



Engineer's Report for Proposed Bluebird Canyon Drive Underground Utility District 2020-2

In the City of Laguna Beach, California
July 21, 2020

Prepared By: City of Laguna Beach Public Works Department, 505 Forest Avenue
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I. INTRODUCTION

An underground utility district is proposed to be established for a portion of Bluebird Canyon Drive from the intersection of Cress Street to 130 feet past the intersection of Saling Way in the City of Laguna Beach for the purpose of removing all existing overhead utilities of, but not limited to, Southern California Edison (SCE), Cox Communications, and Frontier Communications and placing them underground. The boundary of the proposed district is shown on the attached Exhibit "A." Chapter 21.24 of the Laguna Beach Municipal Code sets forth provisions for establishing such an underground utility district. This Engineer's Report is required in order to establish an underground district.

The project proposes to place all existing overhead utilities underground along the portion of Bluebird Canyon Drive within the district as a qualifying California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) Rule 20A project. The majority of the overhead utilities parallel the northerly side of Bluebird Canyon Drive. Some of the existing overhead Cox Communications facilities leave the right-of-way and somewhat parallel the roadway on City owned and private property. According to Cox Communications these lines will be removed and placed into the proposed new underground facilities within the right-of-way.

Three of the existing utility poles have SCE owned street lights attached. It is proposed to remove those street lights and install new street lights, to be owned by the City, at roadway intersections as described in the Draft City of Laguna Beach Guidelines for Street Lighting. The City will design and pay for the installation of the underground wiring system and the street lights within the district.

II. PHASES OF THE WORK

The proposed underground utility district will be completed through the following phases of work.

Design

Upon approval by the City Council of a resolution to establish the underground utility district,

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construction drawings will be developed by the utility companies. The drawings will establish the proposed locations for below-ground conduits, handholes, above- or below-ground transformers, street lights, and any other equipment. The design process involves SCE preparing a civil land survey and developing the construction drawings. These drawings are then distributed to Cox Communications, Frontier Communications, and City Street Lighting so they may commence with their designs, typically utilizing a joint trench design with the SCE facilities. The locations for easements on private properties for structures and conduits shall be determined at this stage of the project. If easements are required, the affected property owners will be contacted to coordinate the recording of such easements.

Construction

The construction phase will consist of: (a) construction of underground utilities for, but not limited to, SCE, Frontier Communications, Cox Communications, and City Street Lighting (b) construction of service connections for those properties that currently receive services from any of the poles that will be removed and qualify under the CPUC Rule 20A guidelines, and (c) installation of street lights to be owned and maintained by the City.

Removals

The last phase of the project consists of the removal of all existing utility equipment, overhead wires, and utility poles within the district boundaries as shown on Exhibit "A." The utility companies are responsible for the removal of their respective wires, equipment, and poles.

III. COST OF THE WORK

Once the district has been established by resolution of the City Council, SCE shall use underground conversion allocations following the requirements of CPUC Rule 20A for the design and construction of the underground facilities, and for the conversion of any properties currently receiving service from the overhead utilities that will be placed underground. As a qualifying CPUC Rule 20A project, all utilities contribute their proportional share of the cost of constructing the underground conduits. Then each utility is responsible for converting their own facilities to the new underground system.

SCE has prepared a rough order of magnitude cost of the project in the amount of \$3.3 million, which includes the costs for design, construction, private property connections, removals, and contingencies for the SCE system which will be funded by the City's Rule 20A credit balance. These credits were previously purchased by the City from surrounding cities at a substantial discount of \$0.55 per \$1.00 of credit. The costs for Cox, Frontier, City Street Lights, and other utilities are not included in the estimate and are not funded by Rule 20A credits. Typically, utilities share the same trench for placing their conduits and enjoy a cost savings through their proportional share of these costs.

Since the City is the street light utility purveyor, the City will contribute for its proportional share of the joint trench construction of the conduits, and pay for the installation of the street lights. A preliminary cost estimate for the installation of approximately 2,750 feet of conduit and 8 street lights is \$225,000 to be funded by the Street Lighting Fund. A more refined cost estimate will be prepared by the City, and by SCE for their facilities, after the construction drawings are developed.

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Therefore, to fund the project based on the preliminary cost estimates the City would need to: (1) authorize the use of \$3.3 million of Rule 20A credits from its existing credit balance; and, (2) appropriate of \$225,000 from the Street Lighting Fund for the street lighting system.

IV. RULE 20A FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

A significant portion of the funding for the work will be from CPUC Rule 20A credits for underground conversion that were primarily purchased by the City from surrounding cities at a substantial discount of \$0.55 per \$1.00 of credit. For a project to qualify as a Rule 20A project, it must be determined, after consultation with the electric utility, that such undergrounding is in the general public interest for one or more of the following reasons:

- (a) Such undergrounding will avoid or eliminate an unusually heavy concentration of overhead electric facilities;
- (b) The street or right-of-way is extensively used by the general public and carries a heavy volume of pedestrian or vehicular traffic;
- (c) The street, road, or right-of-way adjoins or passes through a civic area, public recreation area, or an area of unusual scenic interest to the general public; or
- (d) The street or right-of-way is considered an arterial street or major collector road, as defined in the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research General Plan Guidelines.

This project will remove overhead utilities and 26 utility poles along Bluebird Canyon Drive which has been determined to meet the requirements to qualify as a Rule 20A project under subdivisions (b) and (d) as described above.

V. SCHEDULE OF THE WORK

The estimated project schedule is:

Design	16 months
Construction	18 months
Overhead Facilities Removal	6 months
Total	40 months

Since the project duration is estimated at 40 months, it is expected that the proposed undergrounding and removal of overhead utilities and poles will be completed by the end of February 2024.

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Exhibit "A"
Boundary Map
Underground Utility District No. 2020-2

