

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****October 20, 2020**

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SUBJECT: 5G CELLULAR PERMIT IMPROVEMENTS

The purpose of this Informal Report is to update the City Council on permit streamlining to facilitate the installation of 5G infrastructure throughout Fort Worth.

Background

Robust cellular voice and data services improve the quality of lives for residents and visitors in Fort Worth and also support commerce in our community. The current Fourth Generation (4G) technology is being replaced by newer Fifth Generation (5G) technology across the nation. 5G technology provides up to 10 times greater bandwidth than 4G technology and will enable enhanced services by key industries such as healthcare, transportation, retail, and entertainment. 5G will require service providers to make capital investments and install new fiber optic and cellular radio facilities to provide broad 5G coverage.

A committee was formed by Mayor Price in May 2020 comprised of staff and community leaders from industry and cellular service providers to plan 5G updates in the City of Fort Worth. This committee reviewed the status of 5G deployment and options for expediting 5G service in the City.

Discussion

The committee tasked staff with facilitating 5G installation. Discussions with AT&T and other providers identified the need to streamline permit application requirements and the internal review process for 5G facilities in public right-of-way. The review found that the permit application process for fiber optics supporting 5G service (Transport Facilities or TF) was different than permitting for other fiber optic installation (Utility or UT). The difference was administrative and a result of 5G service being governed by Texas Local Government Code 284 and other fiber optic installations governed by Texas Local Government Code 283. The review also examined the volume of TF and UT permits. Approximately 300 TF permits will be submitted in 2020 with an allowed 15-day review time, while approximately 5,000 UT permits will be submitted and typically these are processed in under 3 days. While 15 days is below the 21-day review time required by State law, staff knew they could further reduce review time for TF permits.

Results

As a result of the review, staff aligned the review process for TF and UT permits. This alignment simplified the TF submission and streamlined the review process by minimizing the number of City staff participating in reviews. Staff have been able to reduce the review timeframes for 5G Transport Facility fiber permits from 15 days to 3 days. In addition, staff have been able to reduce review timeframes for 5G Network Node permits from 15 days to 7 days. To date, permits for 690 network node locations have been submitted with 581 issued or finalized, 97 awaiting applicant revisions, 11 in review, and 1 expired. A map of node locations is included.

For questions on 5G permits, please contact Michael Owen, City Engineer, Transportation and Public Works, at 817-392-8079 or michael.owen@fortworthtexas.gov. For other 5G questions, please contact Kevin Gunn, IT Solutions Director, at 817-392-2015 or kevin.gunn@fortworthtexas.gov.

David Cooke
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