Dianoush Dion Emami Highlights the Challenges Beneath America's Cities

Parkia, Inc. CEO examines the engineering, coordination, and construction challenges involved in expanding underground electrical transmission systems.



Los Angeles, California Nov 27, 2026 (Issuewire.com) - As cities continue to develop and demand for reliable electricity increases, the infrastructure beneath streets and sidewalks is becoming an increasingly important part of urban planning. Dianoush Dion Emami, CEO of Parkia, Inc., is drawing attention to the technical challenges involved in constructing underground electrical transmission systems in densely developed areas.

With more than 40 years of experience in electrical engineering and utility construction, Emami has worked on projects involving power generation, distribution, substations, and high-voltage transmission. His career has included engineering work at nuclear power facilities, contract administration for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), and oversight of major utility construction projects across the western United States.

Today, he leads Parkia, Inc., an engineering and construction company specializing in high-voltage

electrical infrastructure, including underground transmission systems ranging from 69kV to 230kV.

The Engineering Challenges Beneath City Streets

Unlike overhead transmission projects, underground electrical construction requires crews to navigate infrastructure that may have been installed decades earlier. Water lines, telecommunications equipment, sewer systems, and existing electrical facilities can all affect where new transmission infrastructure can be placed.

In established urban areas, the available space is often limited. Engineers must consider existing utility locations, construction access, road restrictions, and the long-term maintenance needs of the completed system.

These complications can influence nearly every stage of a project, from the initial engineering design to equipment installation and testing.

"The strongest utility contracts aren't necessarily the ones with the lowest initial price," Emami's approach to project evaluation suggests. "They're the ones that create a realistic foundation for completing complicated work safely, efficiently, and to the required standard."

For underground transmission projects, that foundation begins with understanding what already exists beneath the proposed construction area.

Why Early Planning Matters for Underground Transmission

Emami's experience on both sides of utility contracting has shaped his approach to infrastructure planning.

During his tenure at LADWP from 1987 to 1997, he prepared electrical cable specifications, evaluated contractor proposals, reviewed distribution designs, and made recommendations concerning project awards.

Those responsibilities provided firsthand experience with the decisions that take place before construction begins.

Since becoming CEO of Parkia in 2014, Emami has overseen engineering and construction work for utilities including LADWP, Southern California Edison, Pacific Gas and Electric, San Diego Gas & Electric, and Arizona Public Service.

His responsibilities include resource planning, project budgets, operational oversight, and coordination across engineering and construction teams.

For projects involving underground transmission, early coordination can help identify access constraints, potential scheduling conflicts, and technical requirements before they become costly field problems.

Managing Risk Throughout Complex Utility Projects

Underground transmission construction presents challenges that extend beyond the engineering design. Crews must work around existing infrastructure while maintaining strict safety and quality standards.

Unexpected underground conditions, changes in equipment availability, and coordination with public agencies can affect construction schedules. Managing these risks requires communication between project managers, engineers, field supervisors, and utility representatives.

Emami emphasizes the importance of maintaining clear priorities when managing complicated projects.

"I step away from the noise and go back to fundamentals: safety, schedule, cost, and people," Emami explained. "I identify the single biggest risk or opportunity in front of us and focus on that first."

At Parkia, project management dashboards help track scheduling, construction progress, costs, and safety performance. This approach allows leadership to monitor conditions across multiple projects and address concerns before they develop into larger disruptions.

Preparing Underground Infrastructure for Long-Term Reliability

As utilities evaluate how to upgrade and expand their electrical networks, underground transmission will remain an important consideration in areas where space, existing development, and infrastructure requirements influence construction decisions.

Emami believes that successful projects depend on strong technical execution, disciplined planning, and investment in qualified personnel.

"Investing in people before projects," Emami said when describing his approach to building capable teams. "When you build strong people, they build strong projects."

For utility companies and contractors, the challenge is not simply installing new electrical infrastructure. It is ensuring that the systems can be constructed safely, maintained effectively, and operated reliably over the long term.

Emami's experience reflects the importance of addressing those requirements before construction begins, particularly as electrical infrastructure projects become more complex.

About Dianoush Dion Emami

Dianoush Dion Emami is the Chief Executive Officer of Parkia, Inc., an electrical engineering and construction company serving utilities and municipalities across the western United States. With more than 40 years of industry experience, he specializes in electrical transmission, distribution, power generation, and utility infrastructure development. His previous roles include Director of Business Development at Henkels & McCoy, Contract Administrator at LADWP, and Electrical Engineer at Bechtel Power Corporation. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from the University of Southern California.

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