



SAINT CHARLES
MISSOURI

PROJECT NEWS

Utility Relocation

In the not so distant past, road improvement projects in St. Charles were simpler. More emphasis was on the construction of new roadways rather than the rehabilitation, reconstruction, or expansion of existing ones. Today, in the City of St. Charles, there is an ongoing focus to improve the existing roadways. This means that motorists should come to expect a level of inconvenience and delay during construction season. This also means added pressure is placed upon Public Works to hasten construction. This environment, therefore, magnifies the impact of any delay when utility facilities have to be relocated during a project.

Beneath the City roadways of St. Charles is a complex network of new and competing utilities. Electric, natural gas, telecommunications, water, sanitary and storm sewers all reside within the same environment. The number of utilities consuming the right-of-way has increased as a result of an ever-growing population, demand for extra services, and advances in technology. Issues regarding the location, coordination and relocation of utilities are all concerns to the City of St Charles, utility owners and construction contractors. Improved coordination is required to reduce project delays, conflicts, safety risks and traffic congestion.

Stakeholders are often mistaken by what seems like a lack of forward progress. Project and Construction Managers for the City have to coordinate schedules with multiple utilities to ensure that relocations and installations are not all completed on the same day, at the same time or on the same location. This advanced level of multitasking can make utility relocation an unreliable and unpredictable process. Frustrations often result from a breakdown in communications and a lack of coordination among invested parties. For instance, during a recent City road project, excavation revealed an unclaimed communication line. Because the line had not been previously claimed, the Construction Manager was responsible for contacting every potential owner of this utility. Although short lived, this unclaimed line hindered progress on the project for a period of time.

Renovating roadways that are in current operation can also be challenging when utilities cross both lanes of traffic. In most cases, a City road cannot be fully closed for weeks or months at a time while utilities are relocated, or in many cases upgraded to fulfill stakeholder needs. Particular utilities beneath

the driving surface require a higher level of care and safety during their relocation. A fiber optic communications line does not carry the same amount of risk to stakeholders as a gas or water main. When these lines are replaced or upgraded, workers must operate at a methodical pace to ensure the safety of crews, area businesses, passing motorists and residents.

Project Managers for the City have embraced strategies that are mindful of utilities and attempt to minimize their relocation. However, in some cases, utility locations are not always known. The materials used for water and telecommunication lines have advanced. Sanitary and storm sewers materials and routing have progressed since they were first installed. Mapping and GPS/GIS technologies have made tremendous strides, but completing work beneath the driving surface often takes more coordination and time than the construction activity on top. The City of St. Charles recognizes that these upgrades, when complete, will ultimately benefit the utility and better serve the public at large.

Questions? You can reach St. Charles Public Works at 636-949-3237 or via email at public.works@stcharlescitemo.gov