

**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
BOARD AGENDA LETTER**



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
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Agenda Number:
Prepared on: 1/13/04
Department Name: Public Works
Department No.: 054
Agenda Date: 2/17/04
Placement: Departmental
Estimate Time: 15 min
Continued Item: NO
If Yes, date from:

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Phillip M. Demery, Director
Public Works Department

STAFF CONTACT: Mark Schliech, Deputy Director
Martin Wilder, Utilities Manager

SUBJECT: Proposed Underground Utility District along El Colegio in Isla Vista; Third Supervisorial District

Recommendation(s):

That the Board of Supervisors:

- A. Receive the attached Road Commissioner's report, which sets forth the boundary of a utility undergrounding district along El Colegio (inclusive of fronting properties) in Isla Vista, the project schedule; and the estimate of project costs;
- B. Adopt the resolution creating the proposed utility undergrounding district.

Executive Summary and Discussion:

The California Public Utility Commission (CPUC) enacted tariff Rule 20 in 1968 to provide a mechanism to underground existing overhead utilities. Pursuant to CPUC regulations, utility companies with existing overhead utilities must plan for conversion from overhead to underground services along roadways meeting certain criteria. The criteria generally includes any one of the following:

1. Such undergrounding will avoid or eliminate an unusually heavy concentration of overhead electrical facilities;
2. The street or road or right-of-way is extensively used by the general public and carries a heavy volume of pedestrian or vehicular traffic;
3. The street or road or right-of-way adjoins or passes through a civic area or public recreation area or an area of unusually scenic interest to the general public; or
4. The street or road or right-of-way is considered an arterial street or major collector as defined in the Governor's Office of Planning Research General Plan Guidelines.

Section 20A of Rule 20 requires the electric companies to set aside funds for allocation to cities and counties for undergrounding overhead utilities along arterial roadways meeting the above criteria. These allocations are credits for work and used as a planning tool. Cities and counties receive an annual allocation based on a formula that accounts for overhead facilities and meters in their jurisdiction. Phone and cable companies are required to follow suit on 20A qualifying projects.

The County of Santa Barbara utilizes an Underground Utility Committee adopted by the Board of Supervisors to assess potential projects in the Pacific Gas & Electric and Southern California Edison service territories. The committee acts on behalf of the County Road Commissioner and makes recommendations to the Board for initiation of undergrounding projects in accordance with Chapter 34 of the County Code. In representing the County Road Commissioner, the committee's interests are generally aligned with County road improvement projects affecting overhead utilities and major arterial roadways located in commercial areas. The committee consists of representatives from the Public Works Department, the Planning & Development Department and from each utility company. The committee membership is periodically updated to reflect committee membership changes and was last updated by the board on January 27, 1999. In general, the committee meets when a sufficient credit balance exists to pursue an undergrounding project. Projects are nominated by need and usually rotate by supervisorial district. Undergrounding projects are initiated by the utility companies upon adoption of a board resolution to form an undergrounding district. This type of district prohibits overhead utilities within its boundaries but does not have assessment powers except to require the undergrounding of private service connections.

In general, areas with larger cities will not have as many County sponsored projects because cities receive 20A allocations as well. For this reason, most County projects are located in unincorporated areas although Rule 20A allows for County assistance to cities.

A utility undergrounding project was nominated by the Utility Undergrounding Committee on January 15, 2003 along El Colegio Road from Storke Road to Stadium Road in Isla Vista including 24 properties that front this roadway or are affected by the project. The project is a result of planning by the community of Isla Vista, the Public Works Department, the Planning & Development Department, UCSB, and affected utility companies (Southern California Edison, Verizon Communications and Cox Cable).

The El Colegio Road undergrounding project will accomplish the removal of overhead electrical, telephone and cable services along El Colegio from Storke Road to Stadium Road in the community of Isla Vista in addition to undergrounding utility service connections to the affected properties. The main line undergrounding costs will be borne by the utility companies. Electric service connections will also be included in the project, excluding the cost of electrical building permits if required. Each affected property, however, will be required to provide for reconnection of telephone and cable service. Electrical building permits are required if there is any work needed beyond the electrical panel. Approximate permitting costs are expected to range between \$470 for single meter services to \$750 for multiple meter services. Verizon service connection may vary from no cost to approximate \$400 per property. Cox Cable service connections may vary between \$100 and \$500. Service connections not originating from the proposed main line undergrounding work will not be affected. County administrative costs are supported by the General Fund and budgeted annually. The attached report details the boundaries of the proposed district, the estimated costs and the project time line schedule. All the underground construction work by the utility companies is

expected to be completed by June 2005 with conversion of service connections to the properties by August 2005.

Another area proposed for undergrounding in Isla Vista included Embarcadero del Mar and Embarcadero del Norte from Pardall Road to El Colegio Road in order to absorb the region between the El Colegio Road project and the existing Isla Vista Loop Underground Utility District established by the Board on October 10, 1983. Unfortunately, the costs associated with the larger project are too prohibitive to include in this project. The El Colegio Road project has a higher priority based on traffic volumes and 20A project criteria. The El Colegio Road project will also coincide with proposed road improvements associated with a UCSB housing project.

Following the El Colegio Road project, the next recommendation for undergrounding overhead utilities in the Edison service territory is along Olive Mill Road from Channel Drive to North Jameson Lane and North Jameson Lane from Olive Mill Road to San Ysidro Road in Montecito in the First Supervisorial District. This coincides with rotating undergrounding projects among the three south coast supervisorial districts in the Edison service territory. The next consecutive qualifying project would then be proposed in the Second Supervisorial District.

In addition, the CPUC adopted a rule change in September of 2002 that allows 20A credits to be used on design of the electric portion only of 20B utility undergrounding projects (a 20B project is a privately funded undergrounding project through the formation of an assessment district for roadways not qualifying for 20A funds). Members of County staff are developing policy pertaining to the use of 20A credit towards 20B projects. A future Board of Supervisors staff report will be presented with recommendations from the Project Team.

Approximately \$1.8 million is now available in the Southern California Edison Rule 20A allocation credit balance (2004). The Edison fund receives about \$275,000 annually. The El Colegio Road project is estimated to cost \$2.3 million (the Embarcadero portion was estimated at \$3.2 million). In order to approve projects that are estimated to cost more than current available 20A credits, the CPUC allows Edison to use future allocations of up to 5 years. Therefore, the El Colegio Road project would utilize almost 2 years of future allocations.

This action requests the Board adopt the resolution to create an underground utility district along El Colegio Road, inclusive of affected properties, in Isla Vista. Upon adoption of the resolution, the utility companies will initiate work according to the schedule shown in the resolution.

Mandates and Service Levels:

There are no changes in programs or service levels with this action.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Project construction costs borne by Southern California Edison, are estimated at \$2.3 million. Verizon and Cox Cable do not track a credit balance account for undergrounding projects under their tariff rules but instead plan work by fiscal year budgeting. The private property owner is responsible for certain service

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reconnection costs. County costs involve only administration and are budgeted in Department 054, Fund 0001, Program 4001, Account 7460 as shown in the fiscal year 2003/2004 budget.

Special Instructions:

1. Public Works staff will notify owners and utility companies within 10 days after adoption or non-adoption of the resolution.
2. Clerk of the Board; please return one copy of the executed resolution prior to recording to the Public Works Department, Solid Waste and Utilities Division, attention Sheila Engellenner for proper noticing after adoption.
3. Resolution is to be recorded in the County Recorder's Office

Concurrence:

County Counsel