

CHAPTER 10
UTILITIES AND RAILROADS

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10. UTILITIES AND RAILROADS

10-1 OVERVIEW

Early in the preliminary engineering phase of project development (once all viable alternatives have been established), the project manager should coordinate with the District Utility Engineer and the District Railroad Coordinator, whenever there is involvement with utilities and/or a rail system on a project. The reason for early coordination is to identify potential conflicts between the proposed highway, along with its associated improvements (drainage, landscaping, mitigation, etc.), and existing or future utilities and rail line owners and users. The information obtained from this coordination is documented as a separate subsection titled "Utilities and Railroads" in the Impacts section for EAs and Environmental Consequences section for EIS's. For Type 2 CEs, this section is addressed in Box 6A (Part 1, Chapter 3 for level of detail). Also, a brief background discussion of utility and rail systems in the general project area is included in the Affected Environment section of an EIS.

10-2 PROCEDURE -- UTILITIES

It is the responsibility of the District Utilities Engineer to furnish all relevant information concerning the location, dimension, and characteristics of major utilities found within a proposed project corridor (all viable alternates under consideration). The District Utility section is responsible for maintaining contact with local utility agencies and coordinating with those utility agencies during the PD&E phase. It is the responsibility of the project manager to evaluate and consider potential utility conflicts and recommended mitigations made by the District Utility staff in addressing roadway impacts on utilities.

10-2.1 PD&E Request Package

In requesting utility information, the project manager must provide the District Utility staff with a set of aerials (conceptual plans) showing the location of all viable proposed alternatives for the project. The aerials must contain the following information :

1. All pavement areas,
2. Bridges,
3. Existing drainage structures,
4. Right-of-way lines and width,
5. Control access lines,
6. Highway stationing numbers and,
7. Special landscaping or mitigation areas.

In addition to the aerials, a typical section should also be provided showing roadway and shoulder width, median width and treatment, and border width with typical treatment.

10-2.2 Utility Coordination

Upon receipt of the request package, the District Utility section will notify major utility agencies within the corridor of the proposed highway project and request the utility agency to advise the Department of any major existing and proposed surface and subsurface structures (i.e., primary transmission lines, substation sites, treatment plants, switching centers, communication lines, etc.) that could be affected by the proposed project.

Each potentially involved utility agency will review conceptual plans (aerials) in conjunction with the District Utility staff and locate all existing and proposed major utility facilities. In coordinating with the utility agencies, the District Utility staff will request order-of-magnitude relocation cost estimates from the utility agencies to further address impacts.

The information provided on the aerial plans should contain major facilities, buildings, and other obstructions or encroachments of a utility agency within the right-of-way, or adjacent thereto, which could affect the construction of the proposed project and any mitigative recommendations which are made should be discussed in the environmental document and Preliminary Engineering (P.E.) Report.

The District Utility staff, in conjunction with the District Right-of-Way staff, should consider the feasibility of joint right-of-way acquisition to minimize utility right-of-way replacement cost. Whenever this is determined to be a feasible approach, this should be discussed in the Utility section of the environmental document and referenced in the Right-of-Way Relocation section.

If, after coordination, it is determined that the proposed project will not affect a utility agency then this fact is noted by the District Environmental Management Office in Box 6A of the suggested Class of Action Environmental Determination format Type 2 (CE), the Impacts section (EA), or Environmental Consequences section (EIS) along with the reasons. The Utility Assessment Package prepared by the District Utility staff is placed in the project file.

10-2.3 Utility Assessment Package

Based on the information provided by the utility companies during early coordination, the District Utility staff must prepare an assessment package which is provided to the project manager. This Utility Assessment Package will contain the following information :

1. The names of major utility companies within the project corridor,
2. A set of aerials denoting the location of major existing and proposed utilities along the project corridor,
3. A description of all utilities located along the corridor (as set out above),
4. A cost estimate furnished by the utility agencies for each alternative being considered,
5. A discussion of joint right-of-way acquisition, if appropriate, and
6. A discussion of any mitigative recommendations which could be taken by the Department and utility companies to minimize community disruption.

All of the above information will be provided in the assessment package for appropriate consideration in locating the proposed project, disruption on the surrounding community, and developing the conceptual design typical section. The EA or EIS and P.E. Report will contain a summary of the information contained in the assessment package and reach whatever conclusions are appropriate based on the information provided. The Type 2 CE will provide information consistent with Part 1, Chapter 3 in level of detail.

10-3 PROCEDURE -- RAIL

Whenever there is a rail/highway grade crossing within the limits of the project the District Railroad Coordinator must be contacted prior to developing the project's interface with the railroad system. This will reduce the likelihood of future rail/highway conflicts and could reduce the chance that the Department may design a facility for a portion of a rail system that is either under used or has been or is scheduled to be abandoned by the rail owner in the near future.

10-3.1 Rail Coordination

It is the responsibility of the project manager to initiate coordination with the District Railroad Coordinator. The District Railroad Coordinator will provide information concerning present and future use of the rail line and existing or proposed protection devices at the crossing.

The project files will be documented accordingly, and the environmental document and P.E. Report will discuss the involvement with the rail facility to the appropriate level of detail required to address any issues identified.

10-4 REEVALUATION OF UTILITIES AND RAIL IMPACTS

After Location/Design Concept acceptance has been received and prior to proceeding to each next phase of project development (Preliminary Engineering, Right-of-way Acquisition, and Construction Advertisement), the project must be reevaluated to determine if there have been any change in the impacts to the environment and that the project determination remains valid. The District Utilities staff and the District Railroad Coordinator must be consulted during the reevaluation process (Part 1, Chapter 11).

10-5 REFERENCE

1. Florida Department of Transportation Utility Accommodation Manual, (Topic No. 710-020-001)