

MEMORANDUM

TAB 84

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS
CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

CTC Meeting: June 25-26, 2026

From: STEVEN KECK, Chief Financial Officer

Reference Number: 2.4f.(1), Action Item – **YELLOW MEETING HANDOUT**

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Division of Right of Way and Land Surveys

Subject: **REQUEST TO APPROVE TERMS, CONDITIONS, AND EXECUTION OF A HIGH VOLTAGE UNDERGROUND UTILITY LICENSE AGREEMENT WITH PACIFIC GAS & ELECTRIC ON STATE ROUTE 49 IN PLACER COUNTY**

ISSUE:

Should the California Transportation Commission (Commission) approve a request by the California Department of Transportation (Department) to approve terms, conditions, and execution of a high voltage underground utility (HVUU) license agreement with Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) on State Route (SR) 49 in Placer County?

RECOMMENDATION:

The Department recommends that the Commission approve a request to approve terms, conditions, and execution of an HVUU license agreement with PG&E on SR 49 in Placer County.

BACKGROUND:

Since the enactment of Senate Bill 901 in 2018, electric utility companies are required to prepare and submit annual wildfire mitigation plans to the California Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety detailing how their facilities will be maintained and operated while reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire. A common mitigation strategy is to underground existing overhead electric distribution lines. In some project areas, use of access-controlled right of way is the last remaining option where utilities can be placed underground. To accommodate these projects, an Encroachment Policy Exception (EPE) and a license fee are required to grant use of access-controlled right of way to utilities.

For this request, the Department seeks to execute a license agreement for 30 years with PG&E, facilitating longitudinal underground installation within access-controlled right of way, for approximately 0.60 miles with an escalating annual rate derived from appraisal principles

based on county and route data, with modifiers accounting for width and length of the proposed installation.

The Department's Project Development Procedure Manual Chapter 17 – Encroachment and Utilities policies do not accommodate longitudinal utilities within access-controlled right of way, i.e., freeways, expressways, and Interstates, without detailed project review in service of an EPE request. An EPE request was approved by the district on October 1, 2024, based on avoidance of existing conservation easements, the avoidance of landscape sensitive areas, the improved safety associated with the removal of discretionary fixed objects presently installed, and the benefit of reduced wildfire risk. All work outside of access-control was completed in 2025 and the area within access-control remains construction ready upon execution of a license agreement. With PG&E as the sole electric utility provider in this area and owner of the facilities that require mitigation, no other entities would pursue similar projects within the Department's right of way.

In addition, Federal transportation funds were used in the development of the access-controlled right of way and the relocation of previously existing installations of longitudinal utilities. As such, the Department must charge a license fee to allow longitudinal utility encroachments within these areas to avoid a gift of public funds. The license fee is based on a matrix of values derived from appraisal principles for each county and route. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has reviewed the license agreement and fee matrix and approved the use of the documents for installations within access-controlled right of way. Any changes to the license agreement will require additional review and approval by FHWA and the Commission.

BENEFITS:

It is in the State's best interest to assist utility companies in meeting their fire hardening goals. Use of a standardized fee matrix provides clear, market-supported, criteria to determine the value of proposed licenses, while the license agreement provides additional terms and conditions associated with longitudinal installations that remain revocable and do not rise to the level of granting property rights to the utility companies.

LICENSE TERMS:

Term: 30 years

License Fee: \$2,831.57 per year

Escalation Rate: 3.2 percent annually

Re-evaluation: Every 10 years

Attachment:

Exhibit A – Location Map

Location Map

