


CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

Date: February 12, 2024

To: Honorable City Council
c/o City Clerk, Room 395
Attention: Honorable Heather Hutt, Chair, Transportation Committee

From: Laura Rubio-Cornejo, General Manager 
Department of Transportation

Subject: **SAFETY AND GRAFFITI REMOVAL AT LADOT LOT NO. 763 IN LITTLE TOKYO**

SUMMARY

In response to Council File (CF) 23-0940, this report provides recommendations to remove graffiti at parking facilities managed by the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) within 24 to 72 hours and improve security at Lot No. 763 at 101 N. Judge John Aiso Street (Aiso Parking Garage) to prevent future graffiti.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the City Council:

1. DIRECT LADOT to work with the Office of Community Beautification to identify LADOT parking facilities that are in frequent need of graffiti removal and determine if it is feasible to add a protective coating to these locations under existing contracts; and
2. AUTHORIZE LADOT to negotiate and execute a revocable permit with a Little Tokyo community based organization that will be able to help activate, maintain, and monitor Toriumi Plaza at the Aiso Parking Garage to keep the area safe and graffiti free.

BACKGROUND

LADOT relies on contractual services to maintain the City's 110 off-street parking facilities. On October 11, 2023, the Los Angeles City Council (Council) authorized a new agreement between LADOT and Metro Services Group (MSG) for the landscape, maintenance, and repairs of LADOT-managed off-street parking facilities.

With this agreement, Council directed LADOT to work with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) to identify additional security measures, such as security cameras, and resources needed to implement those measures at the Aiso Parking Garage and adjacent facilities. Council further directed LADOT to work with the General Services Department (GSD) to develop a plan to ensure that graffiti removal at LADOT parking facilities can be completed on a comparable timeframe as other graffiti removal in the City (24-72 hours).

This report outlines the current graffiti abatement process in City-owned parking lots, potential strategies to reduce graffiti at the Aiso Parking Garage, and the costs associated with these measures.

DISCUSSION

LADOT is typically able to remove graffiti at its parking facilities within 24-72 hours. These services are delivered through the City's graffiti abatement program administered by the Board of Public Works' Office of Community Beautification (OCB), or maintenance and operations contracts for LADOT parking facilities.

However, each option for graffiti removal is limited by the size and extent of the damage. The recurring graffiti at the Aiso Parking Garage frequently exceeds the scope and budget limitations for graffiti removal by OCB or through LADOT's contracts. Additional security measures and community partnerships may be needed to prevent graffiti from occurring at this lot moving forward.

Graffiti Removal

OCB administers the City's primary graffiti abatement program to remove graffiti within 72 hours as well as add protective coatings to surfaces, where warranted, to help remove graffiti more efficiently. LADOT uses this program to remove graffiti on a small scale at its parking facilities throughout the City. However, the amount of graffiti at the Aiso Parking Garage exceeds the scope of services allowed by OCB's approved graffiti abatement budget.

In addition to graffiti abatement services administered by OCB, LADOT includes graffiti removal provisions in its contracts with the facility management companies managing individual LADOT lots. Under these contracts, the lot operator is responsible for graffiti removal, as outlined in standard provisions stating that the operator shall "perform maintenance services on an on-going basis at the parking facilities and shall be required to maintain the parking facilities in a clean and safe condition at all times... Graffiti Removal - Remove graffiti as soon as possible but no later than twenty-four (24) hours from observation or notification by CITY." However, these contracts are limited by both scope and budget restrictions. For example, the contract approved for maintenance at the Aiso Parking Garage in 2014 budgeted \$5.65 per month for graffiti abatement.

The MSG contract for maintenance at the majority of City-owned lots is also limited by scope and budget restrictions. This contract also does not obligate MSG to the City's 72-hour abatement requirement because they must first submit estimates for approval prior to starting the removal work, as outlined in section 3.3.5 of the contract which states that that contractor "shall remove graffiti...within the off-street parking facility within 24 hours of discovery. If the damage is more than 30 square feet in area or affects the facility's public art project, Contractor shall consult with LADOT prior to removal. All graffiti shall be reported to LADOT..."

Estimates for graffiti removal at the Aiso Parking Garage far exceed LADOT's contracted graffiti budget with facility operators. On August 16, 2022, LADOT was notified of graffiti in the lot that exceeded 30 square feet and received an estimate of \$2,800.06 to clean the space. The graffiti was removed on September 17, 2022, but eleven days later LADOT was notified again of large-scale graffiti in the plaza

and received an estimate of \$1,252.90 for removal. The most recent cost estimate to remove the increased amount of graffiti at the Aiso Parking Garage is \$6,850.

LADOT will contract out the removal of the graffiti in the plaza in March 2024. Working with OCB as a partner, LADOT and OCB can determine if applying a permanent protective coating to locations that are regularly tagged is possible using existing resources and determine if applying the protective coat will reduce the cost of graffiti removal.

Security Measures

Following the second graffiti removal cost estimate and compounded by the repair costs of the lighting and landscaping damage at the Aiso Parking Garage, LADOT and Council District (CD) 14 began developing a longer term solution to prevent graffiti because the recurring condition at the facility would impact the Department's parking facilities maintenance budget City-wide. Potential solutions include permanent fencing, heightened security, security cameras, and community monitoring.

LADOT held a meeting with LAPD on December 19, 2023 to discuss the security measures. As additional police reports are filed with LAPD, LAPD indicated that they will be able to commit more resources to patrol the area and to possibly start an active investigation if a pattern develops.

One of the key elements to possibly deterring illegal behavior in the plaza is security cameras. To assess the cost of security cameras, LADOT worked with LAPD to secure estimates from contractors. The estimate to install and upgrade security cameras at the Aiso Parking Garage is \$37,648, including the possibility of using video detection to alert security or enforcement of after hours trespassing without the need for 24/7 surveillance by personnel. Following the clean up of the graffiti removal at Toriumi Plaza, LADOT will temporarily have a security guard patrol the garage and plaza. Should any incidents of graffiti or other illegal activity take place, LADOT or its contractor will report the incidents to LAPD.

In addition to working with LAPD, LADOT is continuing discussions with Council District (CD) 14 and BOE to install decorative security fencing around the perimeter of the plaza. The fencing with gates would be opened and closed by the parking operator and/or a Little Tokyo community based organization. The design of the fencing would be influenced based on input from the Little Tokyo Community. Because the fencing would be installed on the plaza, which is also the post-tension slab roof of the parking structure, structural engineering review is required. The initial cost estimate from BOE included additional scope that led to a cost that is more than eight times greater than the facility's annual gross revenues. Following a discussion to reduce the scope, BOE is now developing a revised cost estimate.

Community Partnerships

In 2022, LADOT, with the support of CD 14, explored the concept of granting a revocable permit for access with Little Tokyo community based organizations to activate the plaza by providing community programming and lead beautification, security and graffiti removal efforts. LADOT, in partnership with CD 14, will continue these discussions with potential community partners to come to an agreement and execute a permit to improve the appearance and safety of the plaza.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The impact to the City's General Fund has not been determined at this time. Graffiti removal expenses may be paid from the General Fund and/or Special Parking Revenue Fund.

LRC:KH:sf/dlg