



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: MARCH 17, 2009

ITEM NUMBER:

SUBJECT: AT&T ABOVE-GROUND UTILITY CABINETS

DATE: MARCH 5, 2009

FROM: PUBLIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT, ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION

PRESENTATION BY: PETER NAGHAVI, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SERVICES

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: PETER NAGHAVI AT (714) 754-5182

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file staff report on AT&T "Project Lightspeed" to provide video service in Costa Mesa.

BACKGROUND:

In 2006, the State of California passed Assembly Bill AB2987 to allow utility companies to provide video service to their customers. The City Council, at their meeting of February 20, 2007, approved the Conditions of Approval (Attachment 1), to address concerns regarding the size and quantity of large utility cabinets in the public right-of-way. The conditions also addressed public notification, aesthetics, and maintenance, including graffiti abatement of the anticipated new utility boxes.

At the March 4, 2008, Council meeting, staff presented a status report on the installation of AT&T above-ground utility cabinets. Council directed staff to continue to work with AT&T to screen the utility boxes to reduce visual impact on the community. Specific items discussed and directed by the City Council include:

1. Landscaping is the preferred method of screening, and where feasible to use mature plants, thereby directing staff to amend the Streetscape and Median Development Standards to allow shrubbery over 18 inches where it does not impede sight lines.
2. Use different methods of screening such as lattices with vines, where mature landscaping is not feasible.
3. Locate cabinets in discrete areas so that the cabinets are not highly visible.
4. Paint other AT&T cabinets that are adjacent to the new installations with the Council approved "beige" color.
5. Contact property owners who would be impacted, in order to work with them relative to the cabinet locations.
6. Reduce the height of the cabinets where possible.

Over the past 24 months, staff has worked with AT&T in processing encroachment permits for the installation of new cabinets in proposed locations. There are 153 existing cabinet locations within the City which are presently distributing telephone service to homes and businesses. The City Council has approved a total of 100 locations for the installation of large, above-ground Video-capable Remote Access Device (VRAD) cabinets. Once a VRAD cabinet is installed adjacent to an existing cabinet, the existing cabinet can then be utilized to transmit video services directly into homes and business over traditional copper lines. The VRAD cabinet also needs to be located near a power source and have an electric service meter installed, which is necessary to power hardware responsible for converting fiber optic signals to a form compatible with traditional copper.

ANALYSIS:

Since the March 4, 2008, City Council meeting, staff has worked closely with AT&T to implement a City Council directive to use mature landscaping as the preferred screening method for the V-RAD cabinets. Out of 100 V-RAD cabinet locations, 54 locations were identified to receive landscaping with a total of over 200 shrubs. Attachment 2 depicts a few locations that have received landscaping. A majority of these locations have already been completed, and 41 locations are now being maintained by the City. The balance of the proposed locations will also be treated accordingly as AT&T completes the construction of their V-RAD cabinet installations.

AT&T has submitted, and staff has issued all 100 permits. The construction/installation of a total of 75 VRAD cabinets has been completed. An additional 15 locations are currently under construction, and the balance of 10 locations are scheduled for completion in the third or fourth quarter of this year.

In addition to coordinating the selection of appropriate VRAD cabinet locations, determining specific landscaping requirements, contacting residents, and inspecting the construction/installation of the cabinets, staff is monitoring VRAD installations after construction. This monitoring includes maintenance of the landscaping by the City and graffiti abatement. Attachment 3 depicts a location where new landscaping was installed by AT&T; the landscaping was vandalized and had to be later replaced by the City. No other locations have been affected in this manner.

Graffiti abatement in general is an on-going task, and graffiti on the VRAD cabinets and other AT&T cabinets is no exception. Staff has reported/submitted to AT&T 61 requests for graffiti removal in the past six months (see Attachment 4). AT&T has been prompt to respond to these incidents in most cases. Second requests were sent when required.

Staff will continue to work with AT&T to complete this project in accordance with Council direction.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

The City Council could modify previous conditions and/add new conditions that better substantiates the City's position with regard to the installation of above-ground utility cabinets.

FISCAL REVIEW:

Per the agreement made between AT&T and the City, AT&T will install mature landscaping and all other supporting items, and the City's Maintenance Division will be responsible for watering and ordinary maintenance of the landscaping. The City at this time, has absorbed the maintenance costs, but will require a revision to its budget to identify other sources to continue this maintenance service. It is estimated that a total of \$15,000 may be required to allow City maintenance of these locations.

LEGAL REVIEW:

No legal review is required on this item at this time.

CONCLUSION:

Per Council directive of March 2008, in conjunction with the installation of AT&T VRAD cabinets, the installation of mature landscaping as the preferred alternative to screen the cabinets is now being implemented.

PETER NAGHAVI, DIRECTOR

Department of Public Services

- ATTACHMENTS:
- 1 - [Conditions of Approval for Large Cabinets](#)
 - 2 - [Pictures of landscaped locations](#)
 - 3 - [Vandalized landscape pictures](#)
 - 4 - [Graffiti on AT&T Cabinets](#)

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