

Chapter 35.96 RCW
ELECTRIC AND COMMUNICATION FACILITIES—CONVERSION TO UNDERGROUND

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Counties, conversion of overhead electric and communication facilities to underground facilities: RCW 36.88.410 through 36.88.480.

Local improvements for underground utilities transmission lines: RCW 35.43.040 (12).

RCW 35.96.010 Declaration of public interest and purpose. It is hereby found and declared that the conversion of overhead electric and communication facilities to underground facilities is substantially beneficial to the public safety and welfare, is in the public interest and is a public purpose, notwithstanding any resulting incidental private benefit to any electric or communication utility affected by such conversion. [1967 c 119 § 2.]

RCW 35.96.020 Definitions. As used in this chapter, unless specifically defined otherwise, or unless the context indicates otherwise:

"Conversion area" means that area in which existing overhead electric and communication facilities are to be converted to underground facilities pursuant to the provisions of this chapter.

"Electric utility" means any publicly or privately owned utility engaged in the business of furnishing electric energy to the public in all or part of the conversion area and includes electrical companies as defined by RCW 80.04.010 and public utility districts.

"Communication utility" means any utility engaged in the business of affording telephonic, telegraphic, cable television or other communication service to the public in all or part of the conversion area and includes telephone companies and telegraph companies as defined by RCW 80.04.010. [1967 c 119 § 3.]

RCW 35.96.030 Conversion of electric and communication facilities to underground facilities authorized—Local improvement

districts—Special assessments. Every city or town shall have the power to convert existing overhead electric and communication facilities to underground facilities pursuant to RCW 35.43.190 where such facilities are owned or operated by the city or town. Where such facilities are not so owned or operated, every city or town shall have the power to contract with electric and communication utilities, as hereinafter provided, for the conversion of existing overhead electric and communication facilities to underground facilities. To provide funds to pay the whole or any part of the cost of any such conversion, either where the existing overhead electric and communication facilities are owned or operated by the city or town or where they are not so owned or operated, every city or town shall have the power to create local improvement districts and to levy and collect special assessments against the real property specially benefited by such conversion. For the purpose of ascertaining the amount to be assessed against each lot or parcel of land within any local improvement district established pursuant to this chapter, in addition to other methods provided by law for apportioning special benefits, the legislative authority of any city or town may apportion all or part of the special benefits accruing on a square footage basis or on a per lot basis. [1967 c 119 § 4.]

RCW 35.96.040 Contracts for conversion—Authorized—Provisions.

Every city or town shall have the power to contract with electric and communication utilities for the conversion of existing overhead electric and communication facilities to underground facilities including all work incidental to such conversion. Such contracts may include, among other provisions, any of the following:

(1) For the supplying and approval by electric and communication utilities of plans and specifications for such conversion;

(2) For the payment to the electric and communication utilities for any work performed or services rendered by it in connection with the conversion project;

(3) For the payment to the electric and communication utilities for the value of the overhead facilities removed pursuant to the conversion;

(4) For ownership of the underground facilities by the electric and communication utilities. [1967 c 119 § 5.]

RCW 35.96.050 Notice to owners to convert service lines to underground—Objections—Hearing—Time limitation for conversion. When service from the underground electric and communication facilities is available in all or part of a conversion area, the city or town shall mail a notice to the owners of all structures or improvements served from the existing overhead facilities in the area, which notice shall state that:

(1) Service from the underground facilities is available;

(2) All electric and communication service lines from the existing overhead facilities within the area to any structure or improvement must be disconnected and removed within ninety days after the date of the mailing of the notice;

(3) Should such owner fail to convert such service lines from overhead to underground within ninety days after the date of the

mailing of the notice, the city or town will order the electric and communication utilities to disconnect and remove the service lines;

(4) Should the owner object to the disconnection and removal of the service lines he or she may file his or her written objections thereto with the city or town clerk within thirty days after the date of the mailing of the notice and failure to so object within such time will constitute a waiver of his or her right thereafter to object to such disconnection and removal.

If the owner of any structure or improvement served from the existing overhead electric and communication facilities within a conversion area shall fail to convert to underground the service lines from such overhead facilities to such structure or improvement within ninety days after the mailing to him or her of the notice, the city or town shall order the electric and communication utilities to disconnect and remove all such service lines: PROVIDED, That if the owner has filed his or her written objections to such disconnection and removal with the city or town clerk within thirty days after the mailing of the notice then the city or town shall not order such disconnection and removal until after the hearing on such objections.

Upon the timely filing by the owner of objections to the disconnection and removal of the service lines, the legislative authority of such city or town, or a committee thereof, shall conduct a hearing to determine whether the removal of all or any part of the service lines is in the public benefit. The hearing shall be held at such time as the legislative authority of such city or town may establish for hearings on the objections and shall be held in accordance with the regularly established procedure set by the legislative authority of the city or town. If the hearing is before a committee, the committee shall following the hearing report its recommendation to the legislative authority of the city or town for final action. The determination reached by the legislative authority shall be final in the absence of an abuse of discretion. [2009 c 549 § 2135; 1967 c 119 § 6.]

RCW 35.96.060 Application of provisions relating to local improvements in cities and towns to chapter. Unless otherwise provided in this chapter, the general provisions relating to local improvements in cities and towns including but not limited to chapters 35.43, 35.44, 35.45, 35.48, 35.49, 35.50, 35.53 and 35.54 RCW shall apply to local improvements authorized by this chapter. [1967 c 119 § 7.]

RCW 35.96.070 Validation of preexisting debts, contracts, obligations, etc., made or incurred incidental to conversion of electric and communication facilities to underground facilities. All debts, contracts and obligations heretofore made or incurred by or in favor of any city or town incident to the conversion of overhead electric and communication facilities to underground facilities and all bonds, warrants, or other obligations issued by any such city or town, or by any local improvement district created to effect such conversion and any and all assessments heretofore levied in any such local improvement district, and all other things and proceedings relating thereto are hereby declared to be legal and valid and of full force and effect from the date thereof. [1967 c 119 § 8.]

RCW 35.96.080 Authority granted deemed alternative and additional. The authority granted by this chapter shall be considered an alternative and additional method for converting existing overhead electric and communication facilities to underground facilities, and for paying all or part of the cost thereof, and shall not be construed as a restriction or limitation upon any other authority for or method of converting any such facilities or placing such facilities underground or paying all or part of the cost thereof, including, but not limited to, existing authority or methods under chapter 35.43 RCW and chapter 35.44 RCW. [1967 c 119 § 10.]