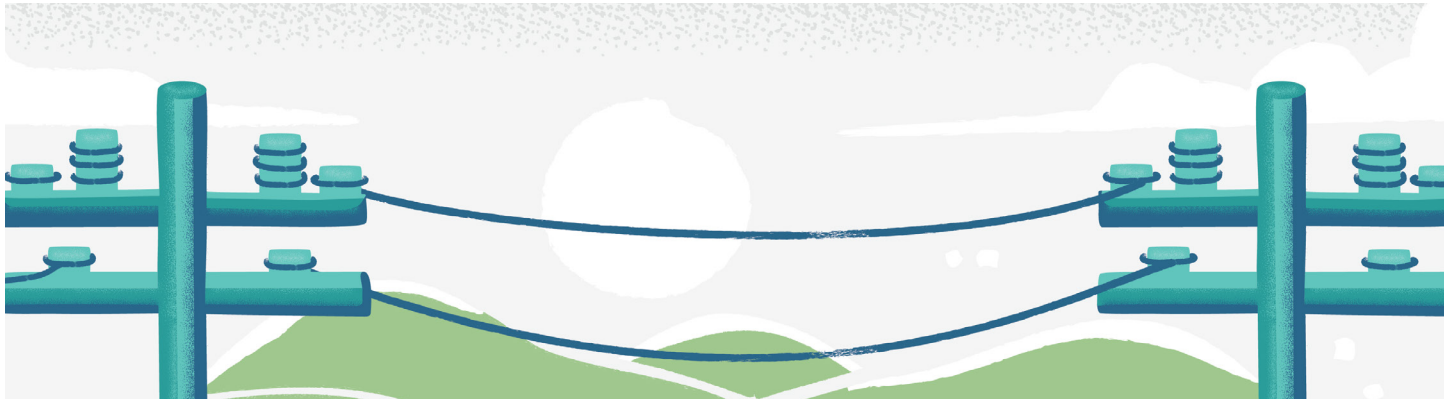


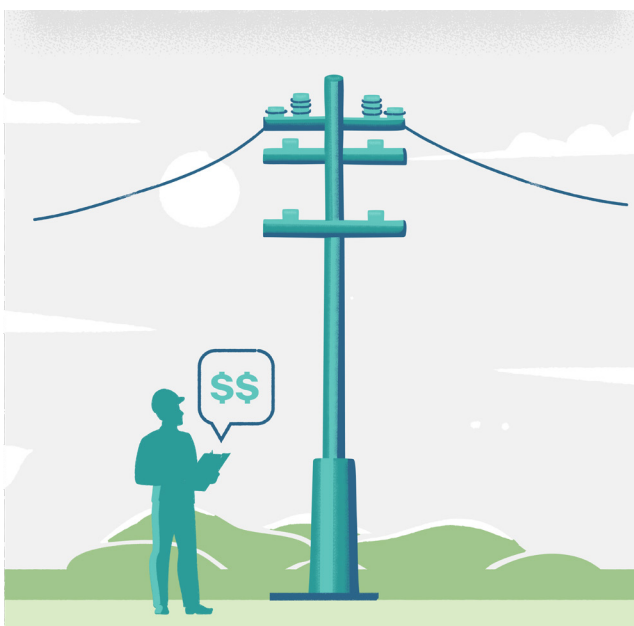
What is the pole attachment process?



Overview

To build a fiber broadband network, wires and other equipment must be placed on utility poles, buried underground, or a mix of both. Therefore, utility poles and how ISPs gain access to them is central to network deployment.

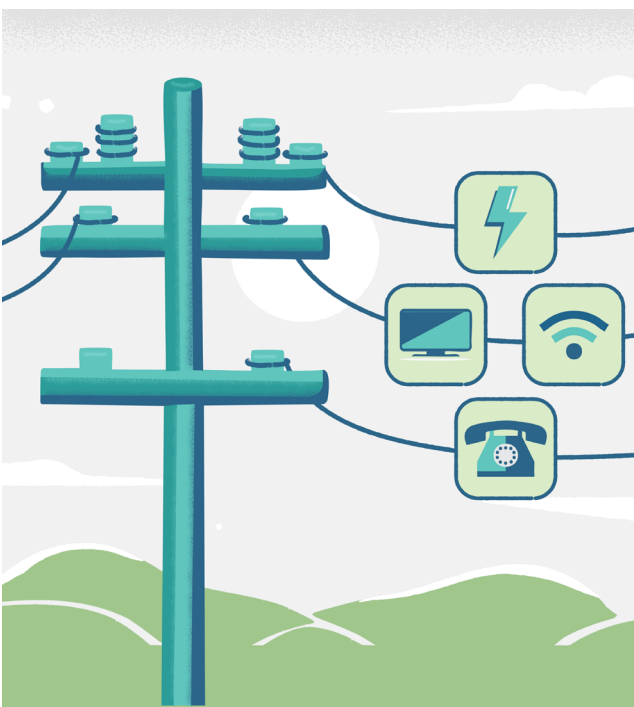
The pole attachment process involves utility pole owners, usually telephone or electric companies or local governments granting broadband providers (i.e., “attachers”) permission to attach wires to poles along the path of a planned broadband construction project. This process has several steps, and the regulations that govern it vary by state and type of pole owner.



Application

Before a new fiber line can be deployed on a pole, the attacher submits an application to the owner who then surveys the requested poles and provides a cost estimate for the proposed deployment. Poles deemed by the owners to be in “good condition” are physically sound and have enough clearance between existing wires to accommodate a new line. Poles determined to be in “poor condition” are not yet at the end of their useful life but would need to be replaced to accommodate a new attachment. And “red-tagged” poles are physically compromised and need to be replaced regardless of any new attachment.

The pole review and application approval process can be lengthy, especially among pole owners with limited administrative staff capacity.

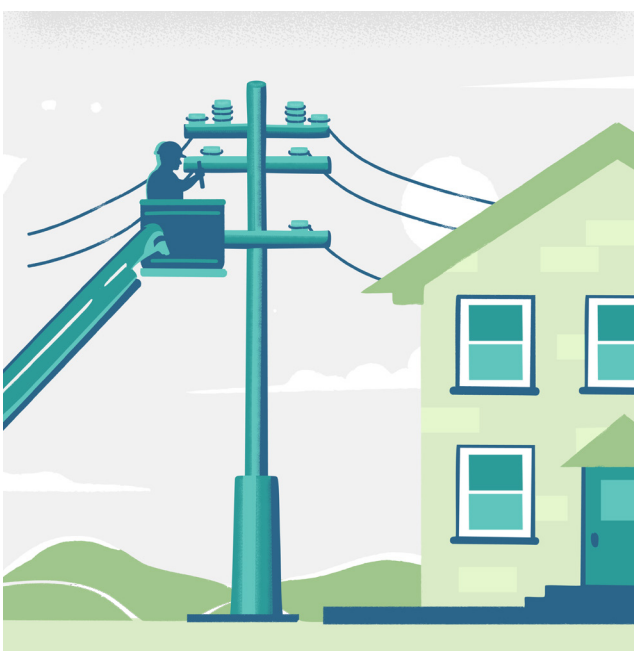


“Make-Ready”

Before attaching a line, a process known as “make-ready” must be completed. This process involves entities that have lines already on the poles—usually cable TV providers, electric utilities, and telephone companies—relocating their equipment to make space for new attachments. In certain cases, especially when poles are in poor condition, the make-ready process can also require costly and time-intensive replacement of the pole.

In most instances, make-ready costs—primarily for labor to rearrange existing attachments, pole replacements, and ancillary work, such as tree trimming—are the responsibility of the new attacher. However, in states where FCC regulations govern pole attachments, owners must pay for replacements of red-tagged poles.

Typically, pole owners complete the make-ready work themselves or allow the various service providers using the pole to select a preapproved subcontractor to move the equipment. Limited availability of qualified subcontractors can cause delays.



Attaching fiber

Once a pole is ready, broadband providers can physically attach the fiber line to the pole and to customers’ homes. Most providers will also “preconfigure” poles to allow for future deployments to new customers, which requires a larger upfront investment but lessens the costs of later network expansions.



For more information, scan the code or please visit: pewtrusts.org/poleattachments

The Pew Charitable Trusts

Contact: Benny Martinez, communications officer Email: bmartinez@pewtrusts.org Project website: pewtrusts.org/broadband

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