



## **Press Release**

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### **Phase VI of Underground Utilities and Streetscape Project At South End Of Town Under Way**

The beautification of the south end of Parkway is the focus as Phase VI of the City's Underground Utilities and Streetscape Project continues.

The Parkway work area extending from the end of Phase V at the Gatlinburg Convention Center to the boundary of Great Smoky Mountains National Park will provide aesthetic improvements including new public sidewalks and furnishings without the clutter of utility lines and poles.

As in the previous five phases, the construction of underground duct banks to house electrical, telephone and cable television lines will affect vehicular and pedestrian traffic in the area.

The Underground Utilities and Streetscape Project is a joint effort of the City, the design firm Barge, Waggoner, Sumner and Cannon, Inc., the contractor Efficient Electric, and local utilities involved in the undertaking. City officials appreciate your patience and tolerance during the period of construction and are confident the lasting enhancements are worth the short term inconveniences.

The entire Phase VI project is scheduled to be completed by June 30, 2012. Construction will be halted during the peak visitation periods of Labor Day, the last two weeks of October, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, Easter and Memorial Day.

At approximately 1,850 feet in length, Phase VI is the largest single Underground Phase to date. Plans call for the work to be done in 200-300 foot sections, with every effort being made to minimize inconvenience to both businesses and visitors. With the exception of the section under construction being reduced to two lanes, all four lanes of traffic will remain open.

The replacement of the steel bridge at the intersection of Parkway and Leconte Street is one of the most challenging components of Phase VI. Construction of the new Leconte Street Bridge is expected to take four months, during which that street will be closed to through traffic and Parkway will likely be down to two lanes in the area. Widening of the turning radius from Parkway to Leconte Street is part of the objective.

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New street lighting, benches, trash receptacles and signage will be strategically placed along the street as new sidewalks on public right-of-ways and distinctive crosswalks are installed. Several planters will be placed to accommodate seasonal plantings and small trees.

With a projected cost of \$7.8 million that covers both design engineering and construction, property owners in the improved areas will be assessed 20 percent of the cost, approximately \$1.52 million, which may be paid over the 15 year timeframe of the City bonds or on a lump-sum basis. State statute dictates that the cost recovery be prorated on an assessed-value basis, which will necessitate the annual review of assessed property values and subsequent reapportionment of each property owner's prorated division of payment as necessary.

Additional improvements in Phase VI include the replacement of the City sewer line on the East side of Parkway, replacement of a section of water line near Ski Mountain Road, the undergrounding of utilities a short distance on the south side of Ski Mountain Road at Traffic Light #10, and the placement of power lines underground along the National Park boundary between Parkway and River Road.

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