

Assembly Bill 1549 – Broadband Conduit Database

Assemblymember Jim Wood

EXISTING LAW

Existing law requires the California Department of Transportation to approve an encroachment permit before any party is authorized to begin construction on any portion of the State highway rights of way.

BACKGROUND

Currently, a central and statewide database of publicly and privately owned network assets, such as fiber-optic lines, broadband conduits, or utility poles, does not exist in California. However, there are multiple public agencies that collect data on the broadband conduits that they own and/or manage, but the information is not centralized. For example, information regarding the location and management of a fiber-optic cable within a conduit could be housed in multiple locations – a private broadband company, a municipal department, and a state transportation agency¹.

The lack of a central database creates unnecessary hurdles for increasing the deployment of high-quality advance communication services to all Californians. Streets and highways are torn up every time a broadband company expands coverage by laying down high-speed Internet cables, which undoubtedly adds to traffic congestion and closed roads. If a central database of broadband conduits existed, it would allow a broadband company to weight the option of using existing

¹ <http://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/San-Francisco-looking-to-link-its-networks-of-6682274.php>

resources, such as an existing conduit or joint trenching with another provider, before excavating the road unnecessarily.

Furthermore, the absence of conduit data has created unnecessary broadband and telecommunication disruptions within California communities. On December 9th, 2015, Caltrans workers, not knowing a cable existed, severed an AT&T fiber-optic cable while working on a project to prepare for an upcoming storm. The damaged line shut down phone and Internet services to tens of thousands of Humboldt County residents² instantly for almost an entire day.

BILL SUMMARY

AB 1549 requires Caltrans to collect and maintain a central database of data on all broadband conduits throughout the State. The newly created database will decrease costs associated with broadband expansion projects while also reducing the staff time associated with planning for such projects. The database also serves as a central location allowing public and private agencies to check for existing fiber-optic cables before excavating.

SUPPORT

California Center for Rural Policy
California Emerging Technology Fund

STATUS

Assembly Transportation Committee

² <http://www.pressdemocrat.com/news/4901530-181/phones-internet-out-across-humboldt?artslide=0>