



County Technical Assistance Service
INSTITUTE *for* PUBLIC SERVICE

March 31, 2025

Relocation of Utilities

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the CTAS website (ctas.tennessee.edu). This website is maintained by CTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee county government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with county government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other CTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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Sometimes a county road project will require the relocation of utilities placed within the county right-of-way. Utilities can be required to move their facilities if relocation is necessary for the road project. The question often arises as to who is responsible for paying the costs associated with the utility relocation. Tennessee follows the common law rule that in the absence of a statute providing otherwise, public utilities must remove their facilities at their own expense *Pack v. Southern Bell Tel. & Tel. Co.*, 387 S.W.2d 789 (1965); *State v. Southern Bell Tel. & Tel. Co.*, 319 S.W.2d 90 (1958) (cert. denied by U.S. Supreme Court, *Memphis Transit Co v. Tennessee ex rel Leech*, 359 U.S. 1011 (1959)); *Bristol Tenn. Housing Authority v. Bristol Gas Corp.*, 407 S.W.2d 681 (1966); *Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency v. South Central Bell Telephone Co.*, 562 S.W.2d 438 (Tenn. App. 1978).

Statutory authority exists for the state to reimburse utilities for their costs in relocating facilities involved in projects undertaken by TDOT. T.C.A. § 54-5-804. This statute authorizes, but does not require, reimbursement. In contrast, T.C.A. § 13-20-303 requires municipalities, housing authorities and other public bodies of the state to reimburse utilities for relocation costs if the relocation is related to a redevelopment or urban renewal project. Aside from these two statutes, there does not appear to be any statutory authorization or requirement to reimburse utilities for relocation expenses.

Source URL: <https://www.ctas.tennessee.edu/eli/relocation-utilities>