

Public Statement from Stow City Engineer Mike Jones at 1/8/26 City Council Meeting

The Engineering Department was asked to provide a statement in regards to the private fiber companies working in the City of Stow. This fiber build is definitely something new to the City of Stow but is taking place all over the State of Ohio. To-date the major companies that are working or planning to work within the City of Stow include Metronet, Omni, AT&T and Windstream. Each company uses separate directional drilling contractors to install their conduits. I would like to reinforce that these are all private companies and none of them are working for the City of Stow.

All contractors performing working within the City Right-of-Way or Utility Easements are required to submit plans and apply for a permit. The as mentioned Fiber companies are licensed with the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio and therefore have the right to install fiber in these areas. The Engineering Department reviews the submitted plans to make sure their lines are keeping required clearances from existing utilities. Once the plans are approved the contractor is required to pay for the permit fee and post a surety bond. Before the bond is released, the City will complete a final inspection of the work area to verify all final restoration is to original or better conditions. This includes landscape islands. However, if a shrub or flower bed is within a utility easement the contractor is not required to replace if damaged or if it dies but if the contractor is notified ahead of time they have been working with our residents to avoid such damages. Areas where these contractors are working behind the sidewalk are areas where there is a dedicated utility easement. These dedicated utility easements were platted as part of the original subdivision and it is where the existing electric, cable and internet line currently are.

The preferred method of conduit installation is by directional drilling and before that can be completed the contractor is required by Law to perform test excavation of all known utilities. This is why the contractors are digging each hole in everyone's front yard. They are locating water, gas, electrical and cable services. Once the conduit is installed these holes are compacted and backfilled. There was a question in regards to each handhold or pedestal that is being installed and these will not be able to have shared access with other companies. The contractors are not aware of the locations of private irrigation or dog fence lines are and these should be marked by the homeowner so to be avoided. The contractor have also been whiling to provide white flags to the residents to use to mark these lines.

The City of Stow does have an inspector actively monitoring their work and the Engineering Department is overseeing to make sure they are installing the conduits as specified on the plans. Any plan modification or discrepancies are required to come back to the Engineering Department for approval.

The fiber contractors are required to provide two forms of notification to each property weather that is by mail, door hanger or yard signs.

The Engineering Department requires each company to provide a main point of contact for problems, issues or questions and a more general number is provided on their notification. In case of an emergency a resident can always call the Engineering Department and we can assist with the situation.

The City of Stow is committed to making sure each contractor complies with the permit and continues to do their doing their best to protect the public health and safety of our residents. This week the City had to issue a stop work order to Metronet due to some recent incidents that occurred and City and Metronet met to discuss and resolve these issues. Thank you and I will be happy to answer any questions.