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**Purpose:** The purpose of this document is to briefly describe the Transportation Enhancement (TE) process and highlight the responsibilities for successful local utility coordination.

**Transportation Enhancement:** Transportation Enhancement (TE) is a program for local governments whereby they are awarded federal dollars for a local transportation project that meets certain criteria. The Transportation Enhancement Sponsor (Sponsor) is defined as the local government receiving the project award. The Sponsor is responsible for letting the project, administering the construction contract and coordinating all activities in the PE, ROW, and Construction phases. The Sponsor is responsible for all utility coordination on the project. Utility coordination shall be done in accordance with the Utility Accommodation Policy and Standards Manual (UAM), current edition, for TE projects unless another Manual has been adopted by a project Sponsor. (A Sponsor-adopted manual only applies to local jurisdiction routes.)

**Memorandum of Understanding:** A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is drafted between GDOT and the Sponsor to establish the general scope of the project and the responsibilities of both parties.

**Concept Development:** After the MOU is executed, the Sponsor will develop a concept report, further defining the scope of the project. The Sponsor will generally hire a consultant to perform design services if they do not have sufficient staff to perform the work themselves. Upon completion, the concept report must be submitted to GDOT for approval.

A Concept Team Meeting (CTM) is required on projects that impact the State Highway System. At the CTM potential issues or conflicts shall be discussed and the Sponsor is encouraged to address avoidance, mitigation, and other strategies to resolve potential impact to utility facilities.

**Preliminary Design:** The preliminary design phase begins after the concept report has been approved. The Sponsor will begin completing environmental studies and will submit an environmental document for GDOT review and FHWA approval. The Sponsor will also send an initial submission to utility companies in the project area, requesting information about existing facilities within the project limits. This is a “1<sup>st</sup> Submission” of sorts and utility companies should be given appropriate timeframes for responses (usually 60 days as these projects fall under the “streetscape” category). Subsurface Utility Engineering (SUE) services are not required on TE projects; however, they may be beneficial and are recommended by GDOT depending on the project’s scope of work. SUE services, if utilized, would take the place of the “1<sup>st</sup> Submission” to the utility companies.

A formal preliminary field plan review is typically not held for a TE project unless the project involves all or part of the state route system. These plans should show the location of existing utilities within the project area as well as other applicable design features. The Sponsor will need to apply the requirements of the Utility Plan Review Checklist as plans are being developed.

The right of way limits are established upon approval of the preliminary plans – initiating a submittal of right of way plans, if applicable. Many TE projects are constructed entirely within existing right of way

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or within Sponsor-owned properties. At 30% plans, the GDOT project management team will review the plans primarily for right of way certification.

The Sponsor will be tasked with insuring that any required design variances or exceptions are submitted and approved. Approval of a variance or exception shall be completed before 90% plans are submitted. The AASHTO Roadside Design Guide, GDOT Design Policy Manual, and the UAM should be consulted to verify that existing features in the right of way are in compliance with clear zone or lateral offsets. Any existing or proposed feature that is within the clear zone or does not meet the lateral offset requirements will require an approved design variance or exception.

For projects that contain lighting, the photometrics for those lights must be approved prior to submission of 90% plans. If the lighting is located along a state route, then the photometrics must be approved by GDOT. After photometric approval, the lighting plans can be included in and submitted with the 90% plans – as with photometrics, the lighting plans for on-system projects must be approved by GDOT. On-system lighting will require a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for Lighting to be executed between GDOT and the Sponsor. If on-system lighting is not made part of the plans or is installed by others, a separate permit will be required. GDOT’s Design Policy Manual as well as the UAM should be consulted on matters of on-system lighting. Lighting plans and photometrics along an off-system route will be reviewed and approved by GDOT’s project management team.

**Final Design:** After Preliminary Plans are approved, the final design phase begins. The Sponsor will begin completing design plans and preparing the required certification documents. Upon approval of Preliminary Plans, the Sponsor should request a “2<sup>nd</sup> Submission” from each utility company (with the same 60-day timeframe allotted) and should have all proposed utility relocations plotted on the 90% plans. The Sponsor will submit 90% plans and all completed design documents for review approximately six to eight months prior to the project letting.

For on-system routes, the GDOT project management team will submit the 90% plans and design documentation to the appropriate GDOT offices requesting a review and to provide any comments within 30 days of the request. If comments are not received after 45 days, the GDOT project management team will proceed forward as a “no comment review”.

For off-system routes, the GDOT project management team will review the 90% plans and design documentation and provide any comments, as necessary.

If the 90% plans and design documentation require corrections, those corrections will be made by the Sponsor and final corrected plans submitted approximately four months prior to the letting.

Once final plans and design documentation are corrected, a final utility certification package will be forwarded to the District Utilities Office requesting a final review and utility certification within 30 days of the request. Refer to the Certification section below for final utility certification package requirements.

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**Certification:** The utility, right of way, and environmental certification is a concurrent process along with the final design. The Sponsor is responsible for providing the following documentation to satisfy GDOT requirements for utility certification.

1. For all facilities in conflict and requiring relocation, a letter to the Sponsor indicating said conflict and proposed resolution and relocation is required from each utility company affected.
2. Additionally, if an agreement is in place for utility reimbursement by the Sponsor or some other entity, that executed agreement must be provided to GDOT.
3. For facilities that are not in conflict, a letter stating “No Conflict” and “No Cost” should be provided by each respective company to the Sponsor. If a utility does not have facilities in the project limits, a letter indicating such should be submitted to the Sponsor.
4. If a project is located along or intersects a state route, a utility permit must be submitted through GUPS by project PI number, for each facility within the right of way of the state route. If only a portion of the utility’s facilities are within the state route right of way, then only that portion must be permitted. Permits for proposed lighting, if said lighting is to be installed and maintained by a utility owner and “No-Conflict” facilities are required for portions of the project that are along the state route.

All permit requests must include applicable documentation including DOT Form 8413, location map, project plan sheets showing relocations (if applicable), NPDES permit, cost arrangement documents, design variances and/or exceptions (if applicable), approved lighting photometrics (if applicable), and Utility Adjustment Schedule (UAS).

If facilities are being placed in the Sponsor’s construction contract for projects which are along an on-system route, and the utility owner will be required to submit a GUPS permit. The items which are required to be part of the permit may include but are not limited to the following: Buy America clause, utility MOU, cost arrangements, construction plan utility relocation sheets, relocation pay items in the summary of quantities and specifications, utility special provisions, et cetera. These items must be provided as part of the 90% plan submittal and part of the utility certification package.

5. A Local Let Utility Certification Request Letter from the Sponsor will be addressed to the GDOT District Utilities Engineer on Sponsor letterhead, listing each utility company within the project area and an associated “status” for each company. “Status” is described as one of the following:
  - **Status 1:** The Utility/Railroad Owner is in conflict with the project and requires relocation by the Utility/Railroad Owner during construction requiring coordination with the Contractor and the Utility/Railroad Owner. The relocations are non-reimbursable and the Utility/Railroad Owner will be relocating at no cost to the Local Government or the Department.
  - **Status 2:** The Utility/Railroad Owner is in conflict with the project and requires relocation by the Utility/Railroad Owner during construction requiring coordination with the contractor and the Utility/Railroad Owner. The reimbursable agreement (which

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includes Buy America clause) between the Local Government and the Utility/Railroad Owner is attached.

- **Status 3:** The Utility/Railroad Owner is located within the project limits but requires no relocation work.
  - **Status 4:** Utility relocation to be incorporated into the highway construction project contract which requires Buy America clause.
6. Each of the documents addressed above, as applicable, must be submitted to GDOT's project management team with the Local Let Utility Certification Request Letter.

Recommendation for utility certification by the District Utilities Engineer will be held until all items above are submitted, including final plans, and all required GUPS permits have been submitted and approved.

**Authorization and Letting:** After the authorization of construction funds by FHWA, a TE Agreement will be executed between the Sponsor and GDOT. This Agreement establishes the responsibilities and funding of the project during the construction phase. Once GDOT is in receipt of acceptable certifications (utility, right of way, and environmental), an executed TE Agreement, and final plan approval, the funds for construction can be authorized. The Sponsor is given Advertising Authority to bid the project when project funding is authorized. Their bid results are submitted to the GDOT project management team for review and, if acceptable, NTP to construction is issued to the Sponsor.

**Construction:** A preconstruction conference is held on all TE projects subsequent to NTP (Construction). GDOT highly recommends that the Sponsor invite utility companies involved with the project to attend. Depending on the utility conflicts, if any, the Sponsor may elect to hold a follow-up utility coordination meeting after the preconstruction conference. The Sponsor is tasked with all construction management responsibilities.

**Funding:** TE projects are funded with federal-aid dollars. A local match of 20% is required. For every \$100,000 provided by GDOT, the Sponsor must provide \$25,000. The Sponsor funds all preliminary engineering costs including design, environmental and right-of-way acquisition. During construction the Sponsor is reimbursed 80% of all expenses up to the federal maximum. The Sponsor will receive credit for verified preliminary engineering, environmental and right of way expenses. These expenses count as part of their local match. There are restrictions on how the federal award can be spent. If the Sponsor chooses to place utility adjustments in the contract and seek reimbursement, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and reimbursement agreement must be in place. The guidance from the UAM concerning reimbursement will still apply. Due to the additional time and coordination this requires, Sponsors are encouraged to cover utility relocation expenses rather than seeking reimbursement.

During the preliminary design phase, the utility company and Sponsor should consult any franchise agreements that are in place to determine if funding is further restricted.

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Any and all reimbursement issues should be resolved during the preliminary design phase to avoid delays in the project schedule.

**Roles:** The role of the **GDOT project management team** in the TE process is similar to their role in any other GDOT project. They are the main point of contact for all project issues and questions and are tasked with keeping the project on schedule and within the scope and budgetary limits set forth. This team provides technical reviews and guidance to project Sponsors and to ensure that quality control and assurance are accomplished on all project documents and submittals – including utility certification packages.

The role of the **District Utilities Office** is to review Preliminary and 90% Plans and provide comments, serve as a subject matter expert to the Project Manager, and assist in the recommendation for utility certification once the required documents are provided (including review and approval of permits).