THE PURPOSE OF PERMITTING PROCESSES

Permitting processes that are relevant to the topic of technology and telecommunications planning include those related to site development, construction (structural, electrical, etc.), utilities, and work in a road ROW. An appropriately designed permitting process provides clear communication of all requirements related to the activity in question, requires proof the individuals engaged to do the work are qualified, requires evidence that the proposed work is designed to meet the requirements, and provides an opportunity for review and comment to the applicant prior to the commencement of work. For many types of routine and non-critical work, the issuance of these permits can be handled quickly and simply. For more complex or non-standard activities the permitting process can be more complicated, involving outside consultants and review of substantial technical submittals. The management of the permitting process can have a major effect on the implementation of new technology and telecommunications systems.

TECHNOLOGY AND PERMITTING PROCESSES

Technology and telecommunications can be used improve the processes through improved tracking, streamlining and communication. But permitting processes that have not been updated to address or utilize modern technology can create unnecessary, unreasonable and expensive barriers to the deployment of new technologies within the community and as part of development projects.

Reduction of Barriers to Technology from Permitting Processes

Barriers to technology and telecommunications deployment from permitting processes usually result from misunderstandings of the nature of the infrastructure and its requirements. This leads to the technology being lumped with other types of dissimilar types of projects and being reviewed or processed under inappropriate standards, leading to denial or the attachment of unnecessary conditions to approval of the

requested permits. There are two actions that should reduce the likelihood of these sorts of problems:

1. ***Review and revise relevant regulations and permit procedures to provide specific standards for the treatment of technology and telecommunications related projects*** (the previous section on Development Regulations/Standards for Technology provides some guidance to the types of technologies that need to be considered and issues related to their deployment). These types of projects should not be lumped with dissimilar work or treated as one category, the four tiered system of telecommunications infrastructure structures (buried, ground mounted, overhead and towers) should be incorporated into the regulations and procedures where appropriate. The regulations should allow for administrative review and approval in cases where the physical and visual impact of the infrastructure is likely to be minimal.

2. ***Ensure that the staff which review and approve permits related technology and telecommunications related projects are familiar with the technologies, their requirements and potential impacts***. An adequate understanding of the nature and scale of the proposed infrastructure can help avoid unnecessary delays and excessive conditions related to permitting projects involving substantial advanced technology and telecom components.

Improving Permitting Processes through Technology

Modern technology and telecommunications can provide many advantages in terms of managing and coordinating permit processes. The following is a checklist to aid local municipalities in evaluating whether improvements to their respective permitting process are necessary:

Permit Process Review Checklist

- *Are permit applications available online?*
- *Is the permitting process clearly defined on the municipal website?*

- *Are permit requirements and/or standards clearly defined or provided on the municipal website?*
- *Is a fee schedule readily available?*
- *Are staff contacts provided?*
- *With respect to ROW work, is permitting process consistent and/or similar with the RCOC permitting process?*
- *With respect to ROW work, do local and RCOC permit applications require similar information? If so, could local permit requirements be reduced or removed?*

As noted in the checklist, the use of technology could be of particular advantage where proposed work requires permits from multiple agencies and levels of government, as with work in County ROW located within a city or many development projects (ROW permits, drainage permits, building permits, etc.) In the section below we provide the description of a Model Permitting Process for ROW work that could be implemented to greatly streamline the process. If successful, such a process could be generalized to provide a central county-wide web portal for most of the required permitting development projects, creating a single point of entry system that would be more attractive to business and developers that are considering projects in communities in Oakland County.

Model ROW Permitting Process

This section provides an outline of a centralized permitting process that improves guidance to applicants, regardless of whether the application is for work within a local, county or state road. This system will also allow right-of-way managers to track projects more efficiently.

Create a county-wide web portal for ROW permitting.

The web portal would allow applicants several ways to access land parcel information. For example, applicants could simply type in the landowner's name or click on a map to identify a parcel.

Once a parcel is identified, several types of information would become available:

a. The jurisdiction of roadways bounding the parcel. In some cases, a parcel could be bounded by 2-3 different jurisdictions, complicating the permitting process. As the system is developed, more detailed information on roadway features could be included. For example, GIS technology could enable a user to click on a roadway and access a table of information on that roadway.

b. Links to the appropriate permitting forms. Ideally, local, county and state forms would be consolidated and upon submission, emailed to the appropriate entities. Additionally, total fees for a specific project could be calculated and submitted to this system offering applicants, then distributed to the appropriate agencies along with the permit application.

c. An instant status report on the parcel of land.

i. Information on current utility providers or other parties leasing or subleasing right-of-way.

ii. Information on any existing installations within the right-of-way. For example, a proper record of underground ducts intended to

accommodate future technologies would help avoid accidental removal when other installations within the right-of-way occur.

iii. Tracking information on project status and deadlines. For example, citizens wishing to track projects related to their properties would be able to find out the status online.

d. Other information relevant to the development review process (for example, site plan requirements). After initial testing of a right-of-way permitting pilot system, the goal would be to create a county-wide, one-stop portal for development reviews and permits.

The system could be set up so that the county and local communities could track other important information related to right-of-way that may not necessarily be readily available via other sources. For example, the system could track removal of building structures; relocation of utilities, businesses or residences; appraisal information; and residue parcels and areas of surplus right-of-way.