



STATEMENT OF AT&T CONNECTICUT

Regarding Senate Bill No. 597 An Act Concerning the Timely Removal of Double and Bare Utility Poles Before the Committee on Energy and Technology March 3, 2009

Proposal:

Senate Bill No. 597 requires the Department of Public Utility Control (DPUC) to conduct a contested case proceeding, no later than July 1, 2009, to establish uniform procedures and time schedules for the timely removal of double and bare utility poles.

Comments:

AT&T opposes Senate Bill No. 597 and urges the Committee to reject it.

In 2004, the DPUC fully considered, in a DPUC proceeding, the process and time taken to remove double and bare poles. Parties participating in this proceeding included the Capitol Region Council of Governments, elected officials and municipalities, the Department of Transportation, Office of Consumer Counsel, AT&T Connecticut, Verizon New York, The Connecticut Light and Power Company, United Illuminating Company, the New England Cable and Television Association, Inc., cable television companies, and competitive telecommunications service providers. After considering the parties' comments, the DPUC issued a decision and order that established a timeframe for the removal of the backlog of such poles existing at that time as well as for double and bare poles created in the future. The order also established a reporting requirement and a process for resolving any disputes. Since the order was issued, the backlog has been substantially eliminated and the process has served to prevent the accumulation of a significant backlog.

Given the inherent difficulties of coordinating the sequential process of moving attachments from the top down, the number of attachments on a pole, and complicating factors such as weather, this is a time consuming process. Moreover, the trigger creating a need to replace a pole, for example a vehicle accident, damage from a storm, or request to attach requiring a taller pole, is often not planned by or within the control of the pole custodian. Additionally, the locations of the subject poles are not conveniently grouped but rather are spread throughout the state which contributes to the removal time. As a result, it can still take considerable time to move attachments and then remove a pole that has been replaced. In situations where the timeliness of removal is questioned or there are other complications, the DPUC is available and has been involved in resolving disputes.

AT&T, as the owner, joint owner and/or custodian of more than 800,000 poles in the state's rights-of-way, has worked diligently to reduce the number of double and bare poles in the areas for which it has responsibility. The framework established by the DPUC has been largely successful. And where concerns have been raised, we have worked to address them as expeditiously as possible. We do not believe that another regulatory proceeding such as would be required under Senate Bill No. 597 would be a necessary or productive use of state, corporate or municipal resources.

Conclusion:

AT&T opposes Senate Bill No. 597 and urges the Committee to reject it.