



# EL DORADO COUNTY

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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## Mount Murphy Road at South Fork American River - Bridge Replacement Underground Utility District Formation Engineer's Report September 10, 2019

### Recommendation

Conduct a public hearing and adopt a resolution to establish an Underground Utility District (UUD) along Mount Murphy Road and the proposed Mount Murphy Road Bridge Replacement Project.

### Background

The Mount Murphy Road Bridge Replacement Project (Project) was initiated through Caltrans and the Highway Bridge Program (HBP) to replace a structurally deficient and functionally obsolete bridge located on Mount Murphy Road over the South Fork of the American River in the town of Coloma. The Project consists of the removal and replacement of the existing bridge on roadway alignment that shares existing Mount Murphy Road. In August 2011, the County received federal authorization to complete planning, environmental phase, and scope for the Mount Murphy Road Bridge Replacement Project. The County is looking to have the draft Environmental Document (ED) and technical studies for the Project completed by January 2020. The ED and technical studies will include a discussion about the potential UUD included as part of the Project to reduce potential impacts to property vegetation, private property, and viewshed within the historic district.

### Utility Participation

Currently, a number of overhead utility lines exist adjacent to Mount Murphy Road and within the future widening areas of the Project. These utility owners include Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) and Pacific Bell Telephone Company dba AT&T California (AT&T). In order to accommodate the Project improvements, these overhead utilities will require relocation. Department staff has concluded that relocating these utilities to alternate overhead locations will be a significant effort, and require considerable tree and brush clearing that would significantly impact the adjacent residential properties on Mount Murphy Road. Due to the complexity of this effort, staff has proposed the formation of an UUD within the limits of the Project, in an effort to avoid additional negative impacts to the adjacent residences, simplify construction sequencing operations, and improve the aesthetics of the Project area by eliminating a heavy concentration of overhead utility lines within the historic district. Staff has directed the environmental consultant to include a discussion in the Environmental Document (ED) that notes the potential formation of an UUD.

Department staff has analyzed the cost differences associated with relocating the utility poles overhead vs. undergrounding the lines. For overhead relocations, PG&E requires a 30 foot easement for the poles in which all trees must be cleared. For underground relocations, PG&E only requires a 10 foot

easement for the joint trench. This accounts for a two-thirds savings on easements necessary for relocation of the poles within the Project. The utility poles are currently within the County's right of way and therefore would need to be relocated at PG&E's cost. If the County moves forward with the UUD for this project, those costs to relocate the overhead poles would be credited back to the County. The design costs associated with the UUD would be approximately the same as relocating the poles and lines overhead. This is because regardless of whether the poles and lines get relocated overhead or underground, there is still a significant amount of coordination with the utility companies to relocate their facilities for the Project.

Funding for the design and construction of UUD facilities is available from the Rule 20A tariff program (except for potential temporary utility relocations), which is managed by PG&E. This program was established in 1967 by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), so that privately owned utility companies would set aside a small portion of billings into a fund available to be used for UUD projects. As these funds accrue, the various cities and counties with PG&E's service area are allocated a proportional amount of funds. PG&E shall use the underground conversion allocation computed pursuant to decisions of the CPUC for the purpose of providing to each premises in the District a maximum of 100 feet of individual electric service trenching and conductor, as well as conduit, backfill, and paving, if required. All costs for individual electric service trenching and conductor, as well as conduit, backfill, and paving exceeding 100 feet shall be borne by the property owner. A similar Rule 32A.1 tariff program exists for AT&T facilities.

### **Funding**

Preliminary costs for the UUD are as follows:

Design Coordination: \$75,000 (County cost 100% would be reimbursable from HBP)

Right of Way Coordination: \$75,000 (County Cost 100% would be reimbursable from HBP)

Utility Engineering: 100% Tariff Program

Estimated Permanent Relocation, Construction (Rule 20A / Rule 32A): \$1,000,000 (100% of which is reimbursable from tariff funds)

Estimated Temporary Relocation: \$150,000 (HBP)

The project will also receive a construction credit on the undergrounding for the overhead poles because the poles are located within the County's right-of-way. If the poles were relocated overhead, as they exist today, the relocation cost would be solely on the affected utility owners. Since the utility owner would not have to relocate overhead the cost for that relocation is given back to the County as a construction credit. That credit is estimated to be \$150,000 to relocate the existing poles and overhead utilities outside the County's right-of-way.

The total estimated UUD costs are \$1,300,000 of which 100% would be paid for from tariff funds and HBP.

As of March 31, 2018, the account balance of the Rule 20A program available to El Dorado County is approximately \$10,128,032. This number does not include the 2019 Allocation which can be assumed to be the same as the 2018 Allocation of \$546,822 which would make the account balance \$10,675,124. The account balance also takes into account the Diamond Springs Parkway Phase 1A Project that is currently under construction in 2019. Also accounted for in this account balance (and going to construction) are the Missouri Flat Road UUDs and Green Valley Road Bridge Projects at Indian Creek and Mound Springs Creek. The Department has received confirmation from PG&E that the Project is eligible to utilize Rule 20A program funds for the UUD, and PG&E has acknowledged notification of the proposed UUD. Staff has also communicated with AT&T representatives regarding the proposed UUD and their associated financial responsibilities in association with the Rule 20A program.

### **UUD Formation Steps**

The following is a list of the steps necessary in formation of the Mount Murphy Road at South Fork American River Bridge Replacement Project UUD:

1. Identify the project envelope: These have been established with design of Mount Murphy Road Project 77129. This task has been completed.
2. Map the project boundaries: From the parcels, a property owner mailing list was developed for later use. Department staff has obtained the parcel list for the Project through GIS data. Mailing lists for the UUD will be extracted from this data. This task has been completed.
3. Create an engineer's report: The report will outline the estimated costs to the County and utility participation. This step has been completed.
4. Conduct public outreach prior to the formation hearing: Rule 20A procedures recommend conducting public outreach with the affected communities. Division staff made a presentation regarding the proposed UUD formation at a Board of Supervisors (BOS) meeting on June 4, 2019 that was held in the BOS Hearing Room. Letters were mailed to the 4 (four) affected parcel owners in the Mount Murphy Road UUD and site meetings have occurred with some affected parcel owners (to include the Grange Hall) to discuss potential relocation plans. This step had no financial obligation to the County. This step has been completed.
5. Meet with other interested agencies: Including PG&E, AT&T, and El Dorado Irrigation District to coordinate undergrounding. Staff met with PG&E representatives on February 19, 2019 to discuss the proposed UUD formation, and initiate correspondence between agencies. Staff has also continued to coordinate with the utility companies involved during and after monthly utility coordination meetings. This step had no financial obligation to the County.
6. Prepare an informational Board item regarding formation of the UUD: The item will provide a brief history of the project, and discuss estimated costs and the future formation hearing that is necessary to establish the UUD. This step has no financial obligation to the County.
7. Conduct the Formation Hearing: A hearing at the Board is required for establishment of the UUD. All affected parcel owners are required to be notified by Certified Mail in advance of the formation hearing. Comments received prior to the public hearing will be incorporated with the staff report accompanying the Resolutions forming the district. Once all public comments have been heard and considered, the Board will decide whether to establish the UUD. If the UUD is established, staff and the utility companies will begin working on the specific design of the UUD, and implement into the Project contract documents. Only after UUD establishment is design work eligible for reimbursement. It is anticipated the Board hearing date will be on October 22, 2019.