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# INTEGRATION OF COORDINATE PA WITH CONNECT COMMUNITIES

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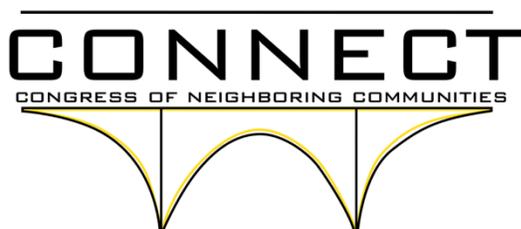
*Final Report Containing Background, Issues, and Recommendations*

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Capstone Seminar

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9 December 2019



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## BACKGROUND

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In 2016, The CONNECT members resolved to support and promote a data platform that would allow for coordinated planning between municipalities and utilities. Members are committed to collaboration in order to limit duplication of construction, unnecessary expenses, inconvenience to residents, and damage to facilities. Coordinate PA is an internet-based software, created by the Pennsylvania One Call System, Inc., in attempt to facilitate collaboration and coordination of digging and excavation projects amongst facility owners and solve the issues mentioned above. The goal of this program was to encourage municipalities to work with utility companies and other facility owners to more closely align their excavation and paving schedules. This would reduce the resources, costs, time, and inconveniences associated with each of these projects. This coordination would also help ensure the safety of Pennsylvania's critical underground infrastructure.

Use of Coordinate PA is not required by law. However, as this report will later detail, all individuals and/or entities who engage in excavation projects are legally mandated to utilize the Pennsylvania One Call System, Inc. Moreover, failure to comply with regulations set by the legislature of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in conjunction with the Pennsylvania One Call System may result in fines. As such, it is the recommendation of this report that users adopt the Coordinate PA software to ensure compliance with these laws.

The software, which each municipality and utility company have access to, consists of a platform for basic data entry on the details of each project. Some of these include the work type, facility type, project status, planned construction dates, and contact information. Moreover, the interface provides a map, on which users may spatially visualize exact locations of their projects and where their project may overlap with other planned projects.

For example, if People's Gas was planning on installing new gas lines underneath Forbes Avenue in Oakland in July of 2020, and the City of Pittsburgh has Forbes Avenue in Oakland on their yearly paving schedule for 2020, Coordinate PA creates the transparency necessary for these two entities to communicate and mutually agree upon a time to complete both projects concurrently. This means both entities incur fewer costs, there is less traffic and road closure inconveniences, and more money can be reserved for future projects.

Despite the Coordinate PA software being introduced in 2012, very few municipalities are actually utilizing this valuable tool. The program works best and is most efficient when a majority of municipalities and entities are submitting their plans and proposals into the software on a regular basis. However, even though many municipalities plan their excavation and paving projects at least one year in advance, very few have input their plans into Coordinate PA for sharing with others. The number of projects inputted into the Coordinate PA system by each municipality in CONNECT ranges from 1 to 180 projects. The median number of projects inputted by CONNECT municipalities, however, is only 4.5. Given that half of the CONNECT municipalities have not inputted more than four projects, it is clear the software is not being utilized as intended and agreed upon by CONNECT members.

Complex projects, as opposed to routine, are the most vital to coordination amongst utilities and municipalities. Complex projects are defined as any excavation involving an area longer than 1,000 feet or intersection-to-intersection, whichever is greater, while routine projects are areas smaller than this. By virtue of their size, complex projects are more expensive, involve more facility owners, and present more opportunities for sharing repaving costs.

Our working group was tasked with analyzing the factors that contribute to the lack of utilization of Coordinate PA and providing recommendations on how to facilitate more widespread use amongst the municipalities. From a public policy standpoint, it is beneficial to encourage and facilitate a more widespread use of Coordinate PA because it provides municipalities and their constituents with opportunities for cost savings, decreased aggravation, and overall efficiency.

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## **CORE PROBLEMS**

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Our research has suggested that the municipalities have the same general aversions or barriers to using Coordinate PA. Interestingly, the explanations given were unrelated to an actual lack of planning or insufficient preparation for projects. In fact, the municipalities generally plan their paving schedule and related projects up to a year in advance, usually because they closely correlate with annual budget planning. We gathered that many do not have the adequate time or resources to input their projects into PA One Call's software. Additionally, even where the resources were present, there was an apparent learning curve issue on understanding the complexities of the actual software. In some cases, municipalities were not even aware of (or had forgotten) the existence of Coordinate PA.

Moreover, regarding aversions to using Coordinate PA, we became aware of some utility company and municipality privacy concerns because of the level of transparency associated with this program. Some entities were simply uncomfortable with sharing their future projects due to privacy and security concerns. Others, however, were more wary about submitting aspirational projects which they may not actually be able to complete, as this could be seen as poor budgeting by the municipality.

### **I. Legal**

What follows is a brief summary of the applicable law that governs Coordinate PA and, more broadly, the Pennsylvania One Call system. Please note that this is a summary and relies on publicly available laws enacted by the legislature of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Moreover, the Pennsylvania One Call System has also published several guidelines and answers to Frequently Asked Questions ("FAQ'S") at their website.

Coordinate PA is offered to municipalities and utility providers by its parent corporation, the Pennsylvania One Call System, Inc., a non-profit organization organized under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, otherwise known as "Pennsylvania 811" or "P.A. One Call." The original legislation regulating P.A. One Call was enacted by General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on December 10, 1974 and can be found at P.L. 852, No. 287, and is entitled an "An act to protect the public health and safety by preventing excavation or demolition work from damaging underground lines used in providing electricity, communication,

gas, propane, oil delivery, oil product delivery, sewage, water or other service; imposing duties upon the providers of such service, recorders of deeds, and persons and other entities preparing drawings or performing excavation or demolition work; and prescribing penalties” (“the Underground Utility Line Protection Law”).

On October 30, 2017, Governor Tom Wolf signed Senate Bill 242, Act 50 amending the Underground Utility Line Protection Law of 1974. This superseding law can be found at 73 P. S. § 176 et. Seq., as amended and, while still known formally as the Underground Utility Protection Law, can be referred to as the PA One Call Law. The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (“P.U.C.”) is designated, under the PA One Call Law, as the exclusive enforcement body of the law.

The P.U.C. has established a Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement as well as a Damage Prevention Commission to specifically handle issues arising under the PA One Call Law. Under the law, any work that requires the moving of earth via a powered piece of equipment (“excavation”) requires the person(s) who is to conduct or oversee the digging to notify PA One Call. This applies, regardless of the scope of the work, across the entire Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and includes projects such as paving. Pursuant to § 1.1 of the PA One Call Law, a minimum of three (3) business days of notice (not including state holidays or weekends), but no more than a maximum of ten (10) business days, may be given prior to the start of excavation. A business day is considered by the Commonwealth to begin at 12:00:00 A.M. and ends at 11:59:59 P.M. Moreover, if an excavator removes their equipment and vacates a site for more than two (2) business days, the excavator must notify PA One Call again.

Pursuant to the PA One Call Law, it shall be the duty of each designer preparing a drawing which requires excavation or demolition work within this Commonwealth to do the following: (1) to forward a copy of the project plans to each facility owner who requests a copy; (2) to show the name, position, and type of each facility owner’s lines in every drawing; and (3) to make a reasonable effort to prepare the construction drawings to avoid damage to and minimize interference with a facility owner’s facilities in the construction area by maintaining the clearance as provided for in the applicable easement condition. It is important to note that a report of an alleged violation may be made to the Commission not more than thirty business days from the time the designer becomes self-aware that a violation of the PA One Call Law has occurred.

If the P.U.C. Damage Prevention Commission finds that an entity has committed an alleged violation, said person shall (1) provide a written acknowledgement of the findings and administrative penalty contained in the report issued by the damage prevention investigator to the committee and must (2) appear before the commission to present its position. The P.U.C. may, at its discretion, issue warning letters or require an individual to attend a damage prevention educational program. Moreover, the Commission may issue a warning and order requiring compliance with the PA One Call Law and may, at its discretion, assess an administrative fine for violations thereof. A person aggrieved by the imposition of an order may appeal to the Commission. The Commission may assess a person or entity who violates the PA One Call Law an administrative penalty of up to \$2,500 *per violation*. If a violation results in the injury or death of an individual or property damage in excess of \$25,000 or greater, an administrative penalty of up to \$50,000 may be assessed. While the Commission may, at its discretion, consider an array of factors including the history of the party’s compliance of the PA One Call Law in the past, the

value of the property damaged by an alleged violation, and the degree of the party's culpability, the Commission will have the final administrative authority. Moreover, a party ordered to pay the commission a fine remains liable for civil actions that may be brought by a private individual or entity, the U.S. government or any of its agencies, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or any of its agencies, a district attorney, the Auditor General, or the Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The P.U.C. has enabled local law enforcement or emergency management personnel, in the interest of public safety, to order any excavator to stop further excavation if said excavation is considered to have violated the PA One Call Law. Moreover, members of the public may, if they suspect that excavation was commenced illegally, contact PA One Call, and leave a tip. This tip is then researched by PA One Call to determine if, in fact, the excavation is being conducted pursuant to 73 P. S. § 176.

## II. Privacy

Some municipalities expressed concern over inputting the entirety of their plan into Coordinate PA because of privacy reasons. There are fears that information will not remain confidential or that aspirational projects that do not get completed may reflect poorly on the municipality. In order for Coordinate PA to effectively lead to coordination and collaboration, municipalities and other facility owners need to include maps of their facilities and input up-to-date projects. Moreover, CONNECT members that use Coordinate PA should agree to be bound by a uniform set rules that set a broad scope as to privacy. Namely, CONNECT members should resolve to respect the privacy of users' data and not share said data with any entity or individual without the express consent of that user. The purpose of Coordinate PA is to ensure up to date data sharing, an effort that will be hampered unless users agree to respect the integrity of fellow users' data. In order to limit some of these fears, we propose a legal resolution that included a provision on confidentiality (see attachments).

## III. Concerns about time

Many municipalities cited the lack of time necessary for consistent use and monitoring of the Coordinate PA software as a barrier to increased utilization. This concern is related to the fact that some municipalities are understaffed or unable to assign a person or working group to plan, use, and update projects in Coordinate PA. Additionally, municipalities may not want or be able to pay an additional employee/intern to do the work and are not willing to add it to current personnel duties.

To mitigate some of these issues we have created a standardized project information sheet and a timeline guide that would simplify the process for anyone at a municipality an reduce time spent on that process (see attachments). Lastly, CONNECT will need to increase its support of municipalities in this issue area. PA One Call has offered CONNECT \$10,000. By using these funds, CONNECT can begin to provide training and municipal support with regards to project planning, data entry, and coordination.

## IV. Lack of Knowledge as to How to Use the Software

Coordinate PA is a web-based software, meaning it can be accessed through web browsers on desktops, laptops, or even cell phones. However, we received feedback that many municipalities still struggle to understand how to use the software. We have created a simplified user guide for Coordinate PA (see attachments) to help municipality personnel use the software more effectively and with less stress.

#### V. Non-Uniform Data Input Standards

In the case of those municipalities and utility companies which are using Coordinate PA, there is a lack of standardized data input. All projects require the same very basic information to be put into the system, but there is no recognized standard for how often projects are to be entered or updated. As a remedy, we have created a standardized project data form for municipalities to use when planning projects and inputting the information into Coordinate PA, as well as a suggested data entry timeline. We have also drafted a resolution for CONNECT members to ratify to ensure accountability for use (see attachments).

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### RECOMMENDATIONS

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In response to the core problems that we have identified, we provide the following solutions and tools for recommended use: 1) a project planning timeline, 2) a standardized project information form, 3) a basic guide to Coordinate PA, and 4) a legal resolution for CONNECT members to ratify to ensure accountability. Each of these tools can be found as document attachments to this report that can be printed out for use.

We recommend the municipalities of CONNECT develop and utilize plans that dictate the projects that occur throughout the year. Planning is an essential component of limiting duplication of construction, mitigating inconveniences to residents and eliminating unnecessary expenses, issues the CONNECT municipalities have identified and want to address. The ability to develop a plan, input the plan into Coordinate PA, and then utilize and update the plan regularly will allow for the necessary coordination to improve on the issues identified. The tools we have developed will help aid in the planning process and mitigate some of the concerns expressed by municipalities.

In order to engage in a planning process in line with the ability to maximize the benefits of Coordinate PA, we recommend a unified timeline and standardized date entry. This recommendation includes developing a plan, identifying project areas throughout the plan, inputting the projects at a preliminary stage, and updating those projects on a monthly basis. Identifying the project areas will allow for members to clearly identify the work that needs to be done and creating complex projects in order to do it efficiently, as opposed to doing things one at a time or as they come up. The development of project areas will also make it easier for utility companies and others to identify where they can coordinate.

After the project areas have been identified, the municipality needs to enter all of them into Coordinate PA as a preliminary project. This will allow time for coordination and gives the municipality the time and flexibility to understand all the components and permits needed to safely and effectively complete the project. Inputting the information at the preliminary stage allows for

time to make any needed adjustments as well as time to maximize the ability to coordinate. Our simplified user guide for Coordinate PA will help municipality personnel to navigate and use the software effectively. That guide is attached to this report.

It is crucial for updating information to be an essential part of the planning process. We are encouraging municipalities to put in projects early, meaning there will most likely be changes that come up. Additionally, municipalities will need to update the progress of the project in order to identify the start of the project and create their dig tickets. Lastly, coordination cannot happen if there is not consistent updates and communication between facility owners. This standard timeline and data to be entered is attached to this report for use by the CONNECT members.

CONNECT has a responsibility to support implementation of the findings of this study. This involves providing municipalities with training on the proper use of the tools attached to this report. It also involves supporting individual municipalities based on their specific planning needs. Our last recommendation is that CONNECT implement the findings of this study. PA One Call has offered CONNECT \$10,000 for this purpose. These funds can be used at CONNECT's discretion to support municipalities in training, project planning and data entry. This will likely require CONNECT to continue to build institutional and community supports for participating members to sustain these activities. This recommendation will need to be considered as CONNECT and its participating communities move forward with project coordination.

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## OPERATING PROCESS

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Coordinate PA Complex Project Information Template

Municipality: \_\_\_\_\_

Project owner: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Project name: \_\_\_\_\_

Facility type: \_\_\_\_\_

Work type: \_\_\_\_\_

Project status:

Project phase dates:

Preliminary design stage (greater than 90 business days)

\_\_\_\_\_

Final design stage (between 10 and 90 business days)

\_\_\_\_\_

Scheduled start

\_\_\_\_\_

Street address: \_\_\_\_\_ Street name: \_\_\_\_\_

Nearest intersection: \_\_\_\_\_

Working between two intersections:  \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, second intersection: \_\_\_\_\_

Working in:  Street  Sidewalk  Public Property

**Resolution XX-XX - Formal Adoption of Coordinate PA- Approved DM, 2019**

WHEREAS CONNECT members agreed at Resolution 16-07 in April of 2016 to serve as the convener and to partner with the Utility providers, as well as the city of Pittsburgh's Department of Public Works, and Allegheny County to engage in a process to select and procure a common data platform that would allow for coordinated planning, both between municipalities and the Utility providers, and across municipal borders; and

WHEREAS Coordinate PA, a free web-based application developed by the Pennsylvania One Call System, Inc. has been developed to support public works and utility advanced planning to aid in the design and coordination of project planning, collaboration, and cooperation between municipalities and utility providers across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

THEREFORE Coordinate PA has been chosen as the official aforementioned common data platform for coordinated planning between CONNECT municipalities and utility providers across municipal borders and shall be used by all CONNECT members, at no cost, in furtherance of the mission of CONNECT to engage municipalities, promote cooperation between municipalities and the City of Pittsburgh, and to maximize the economic prosperity of Western Pennsylvania, generally.

WHEREAS CONNECT members have adopted Coordinate PA as the official common data platform for coordinated planning between Connect municipalities and Utility providers, it shall be agreed that CONNECT members share a desire to have access to a data platform that is comprehensive, up to date, and error-free.

THEREFORE be it resolved that CONNECT municipalities will commit to the use of Coordinate PA on a routine basis such that all of their planned infrastructure projects and capital expenditures will be entered into Coordinate PA in advance such that fellow municipalities and utility providers may coordinate in an effort to eliminate duplicate construction, unnecessary expenses, and inconvenience to residents.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CONNECT municipalities will adhere to a standard of data input wherein every municipality shall, to the best of their ability, enter their projects with specificity--well in advance of their scheduled start-date--and update the progress thereof on a regular basis so as to maintain an accurate and dynamic common data platform in keeping with the standards outlined in the proposed Operating Process. Moreover, the Executive Committee may, as it deems necessary, promulgate or amend rules regarding data requirements. Finally, CONNECT shall assume responsibility for coordinating the training of individuals in order to ensure widespread adoption of Coordinate PA by CONNECT municipalities.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that CONNECT municipalities and utility providers will respect the proprietary nature of the data shared by each CONNECT member such that no municipality or utility provider will seek to furnish it to outside sources or use it for any purpose unrelated to the express goal of Coordinate PA and, more broadly, the mission of CONNECT.

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## SIMPLIFIED USER GUIDE

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### WHAT IS COORDINATE PA

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- Coordinate PA is a web service application developed by Pennsylvania 811 to support Public Works and utility project planning and utility coordination within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Coordinate PA uses the power of the Internet to represent a spatial, map-based look at underground utility and public works projects to help identify opportunities for coordination and collaboration when projects overlap in space and overlap in time.
- Coordinate PA is the next generation of utility coordination. Instead of meeting to discuss plans, or copy maps, or create a spreadsheet of projects, Utility companies, public works directors and others describe their projects on a map. Coordinate PA then shows the projects and the project time frames for users and automatically identifies opportunities for collaboration between projects. The user can see project overlap within a geographic area (for example, Main Street from First Avenue and Seventh Avenue) and can query for overlap within a specific time frame.
- Maps are used to display project scopes and phases to make it easy for stakeholders to identify opportunities to collaborate far enough in advance to recognize cost savings and minimize disruption to the public through sharing and coordination of their effort.
- Coordinate PA integrates with Pennsylvania 811's Web Ticket Entry process to create Design and Excavation notifications to increase project safety and reduce project costs as required by Pennsylvania's Underground Utility Line Protection Law.

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### DEFINITIONS

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- **Designer:** Any architect, engineer, or other person who prepares or issues a drawing or blueprint for construction or other project that requires construction or demolition work.
- **Planning:** Activity at the beginning of a project where information is gathered and decisions are made regarding the route or location of a proposed excavation based on constraints, including the locations of existing facilities, anticipated conflicts and relative costs of relocating existing facilities, or more expensive construction for the proposed facility.
- **Complex Project:** means an excavation that involves more work than properly can be described in a single locate request or any project designated as such by the excavator or facility owner as a consequence of its complexity or its potential to cause significant disruption to lines or facilities and the public, including excavations that require scheduling locates over an extended time frame.
- **One Call System:** The communication system established within this Commonwealth to provide a single nationwide toll-free telephone number or 811 number for excavators or designers or any other person covered by this act to call facility owners and notify them of their intent to perform excavation, demolition or similar work as defined by this act. The One Call System shall be incorporated and operated as a nonprofit corporation pursuant to 15 Pa.C.S. Pt. II Subpt. C (relating to nonprofit corporations).

## LOGGING INTO COORDINATE PA ON PA ONE CALL

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- A. Paonecall.org
  - i) “Applications” tab > “My POCS Links” > Select “Coordinate PA” from the list
    - (1) We recommend you bookmark this page.
- B. Log in with username and password
- C. Coordinate PA Homepage/dashboard
  - i) Once you sign in, you will be directed to your personalized dashboard with all your active projects lists
  - ii) Projects displayed by map and list view

## HOW TO SUBMIT A PROJECT ON COORDINATE PA

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- A. “Add project” button on the upper right-hand side of homepage/dashboard
    - i) Click the “Start drawing” button and begin to draw polygon shape on map to select the project boundary area
      - (1) Polygon can be altered later to allow for more detail
    - ii) Fill in project details
      - (1) “Project Name”
      - (2) “Work Type”
        - (a) Ex. Excavation, damage, odor of gas, demolition, cross bore.
      - (3) “Project Status”
        - (a) Planning
          - (i) Concept stage or early planning
        - (b) In Progress
          - (i) Active project
        - (c) Completed
          - (i) Finished project
        - (d) Inactive
          - (i) No longer active (note: this removes project visibility from dashboard)
      - (4) “Preliminary Design Stage”
      - (5) “Final Design Stage”
      - (6) “Bid Date”
      - (7) “Planned Construction Dates”
      - (8) “Facility Type”
        - (a) \*\*\* You can elect to make project public or remain private
    - iii) Save your project using the “Save New Project” button.
      - (1) A screen will appear, confirming that the new project is saved.
      - (2) This screen will also prompt the user to create a ticket for the project.
- B. Create a Ticket
  - i) Once you save your project and elect to create a ticket, a “Create Ticket” window will appear.
  - ii) Enter ticket details
    - a. “Ticket Type”
    - b. “Ticket Class”

- c. “Work Site”
  - i. Intersection Information
  - ii. “Subdivision Name”
  - iii. “Location Information”
- iii) Select “Create Ticket” at the bottom of form
  - a. You will receive a temporary confirmation number, as well as an email with your ticket information.
  - b. CREATING A TICKET MEANS COMPLIANCE WITH PA ONE CALL LAW, 73 P. S. § 176 et. seq
    - i. This ensures no fines will be incurred for unreported projects.
- C. Add Contact Information
  - i) Adding contact information for the project is a critical piece of the coordination and collaboration puzzle. Without contact information, project owners with other projects that can coordinate with yours will not be able to contact you.
    - a. Select project and Click “Add Contact to Project” button.
    - b. Start typing contact name and click “Add”.
      - i. Suggestions will populate
    - c. Enter Remaining Contact Information
      - i. “Subscription Status”
        - 1. Do Not Receive Project Emails
        - 2. Receive All Communications
        - 3. Receive CPA Daily Digest
      - ii. “Security Role”
        - 1. Project Administrator
        - 2. Project Editor
        - 3. Communications Only
        - 4. Viewer
        - 5. Inactive
      - iii. You can also select whether you would like this contact to view the details before a ticket is issued by PA One Call.
- D. Add Project Phases
  - i) If project phases are known, adding the phases (with dates) increases the opportunity that a portion of the project can intersect with another project, increasing the probability that coordination can occur.
    - a. Click the “Add Phase” button once you select a project.

## HOW TO UPDATE A PROJECT ON COORDINATE PA

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- A. Log-in to Coordinate PA from PA One Call website
- B. Customized homepage will display your projects
  - i) Select the project you’d like to update
- C. Update project or add any new information
  - i) Change “project status” to reflect current stage
    - a. Important to change projects to “inactive” if no longer active

- ii) Add new contacts
  - iii) Add or update project phases
  - iv) Change work site area on map if necessary
  - v) Change privacy options if desired
- D. Submit project changes to save update

## COMPLIANCE GUIDELINES

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- Municipalities have a legal requirement to correctly submit a design ticket for each of their projects
  - ACT 287 SECTION 7.10.
    - The commission may issue a warning and order requiring compliance with this act and may levy an administrative penalty for a violation of this act. A warning, order or penalty shall be served on the person or entity violating this act at the person's last known address. A party aggrieved by the imposition of an order or administrative penalty imposed by the commission may appeal the order or penalty as provided under 2 Pa.C.S. Chs. 5 Subch. A (relating to practice and procedure of Commonwealth agencies) and 7 Subch. A (relating to judicial review of Commonwealth agency action).
    - The following shall apply:
      - a. A person or entity violating this act may be subject to
        - i. an administrative penalty of not more than two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) per violation; or
        - ii. if the violation results in injury, death or property damage of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) or more, an administrative penalty of not more than fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000).

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## MUNICIPALITY BEST PRACTICES

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Gather	Gather Preliminary Plans at Municipality Meetings	Create plans to meet the municipality goals Plans need not be final or even within budget constraints
Identify	Identify Project Areas	Group projects geographically to maximize overall efficiency
Submit	Submit Projects on Coordinate PA	Follow the easy steps to submit a project on Coordinate PA Submission on Coordinate PA means compliance with Pennsylvania Act
Update	Update Plans on Monthly Basis	Mark projects as complete, inactive, or still in progress Add more details as municipality makes decisions and budgets are clear
Coordinate	Coordinate with Utility Companies/ Facility Owners	Coordinate PA allows municipalities and utility companies to collaborate to improve efficiency and reduce costs on projects
Complete	Complete Planned Projects	Complete municipality projects more expediently and cheaper