



Public Works Commission

INFORMATION CALENDAR

November 27, 2007

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Public Works Commission

Submitted by: Jeffrey L. Egeberg, Secretary, Public Works Commission

Subject: Underground Policy for Rule 20A Monies

INTRODUCTION

On December 19, 2000, Council requested that the Public Works Commission (PWC) establish priority streets for incoming 20A monies and that these priorities include major arterial streets that are to be used as evacuation routes in case of disaster. The PWC was further requested to return with specific procedures in place for implementing the priority streets. Lastly, it established that there shall be a moratorium on creating new 20A Districts until these priorities and procedures have been established.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

There are three Rule 20A districts that have been previously established and are yet to be constructed. These districts are using committed Rule 20A allocations through 2011. At that time, Rule 20A funds should become available for new districts to be formed. However, the City needs to start making preparations well ahead of time, since it takes several years to achieve the necessary coordination and engineering for undergrounding projects.

BACKGROUND

A total of nine Rule 20A undergrounding districts were formed in the early 1990's, and six of those have been completed. Three remain to be completed in the near future. However, it should be noted that none of those involve designated major arterials.

POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

The following statement was adopted at the PWC's meeting on October 4, 2007 by a vote of 9-0-0.

Rule 20A funds for undergrounding utility wires are raised from utility fees, which in turn are public funds. Moreover, they are extremely limited and meet only a fraction of the streets we might want to "underground." The policy for distributing these funds and its implementation should, accordingly, maximize the benefit to the public.

For the foreseeable future, streets shall be selected on the basis of meeting all three of the criteria that best reflect widespread and significant public use. These are:

1. Designation by the General Plan as a major arterial route;
2. Designation by the General Plan as an emergency access and evacuation route;
3. High traffic volume.

After all major arterial routes have been completed, collector routes meeting the other two criteria would become eligible. The criterion of vehicular use needs to depend on current traffic evaluation, prioritizing those streets most used over a significant percentage of their length.

Planning shall be for a 5-year period within which we would maximize coordination with other street projects. The Public Works Department shall report to the PWC their draft of the 5-year plan, indicating how the designated streets meet all 3 criteria. The Department shall reevaluate that plan each year and report to PWC, with a clear explanation and justification of any changes, and shall extend the plan one year out, again indicating how the new streets meet the criteria. PWC after noticing (including noticing all property owners on eligible streets) and holding a public hearing, shall consider and recommend to Council the streets to be included in each 5-year plan.

The convergence of these three criteria ensures that this policy confers a public good broadly. Therefore, 20A funds shall cover the cost of the entire project, both the publicly owned and privately owned portions.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

There are no fiscal impacts to the City since these funds are allocated from ratepayer revenue of the utility companies. There are other costs that are assessed to the district participants, but these already exist and are unaffected by this approach.

CONTACT PERSON

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