



North Central Texas Council of Governments

AGENDA

Sustainable Public Rights-of-Way Subcommittee

Monday, July 29, 2024

2:00 pm to 3:30 pm, Microsoft Teams

Or call in (audio only)

+1 903-508-4574

Phone Conference ID: 491 923 800#

Chair:

1. Welcome and Introductions.

Carl Singleton, NCTCOG, welcomed attendees to the meeting.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

2. Review of Previous Discussion: The Subcommittee will give an overview of past progress and discussion on the Best Management Practices (BMP) Guidebook.

Carl Singleton said that previously, the SPROW Subcommittee adopted a plan to create a Best Management Practices (BMP) Guidebook that will be organized into five sections that recommend BMPs to increase standardization across the region.

3. Pending Topics – Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development: The Subcommittee will discuss subtopics to be researched and included.

Robert Woodbury, City of Cedar Hill, suggested greenscape has drainage elements that would be beneficial for reducing runoff and water quality.

4. Pending Topics – ROW Planning, Administration, and Policy: The Subcommittee will discuss subtopics to be researched and included.

Carl Singleton stated TxDOT responded to many small cells permit requests. Carl said TxDOT needed to consider different permit requirements for roadway speeds, driveway locations and the distance from intersections. Also, there is signage, illumination, and extra striping concerns. Carl said entities must have some kind of structure when giving out permits because they cannot have customized permits for everyone.

Robert Woodbury suggested this section should cover duct banks and consolidation of communication lines, single light timing, striping, and how people can comfortably drive with different modes of transportation. Also, Robert suggested this section cover the amount of franchise utilities that want to be in the right-of-way and include a typical cross section where phone lines, fiber optic, Atmos Energy, electrical, etc. goes so everyone understands where they're going to be placed. Robert said each utility is a business and

If you plan to attend this public meeting and you have a disability that requires special arrangements at the meeting, please contact Ashley Barnett by phone at (817) 608-2363 or by email at ABarnett@nctcog.org, 72 hours in advance of the meeting. Reasonable accommodations will be made to assist your needs.

has its own programs, policies, procedures, budgets in respect to removing/relocating utilities. Robert said projects can drag because their planning and programming must be applied to the project. Regional coordination with those utilities gives government entities a chance to forecast their business and resources.

Kelly Roark stated minimum depth, minimum spacing between other utilities, minimum capacity, joint trench, pole placement, pole transfer, joint use coordination, mapping & GIS requirements, or recommendations are important. Also, plan requirements such as engineered sealed, and as-builts are a necessity.

Carl Singleton asked whether cities considered having "Phase 0" in all their plans. All the utility relocates could be dedicated to that "Phase 0", so hopefully no utility issues would exist once "Phase 1" starts.

Robert Woodbury stated ROW management and franchise utility coordination all need to understand their resources.

Robert Woodbury mentioned one of the challenges is we control capital improvement projects, but developers might put in 1,000-unit community, and they have massive demand, so planning with franchise utilities can help you coordinate with that. He asked what Carl meant by "Phase 0"?

Carl Singleton said when TXDOT lets a project some include a "Phase 0" if they think they are going to have issues with utilities and within this phase, time is dedicated to address utility issues that could delay construction. The contractor is not charged for that time, which advances the project, preventing costly delays.

Robert Woodbury noted the city relies on the 60% set of plans that is sent to franchise utilities so they can see how they can fit into the project. The 60% plan set indicates we are far enough along but don't have all the details. In the project side there are a lot of SPROW elements that we would like to have a unified approach to and discuss policies and procedures with the utilities companies. Cities have paid extra money to motivate them to move faster. Carl added sometimes TxDOT will change the alignment to build around a utility conflict.

Carl Singleton asked whether most cities have libraries where permittees can request as-builts. Robert Woodbury answered yes, digital or a physical copy.

5. **Pending Topics – Complete Streets:** The Subcommittee will address acoustics, safety, maintenance, and aesthetics and seek input on additional subtopics to be researched and included.

Carl Singleton displayed before and after pictures of Greenville Ave.

Robert Woodbury stated the City of Cedar Hill is struggling with streetlights and working on putting power lines underground. The right-of-way looks clean but above ground you include transformers. Service connections to each building must be re-routed. It takes a lot of effort. SPROW can help understand the challenges from other people. It was expensive. It is worth it for certain streets.



North Central Texas Council of Governments

Amy Williams stated it is better to keep the power on during a storm when it is underground.

Austin Nguyen stated this would be a struggle for Cleburne because the city has two TXDOT thoroughfares running right through the middle of downtown.

Robert Woodbury noted within older downtown areas the ROW is not consistent, Also, streets are not lined up to accommodate uniformed sidewalk widths.

Carl Singleton stated there is a roundabout on Tyler Street at Kings Highway, in the historic Oak Cliff section of Dallas north of Jefferson Blvd.

Robert Woodbury asked about the pros of using a roundabout. Carl Singleton answered it is safer, but drivers need to be trained in how to use them. Ian Seamans added Federal Highway Administration has a page about roundabout safety and performance: <https://highways.dot.gov/safety/intersection-safety/intersection-types/roundabouts>. Carl Singleton stated the FHWA calls them “proven safety countermeasures” because roundabouts reduce crashes that result in serious injuries or death. Austin Nguyen informed the subcommittee about a bad example of a roundabout on a campus in North Carolina where they had signalized all of the approaches for pedestrian traffic. Of course, this was probably due to bad site design with most of the pedestrian traffic being students trying to get from the parking lot to their classes. It was very safe but very congested. Sue Alvarez said roundabouts can improve air quality, by reducing congestion, idling at the lights, and providing some degree of mixing. Stephen Moore said he loves roundabouts. Stephen stated they are safer and keep traffic flowing much more quickly. The downside is that they consume more space than a typical intersection and are challenging to install after the intersection is already in existence. I would almost always prefer a roundabout to an intersection with stop signs or lights. Kate Zielke informed us that Seattle has retrofitted some small neighborhood intersections without expanding the ROW. Carl Singleton mentioned some materials and colors do not age well and the need to consider the climate. Robert Woodbury stated roundabouts can resolve weird intersections when you have many streets coming to the same location and different angles. However, they occupy a lot of ROW area, but you don't have signal lights which are very expensive and require constant maintenance. Ian Seamans provided some photos of tiny Seattle residential roundabouts. A lot of them are the same size as ROW or smaller than typical residential intersections in North Texas: <https://usa.streetsblog.org/2017/09/18/seattles-playful-traffic-circles-tame-neighborhood-streets>.

Austin Nguyen mentioned it is nice to have a landscape strip or something to keep pedestrians separate from vehicle traffic, and it's less inviting for pedestrians when they have cars whizzing by next to them.

Kelly Roark stated some cities may require trees, but they are often planted under power lines. Cities' rules/regulations conflict with each other.

Kelly Roark informed us of the importance of coordination meetings with utilities so they can plan accordingly. The city or county should make sure on the permitting end they have information about what large developments and Capital Improvement Program projects are coming up so they can plan whether utility relocation is necessary. If we as bureaucrats know something is coming up; but do not tell them we are going to have to justify why utilities were not moved for future development, it's the responsibility of bureaucrats to let them know ahead of time. The utilities need to take the steps to get relocation designs submitted. Through pole sharing agreements, electric companies would come out and place a new pole (due to age/damage), but other utilities would not make line transfers promptly. Then once transfers are made there is no one to pull the old pole because the move was not made in allotted time. This creates problems for municipalities.

Carl Singleton stated TXDOT used an UIR database system where simultaneously a permit request may be reviewed in the Austin ROW office, area office project manager, and design team. It sped up the permitting process. Robert Woodbury suggested inviting Oncor and Atmos public relations people who could provide educational material. We have had trees growing in powerlines and Oncor cut back the trees. That is something we could talk about in a guidebook for cities who don't have resources to put together a standard specification guidebook. Carl Singleton said all utility concerns need to be addressed in advance so it doesn't delay the project and increase costs.

Robert Woodbury asked is there a rough draft of the BMP Guidebook online?

Kate Zielke informed members there is a rough draft of landscape planning & vegetation management that NCTCOG will email it to participants on the call. She asked what format members would like for the guidebook because the current draft, which Kate displayed, has many pictures. Carl Singleton said normally a spec book or user guide doesn't have a lot of pictures; it would have some illustrations, but will include a lot of narrative. Often there would be a link to drawings and/or images. Kelly Roark stated the publication could have a link that takes users to a detailed sheet on that information. If you did it electronically you could have links to photographs.

Robert Woodbury stated the challenge is NCTCOG would have to produce the details but he is not sure if NCTCOG has the staff to do that. Sue Alvarez suggested the Public Works Council Standard Drawings may already have the needed drawings. Kate Zielke said NCTCOG staff can review this.

OTHER BUSINESS AND ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

6. Roundtable Discussion.

No comments were made.

7. Schedule for the Next Meeting. The next Subcommittee meeting is TBD.

Robert Woodbury suggested the subcommittee meet quarterly a week before each Public Works Council meeting.



North Central Texas Council of Governments

Kate Zielke reminded everyone the registration is still open for the 25th Public Works Roundup on August 22nd.

8. Adjournment.

If you have any questions regarding the meeting or agenda items, please contact Carl Singleton by phone at (817) 458-4768, or by email at Csingleton@nctcog.org.

9. Attendees.

Amy Williams	City of Rockwall	AWilliams@rockwall.com
Stephen Moore	Denton County	Stephen.Moore@dentoncounty.gov
Erin Blackman	NCTCOG	EBlackman@nctcog.org
Ian Seamans	Environment Texas	ians@environmenttexas.org
Alan Brown	City of Duncanville	abrown@duncanville.com
Brittainie Cason	City of Cedar Hill	Brittainie.Cason@cedarhilltx.com
Shawn Conrad	NCTCOG	SConrad@nctcog.org
Tristan Cisco	City of Corinth	Tristan.Cisco@cityofcorinth.com
Eric Tate	Atmos Energy	Eric.Tate@atmosenergy.com
Devia Joshi	NCTCOG	DJoshi@nctcog.org
Joslyn Billings	NCTCOG	JBillings@nctcog.org
Brett Bourgeois	City of Denton	Brett.Bourgeois@cityofdenton.com
Kelly Roark	Denton County	Kelly.Roark@dentoncounty.gov
Nicholas Nix	City of Forney	NNix@forneytx.gov
Susan Alvarez	NCTCOG	SAlvarez@nctcog.org
Robert Woodbury	City of Cedar Hill	robert.woodbury@cedarhilltx.com
Austin Nguyen	City of Cleburne	austin.nguyen@cleburne.net
Carl Singleton	NCTCOG	CSingleton@nctcog.org
Kate Zielke	NCTCOG	KZielke@nctcog.org
Sue Alvarez	NCTCOG	SAlvarez@nctcog.org

If you plan to attend this public meeting and you have a disability that requires special arrangements at the meeting, please contact Ashley Barnett by phone at (817) 608-2363 or by email at ABarnett@nctcog.org, 72 hours in advance of the meeting. Reasonable accommodations will be made to assist your needs.