

RCW 47.44.160 Broadband facilities and infrastructure—

Collaboration. (1) The department is directed to adopt and maintain an agency policy that requires the department to proactively provide broadband facility owners with information about planned state highway projects to enable collaboration between broadband facility owners and the department to identify opportunities for the installation of broadband facilities during the appropriate phase of these projects when such opportunities exist.

(2) If no owners are ready or able to participate in coordination of the installation of broadband infrastructure concurrently with state highway projects, the department may enlist its contractors to install broadband conduit as part of road construction projects in order to directly benefit the transportation system and motor vehicle users by:

(a) Reducing future traffic impacts to the traveling public on the roadway;

(b) Supporting the vehicle miles traveled reduction and congestion management goals of the state by allowing for more telework; or

(c) Proactively preparing the transportation system for the widespread development and use of autonomous vehicles.

(3) Broadband facility owners must first obtain a franchise granted by the department pursuant to RCW 47.44.010 and 47.44.020 before installing broadband facilities within the department's conduit. The costs for installation and maintenance of such broadband facilities shall be the responsibility of the broadband facility owner. The department may adopt rules establishing a fee schedule for occupancy of broadband facilities within the department's conduit consistent with federal law.

(4) As used in this section:

(a) "Broadband conduit" means a conduit used to support broadband infrastructure, including fiber optic cables.

(b) "Broadband infrastructure" has the same meaning as in RCW 43.330.530. [2021 c 258 § 5.]

Findings—Intent—2021 c 258: "(1) The legislature finds that:

(a) Increasing broadband access to unserved areas of the state provides an increasingly essential public benefit to the citizens of Washington by allowing full participation in society and the modern economy, and enabling access to health care, education, the use of other technologies, and essential services, including public safety;

(b) Facilitating and accelerating affordable and quality statewide broadband access for all Washingtonians will require sustained investment, research, local and community participation, and the formation of strategic partnerships between private, public, and nonprofit entities;

(c) Providing for additional coordination and removal of barriers across sectors to increase broadband access in unserved areas is in the best interest of the state;

(d) Maximizing the use of rights-of-way during construction or repair of transportation systems offers cost-effective opportunities for extending and improving broadband and high-speed internet connections throughout the state; and

(e) Expanding broadband access, especially broadband conduit along roadways, provides commensurate benefits to the transportation system and motor vehicle users in terms of reducing the use of roads

and alleviating congestion by allowing for more telework, and laying the foundation for a transportation system increasingly more reliant on autonomous vehicles.

(2) The legislature also finds that there is a need to utilize near-term options and opportunities along state highway rights-of-way to drive broadband network expansion and for undertaking longer-term planning of activities to develop additional paths to facilitate the expansion of broadband networks along state highway rights-of-way.

(3) Therefore, the legislature intends to expedite the expansion of broadband access to unserved areas throughout the state by increasing broadband infrastructure coordination, including through collaboration between the statewide broadband office and the department of transportation; proactively facilitating installation and improvement of infrastructure during state road construction projects; and studying recommendations related to the department of transportation's role in broadband service expansion efforts." [2021 c 258 § 1.]