WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §31H-2-1

§31H-2-1. Use of rights-of-way for small wireless facilities and utility poles; other structures.

(a) The provisions of this section shall only apply to activities of a wireless provider within the right-of-way.

(b) Except as provided in this chapter, an authority may not prohibit, regulate, or charge for the collocation of small wireless facilities or the installation of utility poles and associated small wireless facilities.

(c) An authority may not enter into an exclusive arrangement with any person for use of the right-of-way for the collocation of small wireless facilities or the installation, operation, marketing, modification, maintenance, or replacement of utility poles.

(d) An authority may only charge a wireless provider a rate or fee for the use of the right- of-way with respect to the collocation of small wireless facilities or the installation, maintenance, modification, operation, or replacement of a utility pole in the right-of-way if the authority charges other entities for similar use of the right-of-way. Notwithstanding any provision of this article to the contrary, an authority is permitted, on a nondiscriminatory basis, to refrain from charging any rate to a wireless provider for the use of the right-of-way. The rate for occupancy and use of the right-of-way may not initially exceed $25 per year per small wireless facility. An authority may adjust this rate up to 10 percent every five years.

(e) Subject to the provisions of this section, a wireless provider has the right, as a permitted use not subject to zoning review or approval, to collocate small wireless facilities and install, maintain, modify, and replace its own utility poles or, with the permission of the owner, a third party’s utility pole, along, across, upon, and under the right-of-way. Such structures and facilities shall be so installed and maintained as not to obstruct or hinder the usual travel or public safety on such right-of-way or to obstruct the legal use of such right-of-way by utilities or authorities.

(f) Each new or modified utility pole installed by a wireless provider in the right-of-way may not exceed the greater of:

(1) Ten feet in height above the tallest existing utility pole in place as of the effective date of this chapter located within 500 feet of the new pole in the same right-of-way; or

(2) Fifty feet above ground level. New small wireless facilities in the right-of-way may not extend:

(A) More than 10 feet above an existing utility pole in place as of the effective date of this chapter; or

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(B) For small wireless facilities on a new utility pole, above the height permitted for a new utility pole pursuant to the provisions of this section. Subject to the provisions of this article, a wireless provider has the right to collocate a small wireless facility and install, maintain, modify, operate, and replace its own utility pole or, with the permission of the owner, a third party's utility pole that exceeds these height limits along, across, upon, and under the right-of-way, subject to applicable zoning regulations.

(g) An authority may adopt reasonable written design guidelines with objective, technically feasible criteria that reasonably match the aesthetics and character of an immediate area regarding all of the following:

(1) The location of any ground-mounted small wireless facilities;

(2) The location of a small wireless facility on a utility pole or wireless support structure;

(3) The appearance and concealment of small wireless facilities, including those relating to materials used for arranging, screening, or landscaping; and

(4) The design and appearance of a utility pole or wireless support structure.

Any such guidelines shall be applied in a nondiscriminatory manner. Materials utilized to comply with the appearance and concealment criteria established in the guidelines shall not be considered part of the small wireless facility for purposes of facility size restrictions in this chapter. Each new or modified small wireless facility or utility pole installed in the right-of-way shall comply with an authority's current design guidelines.

(h) A wireless provider is permitted to replace decorative poles when necessary to collocate a small wireless facility, but any replacement pole shall reasonably conform to the design aesthetics of the decorative poles being replaced.

(i) A wireless provider shall comply with written, objective, reasonable, and nondiscriminatory requirements that prohibit the installation of structures in the right-of-way in an area designated solely for underground communications and electric lines where:

(1) The authority has required all such lines to be placed underground by a date certain that is three months prior to the submission of the application;

(2) Those utility poles which the authority allows to remain shall be made available to wireless providers for the collocation of small wireless facilities and may be replaced by a wireless provider to accommodate the collocation of small wireless facilities, in compliance with this act; and

(3) A wireless provider may install a new utility pole in the designated area that otherwise complies with the other subsections of this section when it is not able to provide wireless service by collocating on a remaining structure. For small wireless facilities installed before an authority adopts requirements that communications and electric lines be placed

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underground, an authority adopting such requirements shall:

(A) Permit a wireless provider to maintain the small wireless facilities in place subject to any applicable pole attachment agreement with the utility pole owner; or

(B) Permit the wireless provider to replace the associated utility pole within 50 feet of the prior location, subject to the permission of the utility pole owner.

(j) Subject to the provisions of this section, an authority may require reasonable, technically feasible, nondiscriminatory, and technologically neutral design or concealment measures in a historic district. Any such design or concealment measures may not have the effect of prohibiting any provider's technology; nor may any such measures be considered a part of the small wireless facility for purposes of the size restrictions in the definition of small wireless facility.

(k) Any requirements an authority adopts under subsections (g) through (j), inclusive, of this section must be:

(1) Reasonable, in that they are technically feasible and reasonably directed to avoiding or remedying the intangible public harm of unsightly or out-of-character deployments;

(2) No more burdensome than those applied to other types of infrastructure deployments; and

(3) Objective and published in advance. The authority, in the exercise of its administration and regulation related to the management of the right-of-way, must be competitively neutral with regard to other wireless service providers who are users of the right-of-way, including that terms may not be unreasonable or discriminatory and may not violate any applicable law or effectively prohibit the provision of wireless services.

(l) The authority may require a wireless provider to repair all damage to the right-of-way directly caused by the activities of the wireless provider in the right-of-way and to return the right-of-way to its functional equivalence before the damage, as determined by the authority, pursuant to the competitively neutral, reasonable requirements and specifications of the authority. If the wireless provider fails to make the repairs required by the authority within a reasonable time after written notice, the authority may complete those repairs and charge the applicable party the reasonable, documented cost of such repairs. Regardless of whether the authority or the wireless provider ultimately makes the repairs, the authority may assess an additional fine of $100 per day that the wireless provider failed to make the required repairs after the wireless provider received written notice until the repairs were completed.

(m) Nothing in this chapter shall be deemed to impose or otherwise affect any rights, controls, tariffs, or contractual obligations that may be established with regard to the utility poles, similar structures, or equipment of any type that are owned or controlled by an investor-owned electric utility whose rates are regulated by the Public Service Commission

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of West Virginia or any such utility's affiliates, or by an independent transmission company.

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