



Massachusetts Municipal Association

MMA BEST PRACTICES SERIES

Recommendations for Effective Local Government Administration and Management from MMA Policy Committees

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MMA Policy Committee on Transportation, Public Works and Public Utilities

Best Practice Recommendation: Coordination of Infrastructure Work With Utility Companies

BEST PRACTICE: Develop a strategy for coordinating infrastructure work with utility companies.

Municipal officials are justifiably concerned when utility companies perform disruptive work beneath roadways and sidewalks that have recently been paved or reconstructed. Improved coordination and cooperation between municipalities and utilities will save time and money for both parties and improve the quality of life for residents. Communities can preserve local taxpayer dollars and Chapter 90 road construction funds if they can convince utility companies to schedule the maintenance and repair of underground utility infrastructure so that it takes place during or prior to municipal road projects.

One key part of utility coordination is establishing relationships and assigning key point people locally to manage these issues. Many potential conflicts can be avoided when municipal officials and utility representatives know whom to contact and receive regular updates on municipal and utility work. It is important to identify a contact for emergency situations.

Municipalities should consider designating a municipal employee as the primary contact on utility issues. This person can share information with other municipal departments and serve as the contact when utilities need to notify the municipality of a project. Cities and towns should also maintain a list of names and contact information for the key liaison officials at every utility that operates in the municipality.

Municipal officials and utility representatives should meet frequently to review pending roadwork projects and discuss details and implications. This could also be a good time to check in on issues such as double poles, gas leaks, and new utility connections. Large cities might hold these meetings once a month. For smaller communities, it may make sense to have meetings less often.

Whenever feasible, municipalities and utilities should share capital plans for projects for several years out. This practice is helpful in allowing both parties to plan ahead and to help resolve conflicts. Municipalities and utilities must recognize that these plans are subject to change, which is why regular communication is the best approach.

Municipalities may also consider and support the concept of stakeholder partnering at the statewide level. Stakeholder partnering is a Federal Highway Administration "Every Day Counts" initiative that enables collaboration and communication on transportation projects.

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Resources:

Special Commission on Utility & Municipal Coordination report: www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dpu/sp-util-comm-report.pdf

Fixing Our Pipes: Coordinating Natural Gas Main Replacement Between Local Governments and Gas Companies -
Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Home Energy Efficiency Team
www.fixourpipes.org

Federal Highway Administration "Every Day Counts": www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovation/everydaycounts