



Montana Department of Transportation
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Memorandum

To: Distribution

From: Paul Ferry, P.E. **Signed by PF**
Highways Engineer

Date: October 29, 2014

Subject: Manhole and Water Valve Adjustments

The purpose of this memo is to develop a standard practice for the adjustment of manholes and water valves on mill/fill projects. Statewide there is an inconsistency concerning whether or not the adjustment of these features should be the contractor's option. When the adjustment is the contractor's option, the contractor is responsible for the agreements, which saves the Utility Section time. However, the Engineering Project Managers have indicated that requiring the adjustments results in a better finished product.

Discussions with Construction personnel indicated that the following issues occur when the contractor is responsible for securing permits:

- On any given project, there can be numerous facility owners such as cities, telecoms, gas companies, and in the future, electric companies. For example; CenturyLink, AT&T, and the City may all have manholes on the same project. Different owners often have different requirements. Some owners may require that they perform the adjustments. In these cases, coordination with the owners can delay projects.
- It is common to find additional manholes or valves during construction. With line item bids (i.e. per each) an average price won't have to be negotiated when quantity changes happen, as it would with a lump sum bid.
- There may be issues with the appurtenances that are not known until construction is underway. Water valve casings may be damaged or manholes can't be easily adjusted because of pre-existing conditions. Addressing these issues may result in additional costs and construction delays.
- Contractors sometimes adjust these items without any agreements.

After reviewing the issues identified above, we have determined that the following will become the new standard of practice for mill/fill projects that include manhole and water valve adjustments:

1. The contractors will be required to adjust manholes and water valves.

This requirement will entail providing summaries of the valves and manholes and special provisions describing the adjustments. The cost responsibility/share should still be denoted at the bottom of the frame. The contractor will still have to verify the actual amount of valves and manholes.

The plans will also need to address specific items required by different owners (e.g. concrete collars).

2. MDT will secure the necessary agreements prior to letting the project to contract. In order for the Utilities Section to be able to secure the agreements, the following information needs to be provided during the project development process:
 - A utility pick-up survey is needed, because in addition to the number of valves and manholes, the Utility Section needs to know the facility owners with locations so an Agreement can be made with the correct property owners. This can involve multiple owners on the same project.
 - Additional time will have to be added to the project development (OPX schedule) for a Utility Activity. While the Agreement development internally can be accomplished without too much time commitment once a pick-up survey is completed, signatures from the facility owners can take some time. Some Cities' signature authority rests with their council who do not meet on a frequent basis. Some utility companies are out of state.
 - Typically, the IC phase (9302) has not been included in STIP for mill/fill projects. If the facility owner decides to adjust their facilities, they can request to be compensated for the adjustment. Consequently, further project delay can occur while IC is added to the STIP and funding requested. In addition, coordination with the facility owner to make the adjustments may also present a problem.

To address the issues with obtaining agreements for the necessary adjustments, the Utility Section needs to be engaged as early as possible and additional time needs to be added to the project development process (OPX-2 schedule). While mill/fill projects usually have fast project development times, in many cases the additional time needed for utility pick-up survey won't delay project delivery, because projects with manholes and water valves also often require ADA upgrades.

Exceptions

As with all directives, there will be exceptions to this process. The exceptions should be limited to projects with very few valves and manholes. The locations should be specified and the owners need to be identified. The decision to have the contractor obtain their own agreements should be made early in the design process and need to be documented in the appropriate reports. For these cases, a special provision that states the number and types of adjustments that are the contractor's responsibility will be included in the plans for informational purposes. The EPM will need to ensure that the contractor has the agreements for the adjustments and the contractor will be required to verify the appurtenances in the field.

This guidance applies to all projects let to contract after April 1, 2015.

If you have questions concerning this information, please contact Paul Ferry.

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