



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

Dig Once Policy

**November 2, 2020
(Revised 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.

Dig Once Policy

In compliance with Executive Order No. 91, issued by Governor Roy Cooper, a Dig Once Policy has been established 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. A copy of the formal policy can be found in the Appendix D of this manual.

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.

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. Additionally, an Internet Service Provider (ISP) will also include any owner and/or maintainer of broadband facilities.

Requirements for ISPs Relocating Existing Facilities

1. An ISP who desires to use conventional open trench construction to relocate existing facilities within the limits of a state highway 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. In order to avoid impacts to the project schedule, this decision to use conventional open trench construction should be made prior to the highway project’s 30% design threshold.
2. Once the ISP has decided on conventional open trench construction, it shall provide notice of a joint-trench opportunity on the North Carolina Department of Information Technology’s ([NCDIT’s Broadband Infrastructure Office website](#)).

The notice shall conform to a form and content approved by the Department and include the following:

- The highway project’s TIP number
- County where the project is located
- A general description of the location of the work (e.g. NC 64 from Murphy Street to Manteo Road)
- Contact information for the NCDOT utility coordinator (Central Office or Division depending on who is managing the project) and the consultant utility coordinator

The notice shall run at least two consecutive weeks.

The intent for the notice is to publicize the general scope of the proposed installation within the ROW providing other interested broadband providers the opportunity to express an interest in installing additional broadband and/or wireless access facilities as part of the open trench construction.

3. Immediately following the close of the notice period, the advertising ISP shall notify the Department whether any other entities expressed interest or not.

4. In response to an open trench notice, an ISP not currently located within the state highway project limits (i.e. not involved in active utility coordination on the project) may desire to install facilities as part of this trench sharing arrangement. The Department will incorporate this ISP into the utility coordination process.
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. The Department will store these agreements and correspondence on the project's Preconstruction SharePoint site.
6. All joint-trench agreements and the designs for all facilities to occupy the trench shall be finalized prior to the Department's issuance of Utility Authorizations for relocation (generally aligned with the highway project's 60% design threshold). The date for issuance of Utility Authorizations shall not be impacted by the requirements of this policy nor shall compliance with this policy compromise the Department's highway project schedule.

Requirements for ISPs Installing New Facilities within Project Limits

1. In reviewing an encroachment request to install new facilities within the right of way, the Department may discover that the proposed installation is within the limits of a state highway project. When this happens, and utility coordination for the project is underway, this request is incorporated into the utility coordination process, with the ISP subject to this and all other policies that govern utility installations within state highway projects.
2. The Department requires all utilities, including ISPs, to declare their desired installation method at the time of encroachment request submittal. Once contacted by the Department's utility coordinator to begin the coordination process, ISPs shall notify the utility coordinator if they desire to install facilities by conventional open trench. The utility coordinator and the ISP will discuss the project status and schedule, to investigate the viability of establishing a joint trench arrangement.
3. If determined that pursuance of a joint trench arrangement is reasonable, with limited risk of compromising the highway project schedule, the ISP it shall provide notice of a joint-trench opportunity on the North Carolina Department of Information Technology's (NCDIT's) [Broadband Infrastructure Office website](#).

The notice shall conform to a form and content approved by the Department and include the following:

- The highway project's TIP number
- County where the project is located

- A general description of the location of the work (e.g. NC 64 from Murphy Street to Manteo Road)
- Contact information for the NCDOT utility coordinator (Central Office or Division depending on who is managing the project) and the consultant utility coordinator

The notice shall run at least two consecutive weeks.

The intent for the notice is to publicize the general scope of the proposed installation within the ROW to providing other interested broadband providers the opportunity to express an interest in installing additional broadband and/or wireless access facilities as part of the open trench construction.

4. Immediately following the close of the notice period, the advertising ISP shall notify the Department whether any other entities expressed interest or not.
5. In response to an open trench notice, an ISP not currently located within the state highway project limits (i.e. not involved in active utility coordination on the project) may desire to install facilities as part of this trench sharing arrangement. The Department will incorporate this ISP into the utility coordination process.
6. 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. The Department will store these agreements and correspondence on the project's Preconstruction SharePoint site.
7. All joint-trench agreements and the designs for all facilities to occupy the trench shall be finalized prior to the Department's issuance of Utility Authorizations for relocation (generally aligned with the highway project's 60% design threshold). The date for issuance of Utility Authorizations shall not be impacted by the requirements of this policy nor shall compliance with this policy compromise the Department's highway project schedule.