

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: June 21, 2010

Reviewed by: BP

SUBJECT: Undergrounding District (Buchanan/Marin Utility Overhead Conversion District)

REPORT BY: Randy Leptien, City Engineer
Aleida Andrino-Chavez, Transportation Planner
Ann Chaney, Community Development Director

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council approve the Traffic and Safety Commission recommendation to adopt Resolution No. 2010-32 (Exhibit A) for the creation of an Undergrounding District along the south side of Buchanan Street, between Cleveland and San Pablo Avenues, and along both sides of Marin Avenue, between San Pablo and Masonic Avenues, to be called “Buchanan/Marin Utility Overhead Conversion District”.

BACKGROUND

In California, undergrounding projects are being funded by the Rule 20 Program, which was established by the California Public Utilities Commission and enables PG&E to recover costs from rates paid by its electric ratepayers for a particular undergrounding project. As of May 13, 2010, the City of Albany accrual under the Rule 20 Program reached \$2,535,211 in “Work Credits” (Exhibit B). Staff presented the Council with background information about this project at its December 2009, meeting. At that meeting, the City Council directed staff and the Traffic and Safety Commission to conduct a public hearing for the creation of a Utility Undergrounding District in the area described above and presented in Exhibit C.

DISCUSSION

The Traffic and Safety Commission held a public hearing on this issue at its March 25, 2010 meeting. Commission members and meeting attendees’ comments were favorable to the proposed Undergrounding District and stressed the need to build the undergrounding project simultaneously with the implementation of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Path project segment between San Pablo and Cornell Avenues. The Commission took formal action to recommend that the City Council adopt an Undergrounding Resolution, presented in Exhibit A. This action would initiate a process with PG&E to place this project in the

queue with other eligible Rule 20 projects. Staff estimates it will take at least two years, from the date of this Resolution for construction to begin.

In order to process engineered plans through the PG&E process, staff recommends that Robert Gray and Associates (RGA) be hired to assist City Engineer. RGA is an engineering firm that specializes in complex utility undergrounding projects. Later this year, staff will return to the Council with a request to enter into a contract with RGA to prepare the street light design and utility composite design, and provide related consulting services. It is estimated that RGA's cost would be approximately \$50,000. Half of this amount may be reimbursable from Rule 20 funds.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT

Utility undergrounding has a number of benefits for a community including beautification, vehicular safety, and elimination of power line interference with trees. It will also improve visibility and accessibility for pedestrians and bicyclists.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

It is estimated that the City Engineer's costs during the preparation phase of this project will be approximately \$10,000. This work involves mapping adjustments, meeting with residents, property owners, and the T&S Commission, and coordinating with PG&E staff. While these costs are not reimbursable through Rule 20 monies, staff is applying for TDA (Transportation Development Act) funds to pay for this cost.

Attachments

Exhibit A: Resolution No. 2010-32

Exhibit B: PG&E letter dated May 23, 2010

Exhibit C: Maps showing proposed Underground District boundaries