



**North Carolina Department of Transportation  
Division of Highways**

**Dig Once Policy**

**March 1, 2021**

**General**

The State of North Carolina (the “State”) Executive Order No. 91 (the “Executive Order”) calls for the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT or “Department”) and the Department of Information Technology (NCDIT) to jointly develop a policy to reduce the scale and number of repeated excavations related to state road projects for the installation and maintenance of broadband infrastructure in rights-of-way (ROW). The intent of the policy is to reduce the costs of trenching or installation by multiple providers and broadband infrastructure to aid in the expansion of broadband access in the State.

To provide sufficient time for industry and Department staff to prepare for the revised practices, the effective date of this policy is March 1, 2021. This policy applies to broadband and/or associated conduit longitudinal installations on state-maintained routes that are not part of the National Highway System (NHS) and where the proposed installation method is by conventional open trench installation. This policy applies to installations within the limits of state transportation improvement projects (TIPs) and applies to new installations as well as facilities being relocated to accommodate a state highway project. This policy is not intended to revise any of the standard processes and procedures found for Encroachment Agreements in the Department’s Utilities Accommodations Manual. The requirements set forth in this policy do not alter existing rules, policies, and procedures relating to other utility facilities within the ROW or for accommodating utility facilities or other facilities under the control of the Department.

For the purpose of this policy, “broadband conduit” is considered conduit, pipe, innerduct, or microduct for fiber optic or other cables that accommodate current or future broadband and wireless facilities for broadband service.

Detailed guidance regarding this policy can be found in the NCDOT Utilities Accommodations Manual and on the NCDOT Utilities Unit page of Connect NCDOT.

**Coordination Requirements**

1. An ISP who desires to use conventional open trench construction to relocate existing facilities or install new facilities within the limits of a state transportation improvement project, where the open trench construction includes excavation of more than 1,000 linear feet in any one contiguous area, shall discuss this desire with Department’s utility coordinator prior to providing notice of a joint-trench opportunity.

2. Once the ISP has decided on conventional open trench construction, it shall provide notice of a joint-trench opportunity on the NCDIT's Broadband Infrastructure Office website. The notice shall conform to a form and content approved by the Department, include the contact information of the Department's utility coordinator(s), and shall be posted by NCDIT on its website for at least two consecutive weeks.
3. The intent for the notice provided under paragraph 2. is to publicize the general scope of the proposed installation within the State ROW, providing other interested broadband providers the opportunity to express an interest in installing additional broadband facilities as part of the open trench construction.
4. Immediately following the close of the notice period, the ISP shall notify the Department whether any other entities expressed interest or not.
5. For those entities that have expressed their interest in participating in the project, the ISP should make reasonable efforts to enter into an agreement between the two (or more) entities, outlining the responsibilities and financial obligations of each, with respect to the installation within the ROW. In the event a formal agreement is entered into between the parties, a copy of the executed agreement, or, alternatively, a joint letter stating that agreement has been reached regarding joint access to the open trench, shall be provided to the Department's utility coordinator prior to beginning installation. In the event agreement is not reached on joint use of the open trench, the ISP shall provide the Department's utility coordinator notice that such agreement has not been reached.
6. The processes described in paragraph 5 shall be completed prior to the Department's issuance of Utility Authorizations for relocation. Negotiations between the ISP and other broadband providers over access to an open trench shall not delay the state highway project or otherwise compromise the highway project schedule.