

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 6, 2016
SUBJECT: **AT&T Fiber Optic Installations Throughout Town**
FROM: Steve Frey, PE, Town Engineer
TO: Public Notice

AT&T has begun installing new fiber optic telecommunication lines throughout the Town. These lines will apparently bring the company's "Gigapower" high-speed internet service to Mint Hill residents at a later date (unknown at this time). This memo has been compiled to inform residents about the work and to answer some of the common questions that residents have regarding the work:

Who is doing this work?

This work is not a Town project. The work is the responsibility of AT&T. They have contracted with AnSCO & Associates, LLC to manage the installation of new fiber optic infrastructure throughout Mint Hill. AnSCO & Associates has sub-contracted the construction work to private contractors. You may see both AnSCO and private contractor vehicles driving in neighborhoods where construction is underway. This work is **not** related to Google Fiber. The Town currently does not know if or when Google Fiber is coming this way.

Why are they doing this work?

AT&T is bringing their high-speed internet to residents of Mint Hill. This service requires a fiber optic line to transmit the high-speed signals. AT&T's existing copper phone lines are not sufficient to transmit this faster signal, therefore, new lines must be laid. The Charlotte region has seen a significant increase in the interest for high-speed internet products since being selected by Google Fiber as a new expansion city. While Google Fiber is not yet coming to Mint Hill, we are seeing other providers (namely Time Warner Cable and AT&T) upgrade their service and offer more options to residents for internet service.

Why did the Town allow them to do this?

North Carolina state law allows utility companies to utilize public right-of-way to install their infrastructure in order to provide their utility service to customers. Generally speaking, it is illegal for municipalities to prohibit utility providers from installing their infrastructure within public right-of-way. The decision to bring this service to Mint Hill was solely AT&T's; the Town did not request AT&T to bring their new service.

Where are they putting these new lines?

The Town does not have a map of AT&T's planned expansion. Town staff are working with AT&T to stay abreast of current work locations and those in the immediate future. As for the physical location of the new lines and associated construction work, the majority of the work should be occurring within the public right-of-way. "Right-of-way" refers to the property that the roadway and its adjacent shoulders occupy (i.e. grass, ditches, sidewalks, etc.). The boundary between the right-of-way and private property is rarely ever at the edge of the pavement, and the location of the line varies on every street. If you don't have a survey of your property, an approximate way to determine where your property line is in relation to the right-of-way is to view the information provided at the Mecklenburg County Property Appraiser's website known as "POLARIS 3G." Visit <http://polaris.mecklenburgcountync.gov/> and search for your property. Turn on the view called "hybrid" to view an aerial image with property lines overlaid. This will give an **approximate** location of lines for your reference. Any work taking place outside of the right-of-way should be either on an existing utility easement or on a newly negotiated easement. It is the responsibility of the property owner to track existing easements on their property and/or to negotiate new easements. In many circumstances, it may appear that work is being done in your yard, when in fact, it is still within the right-of-way. If a property owner would like a definitive location of their property line, they should seek the help of a North Carolina licensed professional land surveyor.

(continued)

Why are colored lines and flags placed all over my neighborhood and/or yard?

North Carolina law requires anyone (private home owners included) who is digging within the right-of-way to use the NC811 underground utility locating service. When a contractor is about to dig in an area, they must call “8-1-1” and ask for all underground utilities in the work area to be located. This is a process that typically takes 3-5 days to complete. The result is what some may think is graffiti, but to a contractor, it means safety. All buried utility lines (for example: electric, natural gas, telephone/internet, cable, water, etc.) are identified so that safe digging practices may be exercised in an effort to avoid damaging those lines. Removing these lines and/or flags jeopardizes not only the contractor’s safety, but also you and your neighbors’ uninterrupted service for those utilities. In many cases, the locate markings will extend some distance outside of the actual work area. This is both a precaution in the event of a line being hit as well as an efficient way to work and avoid having to return to the site and mark additional areas if the construction limits expand somewhat. The colored lines typically have nothing to do with identifying where holes will be dug. Each color line identifies a unique type of utility service. If you would like more information about this, please visit www.nc811.org or download the “North Carolina 811” app on any smartphone.

Why didn’t anyone tell me about this work?

As previously mentioned, this work is not a Town project. Therefore, the Town is not responsible for communicating AT&T’s plans to residents. There is no requirement for AT&T to notify residents of work occurring within the right-of-way. However, they should notify residents prior to working on private property. The contractor performing the work should not be blocking traffic, preventing access to private property, or otherwise preventing the use of neighborhoods and roads.

They’ve impacted my property—what will be done about this?

In the majority of cases, all work is confined to the right-of-way. Many property owners may have a misconception about owning all the way to the edge of the roadway. Whether on private property or within the right-of-way, the contractor should be maintaining a safe work zone at all times, especially when they leave the site. Additionally, they are required to restore their work areas to an as-good or better condition than they found it. If a property owner has a special type of grass, a sensitive garden nearby, or other unique landscaping circumstance that they are worried about in regard to the construction work, they should make contact with the contractor on site and notify them. In most cases, they will be accommodating and work with property owners as long as they know ahead of time.

What is the Town doing about this work?

As previously mentioned, AT&T has the right to responsibly utilize our right-of-way to install their utility infrastructure. The Town is actively engaged with AT&T to monitor their work for satisfactory completion and to ensure that the safety and integrity of our roads and other public infrastructure is not jeopardized. If and when damage occurs to public infrastructure, the Town is ensuring that AT&T make the necessary repairs at their expense so that public tax funds are not burdened at a later time. AT&T has committed to a successful relationship with the Town in this regard.

I need to speak to someone about this work; who do I contact?

Town staff have limited knowledge about current and future work being done by AT&T. Residents are welcome to contact Town Hall, but the most appropriate entity to contact is AT&T. The AT&T representative responsible for all work in Mint Hill is **Ian Shepherd** and his phone number is **704-247-0924**.