

## LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

[Public Works Code - Excavation by Microtrenching]

**Ordinance amending the Public Works Code to allow the use of microtrenching to install fiber-optic cables in the sidewalk portion of the public right-of-way; and affirming the Planning Department’s determination under the California Environmental Quality Act.**

### Existing Law

To install fiber-optic cables in areas of the City and County of San Francisco (“City”) where utility facilities must be placed underground an excavator must obtain an excavation permit from the Department of Public Works (“DPW”) under Article 2.4 of the San Francisco Public Works Code. Pursuant to Article 2.4 and DPW Order No. 178,940 (“Regulations for Excavating and Restoring Streets in San Francisco”), trenches for fiber-optic cables are typically 24 to 26 inches deep and twelve to 18 inches wide.

### Amendments to Current Law

The ordinance authorizes DPW to issue excavation permits to City departments and utilities to install fiber-optic cables in the sidewalk portion of the public right-of-way using “microtrenching” instead of traditional excavation. Microtrenching involves digging a shallower and narrower trench than is presently required by Article 2.4 and DPW Order No. 178,940.

### Background Information

Telecommunications carriers of all kinds use fiber-optic cables to provide services to their customers including backhaul for wireless communications. City departments such as the Municipal Transportation Agency, the Public Utilities Commission, the Department of Emergency Management, and the Department of Technology use fiber-optic cables to support various governmental functions including public transportation, utility services, emergency services, inter-departmental communications, and free City Wi-Fi. City residents and businesses increasingly rely on services provided over fiber-optic cables.

To meet these needs, telecommunications carriers and City departments need to install more fiber-optic cables. It can cost as much as \$6.8 million per mile to install underground utility facilities in San Francisco. Large excavation projects can take weeks to complete and present major inconveniences for local businesses and residents.

Microtrenches are shallower and narrower than typical trenches. Microtrenching may reduce the expense of and time needed to install fiber-optic cables.

n:\legana\as2017\1700390\01167384.docx