



OCC Advocates for Central Management of the State's Public Rights of Way

The OCC has been advocating for central management of the state's public rights of way, the poles and underground conduit that house electric, telephone, cable, and Internet equipment, for over a decade. As a result of the quickly-heightened awareness in state and local government, not to mention the residents and businesses of Connecticut owing to the disastrous storms that have plagued the state over the last two years, a dedicated focus on new methods of improving the strength and restoration processes for poles has developed.

In addition to reports commissioned by the Governor, PURA has opened a number of dockets to investigate how to best confront the growing problem of ever-greater reliance by a greater number of more diverse attachers on access to the poles and other equipment in the public rights of way. A central docket in that effort was Docket 11-03-07, *DPUC Investigation Into The Appointment Of A Third Party Statewide Utility Telephone Pole Administrator For The State Of Connecticut*, which involved hearings and the establishment of a working group last summer. The group was composed of the electric companies, the telephone and cable companies, municipalities, and the OCC. After a series of intensive meetings, the group filed a report with PURA on the issues resolved, and those issues that remain for PURA to decide. The individual members were recently invited by PURA to file their own comments on the report and the goals to be achieved by the establishment of a Single Pole Administrator.

The OCC supports the proposal offered to PURA by both electric companies for them to manage access to and use of the poles and conduit across the state. In the event an attacher fails to comply with the deadlines imposed on all attachers by PURA in earlier dockets, the Single Pole Administrator would have the authority to hire expert technicians to perform the work on the poles. There will also be a centralized database with the attachment information relating to all the poles across the state, and as changes are required on each pole, this database will provide notice to all attachers of the progress of work performed and when each of them must perform their own work.

The Single Pole Administrator will serve to centralize communications and provide efficient communication and work coordination, while promoting cooperation and partnering to manage pole transfers, joint trench construction, pole attachments, and project notification. The Single Pole Administrator process, as proposed by the electric companies, will also ensure nondiscriminatory access to the poles with fair and reasonable application procedures and prices,



and will encourage competition and expanded access to services for all residents, businesses, and municipalities.

The Single Pole Administrator-managed statewide database will streamline the management of the PROW by providing a single source for input and output of information concerning the status and priority of restoration processes, during routine make ready operations or in the event of an emergency, supported by electronic access by all attachers to vital data about the status and management of work in the public rights of way. The database software platform will provide a statewide central repository for pole-related data, thus providing the Single Pole Administrator with a critical tool for managing the activities of all attachers in the state's public rights of way, while providing the Single Pole Administrator and PURA with the necessary transparency of information to hold all parties accountable to the regulatory timeframes established by the Authority.