



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS MODIFICATIONS TO EXISTING WIRELESS FACILITIES

PLANNING & BUILDING DEPARTMENT • COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO  
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**Q: Is zoning / planning review required for modifications to existing wireless facilities?**

A: Yes.

**Q: What's the zoning / planning review process for modifications to existing wireless facilities?**

A: The process will depend on the visual impact of the proposed modifications. Modifications that do not substantially increase the visual impact of the existing facility will qualify for a substantial conformance determination. This means the proposed modification would be deemed in conformance with the previously approved land use permit that authorized the existing facility. Modifications that would substantially increase the visual impact of the existing facility would require a new discretionary land use permit.

**Q: What are examples of projects that would qualify for a substantial conformance determination?**

A: Generally, these include the following types of projects:

- “Like for like” antenna swaps with little or no increase in the physical dimensions of the existing antennas.
- Utility trenching to replace existing teleco lines with fiber optic lines.
- The addition of ground-mounted equipment cabinets or similar equipment within an existing equipment area.
- The addition of Remote Radio Units (RRUs), Tower Mounted Amplifiers (TMAs), or similar equipment located on the ground, behind existing antennas, or flush-mounted on antenna support structures.
- The addition of new antennas on stealth or otherwise screened antenna support structures. This could include adding new antennas within a faux water tank, adding antennas on a monopole that is substantially screened or back-dropped by vegetation, or adding antennas to a monopole that is designed with sufficient foliage to completely screen the additional antennas. Note that many older stealth structures (monopines, water tanks, etc.) were designed to accommodate no more than six 4-foot tall panel antennas per carrier, and may not be able to sufficiently screen a greater number or size of antennas.

**Q: Where do I find an application form for a substantial conformance determination?**

A: The form is called “Modification to Land Use Permit Application,” and is found online at the following link:

<http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Assets/PL/Forms+and+Information+Library/Land+Use+Permit+Documents/lupmod2014.pdf>

You can also access the form online by going to the Department's homepage ([www.sloplanning.org](http://www.sloplanning.org)), clicking on the "Forms and Documents" link at the upper left hand corner of the page, and typing "modification" in the search box.

**Q: What additional information is required with my application?**

A: Your application will not be processed without the following information:

- Two reduced size sets of plans (one 8.5" x 11" set and one 11" x 17" set). Do not submit full-sized drawings with your substantial conformance determination package.
- A cumulative radio frequency analysis showing compliance with applicable FCC guidelines for public and occupational exposure limits. The analysis must include existing emissions for all carriers at the facility and the increased emissions resulting from the proposed modification.
- Photo-simulations of the proposed modifications.

**Q: What is the fee for a substantial conformance determination?**

A: \$506.

**Q: Can I mail my application for a substantial conformance determination to the Department?**

A: Yes. Send the package, including a check for \$506, to:

County Department of Planning and Building  
Attn: Airlin M. Singewald  
976 Osos Street, Room 300  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

We will send you a receipt by mail or email.

**Q: How long does a substantial conformance determination take?**

A: Processing time is 3-4 weeks.

**Q: What does a substantial conformance determination look like? Will it include conditions?**

A: A substantial conformance determination is a letter deeming the proposed modifications in conformance with the original land use permit for the existing facility. The determination often includes "special requirements" that emphasize the original conditions of approval and propose measures to offset the increased visual impacts of the proposed modification.

**Q: Can I submit concurrently for plan check?**

A: No. You must wait until after you receive a substantial conformance determination (or land use permit approval). When you submit for plan check, the substantial conformance determination letter (or land use permit conditions of approval) must be printed on the project plans.

If you have additional questions about this process, please contact Airlin Singewald at (805) 781-5198 or by email at [asingewald@co.slo.ca.us](mailto:asingewald@co.slo.ca.us).