



TRN-10.19 - Utility Permits in the Right-of-Way

Administrative Rules Adopted by Bureaus Pursuant to Rule Making Authority (ARB)

Policy category: [Other Rights-of-Way Permits](#)

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UTILITY PERMITS IN THE RIGHT-OF-WAY

Administrative Rule Adopted by Bureau of Transportation Development and Capital Program Pursuant to Rule-Making Authority

HISTORY

Filed for inclusion in PPD December 19, 2003.

Amended by Group Manager of Bureau of Transportation Development and Capital Program and filed for inclusion in PPD May 30, 2012.

Amended by Assistant Director of Portland Bureau of Transportation and filed for inclusion in PPD April 9, 2015.

Amended by Acting Assistant Director of Portland Bureau of Transportation March 28, 2016.

Amended by Manager of Development, Permitting & Transit Group November 3, 2016.

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Amended by Director of Portland Bureau of Transportation January 6, 2020.

Amended by Director of Portland Bureau of Transportation June 22, 2022

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ARB-TRN-10.19

I. Purpose

Any person desiring to make a public improvement, do work in, or use the public right of way must first obtain a permit from the City Engineer as prescribed in Title 17. Utility permits, aka Street Opening Permits, are issued to franchised utilities, the Bureau of Water Works, the Bureau of Environmental Services, Portland City Streetcar, the Street Lighting and Traffic Signals sections of the Bureau of Transportation and other public entities. Utility permits are required for installation, reconstruction, relocation or repair of utility service facilities within the public right-of-way. Utility mains, service connections, conduits, vaults, hydrants and utility poles are examples of, but are not limited to, installations requiring permits from Portland's Bureau of Transportation, Utility, Construction and Inspections Division. For more information on the Design Exception process, see the Design Documents – City of Portland, Oregon section on the City of Portland Bureau of Transportation website.

II. Utility Infrastructure Regarding Private Development

A. A site utility plan for new construction or significant alteration shall:

1. Be required for all Design or Historic Resource Review processes. The site utility plan shall be submitted, to BDS, no later than land use application.
2. When a Land Use or Historic Resource Review is not required, a site utility plan shall be submitted, to BDS, no later than building permit application.
3. List the Utility contacts consulted in the creation of the utility site plan.

4. Address how the building will be serviced by private and public utilities (power, gas, telecom, sewer, water, etc).
 - Transformer vaults, or any other vaults for the benefit of the adjacent property, must be placed on private property.
5. Identify all Utility infrastructure, including vaults, appurtenances, above ground structures, blow off valves, utility risers and valve covers etc and their locations within the public right of way.

III. **Administrative Rule**

A. **General Requirements**

Prior to issuance of Street Opening permits, plans must be submitted as outlined below and meet the requirements for each type of permit as described in this Rule.

Provide a PDF plan set, via email to pbotutilitypermits@portlandoregon.gov, showing proposed work. Plans shall be submitted in a manner that includes the requirements as listed here:

1. The plans must include the name of the utility company that will own and maintain the proposed facility, a contact person's name and phone number, an assessor's map number (quarter section number) and a north arrow, to the top of the page, if possible.
2. Provide a cross section of the trench or otherwise indicate the depth of cover over the installation. There is a required 36" minimum depth of cover.
3. Place all installations parallel or perpendicular to the right-of-way.
4. Place installations with a minimum horizontal skin to skin separation of 5' from sewer facilities and water facilities.
5. Place installations with a minimum vertical skin to skin separation of 18" when crossing sewer or water facilities.
6. On the street side of the curb, trench edges must have a minimum separation of 3' from the face of curb. If trench edge encroaches upon that 3' separation, a variance letter must be submitted to the Portland Bureau of Transportation on Company Letterhead which guarantees the structural integrity of the curb line for a period of two years from date of permit restoration completion.

7. On the property side of the curb, conduits or main lines must maintain a minimum of 3' skin to skin clearance from the back side of the curb.
8. Specify the size, number and type of the proposed installations. Show and label any existing facilities as they relate to, or are in the vicinity of, the proposed work.
9. Dimension installations from the right-of-way lines if a survey has been completed. Otherwise, dimension from the face of curb or edge of pavement is required. In corners, dimension from the curb line extended and not from any point on the radius.
10. Label street names, curbs or pavement edges and right-of-way lines.

B. Placement of Underground Structures

Pre-cast vaults proposed for use in the right-of-way must be on the [structural engineer's pre-approved list](#). Vaults poured on-site or vaults not listed on the pre-approved vault list are reviewed by the City's Bureau of Transportation's Structural Engineering Section prior to approval. Plans and calculations must be provided for each vault and must carry a current Oregon Registered Professional Engineer's stamp.

Where sufficient space exists between the curbs or edges of pavement, and the utility cannot demonstrate a reason to do otherwise, vaults will be located in the street area.

Vaults placed in the public sidewalk corridor will require adjacent property owner written consent, except those vaults centered on the extended property line or placed for the benefit of the abutting property.

Vaults installed within the furnishing or frontage zone of the public sidewalk corridor, as defined by the Portland Pedestrian Design Guide, require non-slip lids per City of Portland Standard Construction Specifications.

Vault access doors and valve lids must not be placed in crosswalks, bike lanes, the vehicle wheel paths of traffic lanes, sidewalk corners or pedestrian through zones (see Portland Pedestrian Design Guide). Place vault access doors and/or valve lids in the furnishing zone or planting strip. Exceptions can be made if the utility can satisfactorily demonstrate, through the Design Exception process, that no other option is feasible. An approved design exception will be required prior to permit issuance.

Utility vault vent grates must be shown on all Street Opening permit requests and may not encroach upon the pedestrian through zone.

Abandonment of vaults must be accomplished by removal of the entire vault; or removal of the lid, breaking a hole in the bottom, breaking down the walls to five feet below grade and filling with pea gravel or acceptable equivalent. Street restoration will be by current City standards. See Administrative Rule 10.18.

Vaults must be placed with a minimum depth of cover of 36" from the current street grade to the top of the vault structure.

C. Service Demarcation Points

Service Demarcation Point – The physical location where a Franchised or City Licensed service provider transfers ownership and maintenance responsibility from themselves to the service requestor.

This rule applies in the following two situations:

- Service is requested for infrastructure residing on private property.
- Service is requested for infrastructure residing in the Public Right of Way.

A. Service on Private Property

When service is requested on private property, the demarcation point between the service provider and the serviced entity must be outside of the Right of Way.

B. Service in the Right of Way

When service is requested in the Right of Way, the demarcation point between the service provider and the serviced entity must be as on the same frontage as and as close as technically feasible to the serviced infrastructure, not to exceed 25'.

D. Utility Vaults or Structures for Adjacent Property Benefit

For a Utility Vault or Structure, individually or collectively known as ("UV") to be placed or modified in the Public Right of Way for the benefit of the adjacent property owner, a design exception is required. See [TRN-8.13 Utility Vault or Structure for the Benefit of the Adjacent Property](#).

E. **Above Ground Structures**

An Above Ground Structure (AGS) is defined as a utility cabinet or other structure mounted on the ground that is or contains equipment for the monitoring or control of a utility's infrastructure. AGS does not include antennas, utility cabinets or related equipment mounted on a utility pole, traffic or street light pole. The approval criteria for obtaining a permit for an AGS is dependent on the requesting party as either a "Private" or "City Bureau" entity.

A "Private" utility is a non-City of Portland bureau which has a franchise or other right to provide a commodity or service, such as natural gas, electricity, or telecommunications, to the public within the City of Portland.

A "City Bureau" utility is an organization that maintains the infrastructure for a public service (often also providing a service using that infrastructure) such as Water Services, Sewer, Parks, and Signals and Street Lighting Systems.

General Conditions for Approval:

The guidelines for both Private and City Bureau utilities for approval of a permit are as follows:

- 1) All AGS must be permitted to be allowed in the right-of-way subject to these administrative rules. PBOT shall apply these administrative rules to all utilities in a nondiscriminatory manner.
- 2) All AGS's shall be subject to Portland City Code requirements for relocation and removal of facilities.
- 3) All AGS's must meet standards for structural integrity and traffic safety.
- 4) Each AGS must display on a lower corner of the AGS, in a 3" by 5" area (maximum) the following information: (1) the name of the company who owns the AGS, (2) Contact information for the AGS owner. A logo for the company may be the name of the company who owns the AGS.
- 5) An AGS review is required for all "City Bureau" and "Private" AGS proposals. The cost of an AGS review and any permit fees are outlined in and published within PBOT's annual fee schedule and are adjusted annually.

AGS will not be allowed for the following:

1) Above ground pad-mount transformer vaults and pedestals are not permitted in the public right-of-way. All such requests will be denied. In newly annexed areas and unimproved rights-of-way, existing pedestals will be allowed to remain in place until such time as they require replacement, where maintenance will not be considered replacement, or when construction or reconstruction of that street occurs.

2) In Underground Wiring Districts or in areas where all other utilities are required to be placed underground.

In addition:

1) Bollards or other devices designed to protect an AGS will not be allowed.

2) No company or corporation logos are allowed on the AGS except for what is allowed in Section 4 of General Conditions for Approval (name of company that owns the AGS).

Conditions for “Private” Utilities:

For a “Private Utility” request, PBOT will review each on a case-by-case basis. At the 30% design phase the utility shall show all proposed locations for the placement of an AGS, and shall conform to the following criteria:

1) Applications for placement of AGS’s shall include a “Pre-Application Consultation” with PBOT at the 30% design phase (or sooner). Requests for a “Pre-Application Consultation” can be submitted to the PBOT Utility Section for review.

2) Exterior shall be painted a muted or monotone color.

3) The Utility shall maintain, in a prompt and timely manner the visual exterior of the AGS infrastructure (paint, graffiti removal, damage mitigation, et cetera).

4) The following location criteria shall be used to evaluate the proposed AGS facility:

- a) Maximum of one private utility AGS allowed per 200 feet of street frontage.
 - b) Minimum of 25 feet from the property corner of a lot where two streets intersect.
 - c) Minimum 5 feet clearance from traffic signs and other encroachments in the public right of way (street furniture, public infrastructure, etc.).
 - d) Maximum of 4 feet tall excluding a maximum 6-inch riser. The total square footage of the cabinet, excluding any riser if present, should be 4 square feet.
 - e) Minimum setback of 18 inches from face of curb.
 - f) The AGS must fit entirely within the furnishing/frontage zone.
 - g) Must be located a minimum of 10' outside of any driveways or pedestrian ramps including wings of both.
 - h) Placement of the AGS must be on the property line extended (+/- 2 feet). This means extending where a property line would be into the right-of-way to determine location.
 - i) Must be located on any street classification other than a Local Service street as defined in the City's Street classification database.
 - j) No AGS's will be allowed on an unimproved street.
- 5) All "Private" AGS facilities require:
- a) The AGS and its power supply meter, if needed, shall be combined in one AGS. If this is not possible, applicant may apply for a variance or other arrangements made with the power provider.
 - b) The power supply for the AGS shall be underground (i.e. power must not be supplied from above).
 - c) Crash test rated and verification of rating provided.
- 6) For AGS located in right-of-way encompassed by a park or on Terwilliger Parkway, the application will be processed in coordination with PP&R staff for placement and mitigation to protect scenic areas or sensitive natural areas.

7) If an AGS is permitted within the public right-of-way, no advertising may be located on the AGS except for what is allowed for in Section 4 of General Conditions.

If all the criteria detailed in this section are met, PBOT may issue a permit to the “Private” utility for an AGS in the public right of way.

Variance for a “Private” Utility Request from the Above Ground Structure Criteria:

If any of the above criteria has not been met, the “Private” Utility can request a variance from the AGS policy. A Design Exception must be submitted for a variance request and the process is as follows:

- 1) Demonstrate that the infrastructure is unable to be placed in a below grade vault.
- 2) Demonstrate (in writing) that a private utility easement was sought from the adjacent property owner. The applicant, for example, could provide a copy of a certified letter sent to the property owner.
- 3) The Utility shall demonstrate that the appropriate Neighborhood Association and District Coalition and the adjacent property owner have been notified of the request to place an AGS at the proposed location. PBOT requires providing a 30 day notice to allow for an adequate time for notification to occur.
- 4) Demonstrate that the placement of the above ground facility is located within the public ROW at a safe location with respect to the traveling public.
- 5) If the variance is granted, the Utility will execute a utility permit for the above ground facility.

If the Director of the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT Director) is satisfied that the Utility has complied with these requirements and the PBOT Director agrees that the variance request is in the best interests of the City, the PBOT Director may approve the issuance of a utility permit for the above ground facility.

The PBOT Director may review such applications on a case-by-case basis. The PBOT Director is committed to reviewing and responding to such requests

from the Utility within a 2 to 3 week timeframe. This timeframe may vary depending upon work load and budgetary constraints.

Conditions for a “City Bureau” Utility:

This outline details PBOT’s policy regarding the allowance of Above Ground Facilities within the public right-of-way (ROW) for City Bureau Infrastructure. PBOT will review each request on a case-by-case basis.

- 1) Applications for placement of AGS’s requires a “Pre-Application Consultation” with PBOT at the 30% design phase (or sooner). The fee for this consultation shall be included once a permit application has been approved for a public entity. Transit and PBOT AGS facilities will be reviewed separate for this policy.
- 2) Requests for a “Pre-Application Consultation” shall be submitted to the PBOT Utility Section for review.
- 3) Exterior shall be stainless steel.
- 4) The Utility shall demonstrate the ability to maintain, in a timely manner, the visual exterior of the AGS infrastructure (paint, graffiti removal, damage mitigation, et cetera).
- 5) For AGS located in right-of-way encompassed by a park or on Terwilliger Parkway, the application will be processed in coordination with PP&R staff for placement and mitigation to protect scenic areas or sensitive natural areas.
- 6) The following location criteria shall be used to evaluate proposed AGS facility:
 - a) Minimum of 25 feet from the property corner of a lot where two streets intersect. Exceptions given for Transit and PBOT AGS facilities.
 - b) Minimum 5 feet clearance from traffic signs and other encroachments in the public right of way (street furniture, public infrastructure, etc.).
 - c) Maximum of 6 feet tall excluding a maximum 6-inch riser. The total square footage of the cabinet, excluding any riser if present, should be 9 square feet. Minimum clearance of 18 inches from face of curb.

- d) The AGS must fit entirely within the furnishing/frontage zone.
- e) Must be located a minimum of 10' outside of any driveways or pedestrian ramps including wings of both.
- f) Must demonstrate that the AGS placement does not block visual site distance for vehicles.
- g) Placement of the AGS must be on the property line extended (+/- 2 feet). Exceptions given for Transit and PBOT AGS facilities.
- h) Allowed on any street classification.
- i) Allowed on an unimproved street.
- j) Demonstrate the facility is sited within the public ROW at a location that mitigates the visual impact of the facility.

7) All City Bureau AGS facilities require:

- a) The AGS and its power supply meter, if needed, shall be combined in one AGS or other arrangements made with the power provider.
- b) The power supply for the AGS shall be underground (i.e. power must not be supplied from above).
- c) Crash test rated and a verification of rating provided.

If all the criteria detailed in this section are met, PBOT may issue a permit to the City Bureau for an AGS in the public right of way.

Variance for a City Bureau Request from the Above Ground Structure Criteria:

If any of the above criteria has not been met, the City Bureau may request a variance from the AGS policy. A Design Exception must be submitted for a variance request and may be reviewed/responded to within 2 weeks of submittal. If the Design Exception is approved PBOT may then issue a permit to the City Bureau for an AGS in the public right of way.

Exceptions to Above Ground Structures Regulations:

City Bureau and Private utility infrastructure allowed to be placed above ground, but are exempted from the AGS policy are as follows:

1. Electrical power, telecommunication or OCT poles
2. Fire hydrants
3. Water Quality Sampling Stations
4. Natural Gas or Air Relief Valves
5. Signals and Street Lighting equipment
6. Portland City Streetcar facilities or TriMet facilities installed under IGA with the City of Portland Bureau of Transportation.
7. Natural Gas meters, if the placement of the meter is attached to and within 1 foot of a building face and meets the Americans with Disabilities Act criteria for placement.

F. Utility Pole Placement Permits

City policy directs that utility poles should be placed within 1' from the extended property line on frontages 100' or less to the centerline of the new or replacement pole. If the pole is not placed on the extended property line, the utility must obtain abutting property owner written consent.

Poles should be placed a minimum of 18" from face of curb to face of pole unless right of way constraints exist.

Guy or anchor poles are permitted the same as power/telecommunication poles. Guy or tension anchors installed through a Surface Stormwater Facility or other hard surface will require permits prior to construction.

Poles, guy wires and anchors may not encroach upon the pedestrian through zone and must be placed leaving the maximum clearance possible. Pole clearance must meet City of Portland Bureau of Transportation minimum requirements for pedestrian clearance as defined by the Portland Pedestrian Guidelines, followed by FHWA minimum requirements, if right of way constraints exist.

Exceptions are granted if a sewer lateral, driveway, or other conflict which cannot be feasibly mitigated exists with the pole placement. One other possible exception is the need for placement of a guy anchor at a street corner, requiring the adjacent pole to be placed away from the corner. Poles owned by City of Portland Signals and Street Lighting section for the exclusive use of street lighting may be placed in the furnishing zone at any location on the frontage without property owner consent.

Poles relocated 40 feet apart or greater are permitted as two poles: one removed and one placed.

Poles proposed to carry wireless communications equipment will not be permitted. Wireless facilities must be placed on existing or replacement poles only and follow all Administrative Rules listed under the "Wireless Telecommunication Facilities" section of this Administrative Rule.

G. Wireless Telecommunication Facilities

Proposed wireless telecom facilities are reviewed and permitted as with any other utility installation and must meet the standards of the City regulating such construction.

The facilities placement will also be regulated by the terms and conditions set forth in the Right-of-Way Agreement entered into between the City and the Telecom provider.

Reference [TRN-10.44 – Vertical Infrastructure in the Public Right of Way](#) for more information on the installation of wireless telecommunications facilities.

H. Pay Phone Permits

The Bureau of Transportation issues permits for the placement and removal of pay telephones in the public right of way.

Requests for a phone booth are the same as for other utility installations in the public right-of-way with the following exception: prior to approving the request, a site visit by a City inspector or technician is required to verify that the payphone location meets clearance and sight distance requirements.

If the location meets clearance requirements, a copy of the application will be forwarded to the District Traffic Engineer for approval of sight distance requirements. If it does not meet clearance requirements, it will be returned to the applicant with an explanation.

Payphone applications must be accompanied by an underground wiring installation permit request when in an underground wiring district. All separate wiring permits shall be issued to the authorized telecom provider who will pay the appropriate utility permit fee. The fee for each payphone installation or removal permit is the minimum utility permit fee and is paid by the applicant when the permit is issued.

1. Permit applications shall be on a first come, first issued basis. If the payphone is not installed within 180 days of permit issuance, the permit is void and no extensions or new permit for that location shall be issued to the same permittee, unless approved by the City Engineer.
2. Payphones shall be placed in the furnishings zone adjacent to the curb. No portion of the payphone may be within two feet of the curb.
3. Payphones shall not exceed 9 square feet with no single dimension greater than three feet. Phone equipment shall meet ADA requirements (this is the applicant's responsibility to determine).
4. Payphones shall not be placed on any sidewalk less than twelve feet in gross width and Pedestrian Guidelines or a minimum of 6ft shall be maintained.
5. No more than one payphone is allowed within 100 feet of the intersection of any two streets and within 200 feet of another payphone in the public right-of-way. Double phone booths will be allowed.
6. Payphones on the LRT station platforms or integrated into Tri-Met shelters require our permit.
7. Payphones placed on the transit mall, a light rail transit platform or bus shelter must have the approval of Tri-Met. No freestanding payphones are allowed on the 5th and 6th Avenue Transit Mall.
8. Payphones shall not be placed within 5 feet of: any building doorway extended from the property line to curb; the intersection of any sidewalk

with another sidewalk measured from the back of the sidewalk; any portion of a handicapped access ramp, whether on private property or public right-of-way; any portion of a driveway, including the wings; any handicapped parking zone or transit zone.

9. Payphones shall not be allowed on the right-of-way abutting residential property zoned R2 or less dense (i.e. R2.5, R5, R7, R10, R20, FF, etc.).

10. Payphones may not be placed adjacent to existing restaurants as they may interfere with sidewalk cafe operations. Pay phones will not be removed if installed prior to the restaurant locating on abutting property or installed prior to July 1, 1995.

11. Payphones shall be at least 4 feet from any fire hydrant, ornamental street light pole or traffic signal equipment (including poles and controller boxes), and all standard utility clearances shall apply.

12. At locations where booths have been removed at the City's request, the company who removed the booth will have the first option to replace a booth at the site. A current list of the removed phone booths can be obtained from the Cable and Franchise Office.

I. **Emergency Work - Verbal Permission to Start Work**

1. The utility must demonstrate that existing service has been disrupted. This verbal approval is for **emergencies only**.
2. The utility will request a verbal permit at least 24 hours before starting work, if possible. This request will be made through the PBOTUtilityPermits@PortlandOregon.gov email box.
3. The applicant will describe work to be done, give a reason for emergency street opening and the exact date and time work will begin. An emailed site plan with this information is preferred.
4. The applicant will give this office an emailed plan set within two business days from date permission to work is granted detailing the exact work completed.
5. If applicant submits copies later than two days, they will be subject to the Right of Way Use Enforcement Program.

J. **Public Infrastructure Installed within a PBOT Project**

1. For BES infrastructure installed under PBOT CIP projects, concurrent with the 3rd Utility Notice, the PBOT design engineer or PBOT PM (on Consultant projects) will send an e-mail to the PBOTUtilityPermits@PortlandOregon.gov (and copy the BES contact) to initiate the Street Opening Permit process. A Street Opening permit will be issued to BES for their facilities within 5-7 business days.
2. For PWB infrastructure installed under PBOT CIP projects, the Street Opening permit process remains unchanged.
3. All other requirements and provisions of this Administrative Rule apply as noted above.

IV. **Code Reference**

Title & Section 17.24, 17.56

Pursuant to Rule Making Authority Title & Section 3.12

HISTORY

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