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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FROM THE OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER STAN WISE NEWS RELEASE

COMMISSIONER STAN WISE SEEKS REVIEW ON DAMAGES TO UNDERGROUND FACILITIES

ATLANTA, August 11, 2016 – Reacting to what he called “the extraordinary level of digging” over the past year in metro Atlanta as communications providers install and upgrade their fiber optics networks, Public Service Commissioner Stan Wise today called for all interested parties, including communications companies, utilities, excavators, contractors, facilities locators and Commission staff to present comments at the September 1, 2016 meeting of the Commission’s Facilities Protection Commission. Wise said, “I’ve heard from countless people concerned about the safety and economic disruption that come from the cutting and uprooting of underground facilities. These are clearly issues that surround our Pipeline Safety Act and Georgia Underground Facilities Protection Act (GUFPA).”

Wise presented six questions. He asked interested parties to address the following questions either in-person or in writing in advance of the next Facility Protection Committee scheduled September 1, 2016.

1. How many facility damages under our jurisdiction (Georgia Utility Facilities Protection Act) have occurred by contractors working for Google Fiber or U-verse? Can the damages be quantified in dollars?
2. Are utilities being asked to go beyond the locating requirements in GUFPA and provide premium service? If so, at what cost and who pays for that?
3. Are the locating companies able to keep up with demand? If not, why not?
4. What changes in rule, regulation, law or practice need to be made and by whom to safely deploy utility services without burdening our ratepayers?
5. What action, if any, does the Commission need to take at this time?
6. How does the bidding-out process for location services contribute to this problem, i.e. if a utility bids out for a locator and estimates low as to the number of locates it anticipates, then how is the “winner” of that bid expected to cope with the workload if the real number of locates is 150 or 200% of what was estimated?

Wise said he wants a discussion to ensure that work on underground facilities is being done safely and in compliance with the law without slowing down economic development.

Commissioner Wise is serving his fourth six-year term on the Georgia Public Service Commission. He was first elected in 1994 and re-elected in 2000, 2006 and 2012. He also chairs the NARUC Natural Gas Committee. His full bio is found at <http://www.psc.state.ga.us/content.aspx?c=/commissioners/stan-wise/>

See photo at end of release.

The Georgia Public Service Commission is a five-member constitutional agency that exercises its authority and influence to ensure that consumers receive safe, reliable, and reasonably-priced telecommunications, electric and natural gas service from financially viable and technically competent companies. For more information, visit the Commission website at www.psc.state.ga.us .



Commissioner Stan Wise

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