

A Brighter Future: How Varasset Software Lit PacifiCorp's Streetlights

SUMMARY

PacifiCorp is an electric power company that operates the largest grid in the western United States. They have over two million customers across Oregon, Washington, California, Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming. PacifiCorp is implementing a proactive renewable energy program by modernizing its grid, utilizing green energy resources, and seeking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 74% by 2030.

PacifiCorp is actively converting its streetlights to LEDs as part of its plan to provide excellent and ecologically efficient service to its customers. To manage the conversion of over 216,000 streetlights, PacifiCorp needed a streamlined digital asset management tool to track streetlight maintenance, billing, and other processes.

PacifiCorp used Varasset to renovate its asset management database. The change increased customer transparency, sped up communication, and centralized asset records. With Varasset's versatile software, PacifiCorp saved over \$1 million in the first year after implementation. PacifiCorp can now rely on its database and maintain its reputation for excellent streetlight management.

THE CHALLENGE

PacifiCorp's office for streetlight policy is headquartered in Salt Lake City, UT. The Streetlight Policy Manager for PacifiCorp also oversees all local construction and maintenance activities. When she inherited her position in 2018, she learned that the streetlights program records could be improved to help limit cost and improve reliability.

At the time, PacifiCorp didn't have an in-house streetlight asset management tool. Instead, PacifiCorp's contractor managed a proprietary asset database that the Streetlight Manager and her team could not access. As customers inquired about converting streetlights to LEDs, PacifiCorp couldn't provide accurate accounts of which streetlights they owned. When requesting streetlight data from the contractor, the streetlight Manager received raw data. Her office had the arduous task of manually inputting and organizing that data into a readable format and verifying its accuracy. The data didn't match PacifiCorp's record in many cases, creating hours of extra labor to discover which records were factual.

Typically, the Streetlight Policy office lost oversight on jobs once they handed an estimate to the contractor. The contractor answered all customer questions about job progress because the Manager and her team were not kept updated on job timelines. They also relied on contractors' handwritten invoices to track time and materials expenses and job progress. Because of this, PacifiCorp had difficulties controlling the contractor's costs. The Streetlight Policy office received invoices that often exceeded the initial estimate by 200%, which required two analysts to be on the phone for almost three hours per day, disputing charges with the contractor.

Inundated with duplicate labor, excessive bills, and confused customers, the streetlight policy Manager decided to set up an in-house asset management software tool to reinvigorate PacifiCorp's streetlight program and restore its reputation for streetlight construction and maintenance.

"[My predecessors] didn't really have a process. What they knew was that our system was broken."

- Streetlight Policy Manager

STRATEGY

PacifiCorp already owned and used Varasset for managing their utility pole joint use processes. The Streetlight Policy Manager had heard about Varasset's decades of experience developing asset management software for joint use departments. She learned that Varasset's software was configurable to support her streetlight program!

The first step was ensuring every PacifiCorp streetlight was accounted for and unduplicated in their database. With Varasset's import/export tool, the streetlight Manager could cleanse PacifiCorp's records of duplicate or discontinued streetlights and upload new streetlights as they installed and connected new lights. This tool would eliminate the time she and her staff spent organizing, reconciling, and re-inputting data from their contractor's asset management database.

Varasset's work and service order module would allow the Streetlight Policy office to develop specific benchmarks for contractors and receive progress updates in real-time. Varasset's rate-based billing engine could track project labor, equipment, and material costs for any PacifiCorp streetlight. The Policy office could also utilize Varasset's crew scheduling tool, which would allow the Streetlight Policy Manager to see any open jobs contractors were working. This tool would also allow her to quickly schedule streetlight repairs and LED conversions as customers called in.

Within a year, streetlight maintenance and construction were managed fully in Varasset, for the first of PacifiCorp's several regions. They are now rolling out Varasset's streetlight management to the remaining areas. They expect to see much more significant cost savings and reliability improvements.

RESULTS

PacifiCorp's streetlights program has transformed through Varasset. With every streetlight record available within a few clicks, the Streetlight Policy team no longer relies on outdated or confusing third-party data. Every streetlight's longitude and latitude are precise and mapped.

"[PacifiCorp's GIS group] said, 'Wow, your data is better than ours now! How do we get this?'"

- Streetlight Policy Manager

By clicking on a streetlight in Varasset's map view, the Streetlight Policy Manager can see all that pole's billing, permits, and work order history. Suppose a streetlight has an active work order on it. In that case, the Streetlight Policy Manager can see the estimates, job progress, and time and materials cost the moment PacifiCorp contractors enter them into the Varasset web app. With this effective workflow, she can assure customers that the contractor will complete any job within ten business days.

In addition to turning around their operations and procedures, the financials experienced colossal change. By having detailed records of every asset, the Streetlight Policy office could track assets that received repeated repairs and have them fixed under warranty, saving PacifiCorp the cost of the repairs. But even more surprising was the sheer amount of money saved on time and materials. The Streetlight Policy Manager knew that if they continued the unit-rate relationship with the contractors, they would have spent \$2.3 million per year on 27,000 lights. With Varasset, they reduced spending down to just under \$900,000 in 2020, saving **\$1.4 million**.

The Streetlight Policy Office Manager has demonstrated Varasset's versatility and data-rich interface to other PacifiCorp streetlight districts. At the time of this article, PacifiCorp's LED streetlight conversion program is expanding rapidly. Presently, the Streetlight Policy Offices has 17 cities across Oregon, Utah, and Idaho ready to switch. As she receives approval from the cities, the Streetlight Policy Office can bring thousands of their streetlights into PacifiCorp's database overnight. They efficiently audit each city's streetlight records, preventing errors from entering their database.

"We're able to track our warranties down to the minute. It's pretty impressive!"

- Streetlight Policy Manager

As PacifiCorp continues to convert streetlights to LEDs across six states, the Streetlight Policy Manager is confident using Varasset to manage streetlights saves her team time and money and helps make PacifiCorp a more ecologically friendly company.