

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

Date: November 18, 2024

To: Honorable City Council
c/o City Clerk, Room 340
Attention: Honorable Heather Hutt, Chair Transportation Committee

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

Subject: **STREAMLINE, ACCELERATE, AND REDUCE WAIT TIMES FOR THE DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**

SUMMARY

As directed by the Los Angeles City Council (Council) in Council File (CF) [23-0916](#), this report provides recommendations to streamline, accelerate, and reduce wait times for the design, construction, and implementation of transportation infrastructure projects, including traffic signals, speed humps and speed tables, signage, and crosswalks.

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council NOTE and FILE this report.

BACKGROUND

Several Council files provide recent direction to Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) to report on existing processes to deliver various treatments in the right of way, streamline coordination efforts, and identify necessary resources to accelerate project delivery.

In June 2022, in CF 15-0719-S26, Council directed the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) to report with the status of current capital planning activities and recommendations for coordination and/or integration, as well as an evaluation of existing entities and processes for coordinating between LADOT and the Department of Public Works (DPW), including recommendations to improve coordination. The CLA provided its recommendations in a report provided to Council in October 2022, and in December 2022, Council directed LADOT and DPW to report on the work being done to deliver coordinated transportation projects as guided by the City's Mobility Plan 2035 and make recommendations to improve coordination amongst City departments and agencies with regard to the project delivery.

In June 2023, as directed by CF 23-0204, LADOT reported with an initial evaluation of previously installed pilot speed tables, including staffing resources expended, capital expenditures, and effectiveness. A subsequent report on the creation of an annual speed safety program for arterial and non-residential local and collector street speed mitigation is forthcoming.

In October 2023, Council File 23-0916 directed LADOT to report with recommendations and best practices that will streamline, accelerate, and reduce wait times for the design, construction, and implementation of transportation infrastructure projects, with a focus on traffic signals, speed humps and speed tables, signage, and crosswalks.

In January 2024, LADOT and DPW reported in CF 15-0719-S26 with an overview of existing coordination efforts to deliver street design projects, guided by the City's Mobility Plan 2035 (MP2035) to deliver a transportation system that balances the needs of all road users, as well as recommendations to improve coordination. This report focused on the necessary coordination to deliver street design projects that require civil design and construction work to be compliant with other guiding policies and legal requirements.

In March 2024, in CF 24-0332, LADOT provided a report outlining the existing process to solicit applications for and deliver residential speed humps throughout the City.

In April 2024, as directed in CF 23-0306, LADOT provided a status update and revised methodology to deliver speed humps at elementary schools with resources provided in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Adopted Budget.

DISCUSSION

LADOT leads the development, design, and implementation of transportation infrastructure improvements throughout the City to improve traffic safety and create more mobility options. Many transportation infrastructure projects require coordination across City departments to design and construct, which can result in long construction and delivery timelines. This report provides an overview of the City's coordination to deliver traffic control projects in the right of way with recommendations to streamline and accelerate construction timelines. It describes the current process to deliver these infrastructure projects, the challenges that impact delivery timelines, and recommendations to streamline and reduce timelines. It also provides a summary of constraints LADOT faces in delivering new traffic controls in the right of way with existing resources.

Traffic Control Devices

LADOT is responsible for studying and approving all new traffic control devices in the City. These traffic controls include new traffic signals, new rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFB's), new pedestrian hybrid beacons (Hawks) and the addition of left turn phasing at existing signalized intersections. LADOT's current traffic signal work program includes approximately 550 new traffic controls that are either in pre-design, design, bid and award, or in the construction phase, with approved funding for approximately 458.

The implementation of any new traffic control requires collaboration between various City departments, including LADOT, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) and Department of Public Works (DPW) Bureaus of Contract Administration (BCA), Engineering (BOE), Street Lighting (BSL), and Street Services (BSS). LADOT initiates the design of each new control in coordination with LADWP, BOE, BSL, and BSS to ensure power source, proper lighting levels, and accessibility needs are met. LADOT typically batches the work in sets of 20 to 30 locations to ensure economy of scale for construction

contract solicitation purposes. The initial signal design takes approximately six to nine months per 20 locations to complete, and is dependent on the complexity of each location.

Per Public Right of Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) and BOE Special Order No. 04-0222, new access ramps are required where they are missing. As LADOT develops traffic signal plans, existing curb ramps are required to be assessed and upgraded if they don't meet current standards for all new traffic controls. LADOT coordinates with both BOE and BSS to design these necessary accessibility improvements with traffic control delivery. Due to limited in-house staffing resources to lead the design effort and other competing priorities, BOE and BSS recently utilized their bench list of consultants to support curb ramp design for new traffic controls, and this strategy added several months to the process. Signal plans can only be advanced and completed after curb ramp designs are finalized and there are sufficient construction resources to deliver them. More recently, staffing resources in both BOE and BSS have been reduced and created additional challenges in meeting the requirements as identified in PROWAG and the BOE Special Order. LADOT secured funding through the previous two budget cycles for consultant-led design, but staffing levels within BOE and BSS that support design review prevented designs from advancing at a reasonable pace.

With existing staff resources, LADOT requires an additional two to three months after the design is completed to assemble the final construction bid package, inclusive of technical specifications and a final City Engineer's construction cost estimate. Once the bid package is complete, BOE supports LADOT's efforts by soliciting construction bids from external contractors. Within five to six months from the initiation of bid solicitation, BOE issues a Notice to Proceed to the external contractor at which point physical construction work can commence. Additional staff would allow LADOT to accelerate this step without redirecting design engineers away from other responsibilities, including initiating design on new controls.

Once a Notice to Proceed is issued, LADOT and BCA work together to ensure the contractor builds the new controls per all approved plans and contract documents. The approximate construction time for all controls under a contract for activation ranges from 18 to 24 months, with a majority of this time allocated for the procurement of long lead material - which in some cases can take up to six to nine months to procure.

Collectively, the implementation of most new traffic controls from design initiation to signal activation can range from 36 months to 48 months. When possible, LADOT constructs traffic controls with its own field forces to reduce this time, but this is only possible at locations that do not require either street lighting or access ramp work. With existing resources within LADOT, design plans for approximately 150 new controls a year are advanced and follow the sequencing events identified above for advancing from design to construction.

Challenges

Staffing levels at LADOT and coordinating departments continue to pose significant challenges to project delivery timelines and limit the ability to expedite construction. LADOT currently has a 21% vacancy rate in staffing dedicated to signal design. BSL has three engineers for Traffic Signal support, which is a 50% reduction from previous years. BOE and BSS also have very limited in-house staff to support these

efforts, and as such, rely on outsourcing this work through the use of bench list consultants on an ad hoc basis, which extends the delivery timeline.

Neither LADOT nor its partner departments have the necessary field staff resources to absorb the construction work program. LADOT currently has a 50% vacancy rate in sign fabrication and a 30% vacancy rate in sign installation, which significantly delays project implementation. The FY 24-25 paint and sign budget, reduced from \$3,500,000 to \$2,000,000, limits LADOT's Field Services Division maintenance activities and inhibits the Department's ability to deliver new treatments outside dedicated programmatic budgets.

LADOT makes every effort to identify traffic controls that can be constructed with limited existing field forces, but this approach restricts implementation to less complex locations that require little or no support from either BSS or BSL. BSL indicated internal procurement challenges that prohibit additional opportunities to support construction efforts with their own limited resources, and BSS indicated limited capacity due to ongoing pavement preservation program needs.

To meet the above challenges and opportunities, BSL has determined through a resource assessment analysis that three additional engineering resolution positions are needed to support LADOT's traffic signal work program. This would help restore production to full capacity and assist with meeting any unexpected expedited requests. BOE and BSS are currently undergoing a resource assessment to manage their existing project obligation.

A shifted focus on preparations for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games and delivery of First/Last Mile improvements with existing staff resources at LADOT will have further impacts on delivery due to the need to shift limited existing resources to support these efforts. LADOT requested additional resources to support the Games, which, if approved, would lessen this impact.

In addition to staff resource limitations, recent construction trends hamper our ability to receive construction bids. With recently awarded construction contracts for signal construction, bids either exceeded the available funding by 25% to 30% or there has not been interest from any construction firms to submit bids. LADOT recently awarded a construction contract to the sole bidder, after three unsuccessful bid attempts, at an amount that exceeded the City estimate by 66% (\$20 million bid vs \$12 million estimate).

While acknowledging the current constraints with an accelerated traffic signal delivery model, LADOT identified the following opportunities to streamline, both short term and long term, traffic signal project delivery processes:

Opportunities

In the short term, LADOT will collaborate with BSS to better align policy goals to improve service in the following programs: pavement preservation, capital projects, access ramp design, and other City priority initiatives such as 2028 Games and First/Last Mile Planning efforts. LADOT will also identify supplemental overtime funding for BSL to prioritize design and possible construction efforts through their field forces, and where possible, advance procuring BSL equipment to better align with BSL field forces. Where funding and storage space allows, LADOT will advance to order long-lead material items

for contractor use. The long term strategy includes increasing the bandwidth at LADOT and our partners at the DPW with additional staff to provide the necessary design and in-house support to improve on traffic signal delivery.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no impact to the General Fund from the recommendations of this report.

LRC:DM:cr