


CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

Date: March 31, 2022

To: Honorable City Council
c/o City Clerk, Room 395, City Hall
Attention: Honorable Mike Bonin, Chair, Transportation Committee

From: Seleta J. Reynolds, General Manager  for Seleta Reynolds
Department of Transportation

Subject: **Department of Transportation (LADOT) Recommendations to Transfer \$500,000 from the Unappropriated Balance to LADOT to Fund Overtime for Traffic Officer Enforcement of Abandoned Vehicles and Seek Consultant Services to Develop a Task Force Model**

RECOMMENDATION

1. APPROVE LADOT's request to transfer \$500,000 in funding from the Unappropriated Balance (UB) to LADOT to fund Traffic Officer overtime for Abandoned Vehicle Enforcement;
2. AUTHORIZE the General Manager, LADOT, to negotiate and execute agreements, subject to review by the City Attorney as to form and legality;
3. AUTHORIZE the City Controller to:
 - a. Transfer and appropriate \$500,000 from the Unappropriated Balance Fund No. 100/58, Account No. 580341, Abandoned Vehicle Task Force to a new account in the Transportation Trust Fund No. 840/94, entitled "Abandoned Vehicle Enforcement" to support the expenditure of overtime for enforcement of abandoned vehicles;
4. AUTHORIZE the General Manager of LADOT, or designee, to prepare additional Controller instructions and/or any necessary technical adjustments that are consistent with Mayor and Council action, subject to the review of the City Administrative Officer, and instruct the Controller to implement these instructions.

BACKGROUND

LADOT requested funding for an Abandoned Vehicle Task Force (AVT) in the FY 2021-22 budget to address the increasing number of abandoned vehicles in the public right of way. The AVT is a team of Traffic Officers dedicated to exclusively addressing abandoned vehicle and dwelling vehicle complaints citywide. Full funding of the AVT was not provided in the City's FY 2021-22 budget. However, \$500,000 was allocated in the Unappropriated Balance (UB) to support the formation of a Citywide Working Group to address the growing challenges of abandoned vehicle enforcement and vehicle dwellings, including Oversized and Recreational Vehicles (RVs).

DISCUSSION

The California Vehicle Code prohibits residents from parking vehicles in the public right of way for more than 72 hours. The City of Los Angeles (City) currently enforces the 72-hour rule by complaint, due to the high volume of complaints we receive and limited staffing. LADOT receives complaints for vehicles stored on the street for more than 72 hours through the 1-800-ABANDON hotlines and direct complaints to a local Parking Enforcement Office, as well as from Council offices. Most complaints are made through the abandoned vehicle hotline, which generates a service request to the appropriate Parking Enforcement Office where an officer is assigned to investigate the complaint in addition to performing their regular patrol duties.

In 2001, LADOT created the “Special Operations Unit” (SOU) within the parking enforcement division to handle more complex or time consuming enforcement tasks. The SOU is responsible for enforcing and removing parked vehicles in violation of L.A.M.C section 80.73.2 (Use of Street for Storage - Exceed 72 hours). These units provided a streamlined process to increase parking availability, and improved the quality of life in neighborhoods by decreasing blight and chronic complaints. SOU officers also increased the public’s awareness of the City’s parking restrictions and regulations. Due to the economic downturn of 2007 - 2009 and the resulting budget reductions, LADOT had to disband the SOU and redirect these complaints back to the respective local area Parking Enforcement Office.

Today, LADOT receives 10,000 - 12,000 abandoned vehicle complaints each month. Approximately 45 percent of these complaints are concentrated within LADOT’s Valley Enforcement Area. The remaining 55 percent are distributed among the remaining four (4) area enforcement offices (Hollywood, Southern, Central and Western). Each complaint is assigned to an officer for investigation, which may ultimately result in citation or impound. This enforcement effort is time consuming and requires multiple visits to document specific details associated with the vehicle, in order to generate a basis for enforcement action or closing disposition.

LADOT analyzed its abandoned vehicle enforcement and found that the average response time from a hotline complaint to an officer’s initial documentation of the vehicle (1st Response) is approximately seven (7) days. Monitoring for compliance with the 72-hour rule begins once an officer documents a vehicle that is reported to be in violation of the City’s time restrictions for parking. The officer returns to the location after 72 hours and issues a citation if the vehicle has not moved (2nd Response). The average response time from date of complaint to the 2nd response time is 11 days. There is a direct correlation between the response time duration, volume of complaints, and staff capacity.

Some vehicles in violation of the 72-hour rule are vehicles that are used as a dwelling. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Council placed a moratorium on enforcing the 72-hour rule for “vehicle dwellings” to prevent the spread of the virus. In 2021, LADOT referred 2,093 vehicle dwellings to the Unified Homelessness Resource Center (UHRC) to initiate outreach and engagement with the vehicle occupants. Effectively addressing abandoned, oversized and dwelling vehicles can require significant collaboration between various city departments and local agencies including homeless service providers, the Bureau of Sanitation (LASAN), vehicle towing companies, and the Police Department.

The transfer of the UB funds will allow the Department to quickly deploy Traffic Officers on an overtime basis to function in a manner similar to the AVT. LADOT will assign overtime exclusively for officers to investigate abandoned vehicle complaints, which will reduce overall response times and result in greater compliance to the 72-hour ordinance.

In February 2022, the Department submitted a joint report with LAPD to the Transportation Committee regarding the citation and towing process for abandoned and oversize vehicles. The report, Council File 21-0956, details the recommended criteria and prioritization for removal of illegally parked vehicles. By consistently deploying officers to address abandoned vehicles, LADOT will also improve its vehicle dwelling documentation, facilitate better reporting, and deepen its relationship with LAHSA and other homeless service providers to better connect them with unhoused motorists. Officers assigned to this overtime function will develop expertise that will improve collaboration with LASAN and the UHRC and expedite the resolution of these complex matters.

In addition to funding enforcement overtime, LADOT will use UB funds to contract for consultant services to provide recommendations on ways to improve citywide coordination to address abandoned vehicles and vehicle dwellings. In February 2022, the Department submitted a joint report with LAPD to the Transportation Committee regarding the citation and towing process for abandoned and oversize vehicles. The report, Council File 21-0956, details the recommended criteria and prioritization for removal of illegally parked vehicles.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no impact to the General Fund as a result of the recommendations contained in this report, as funding was set aside in the Unappropriated Balance for this purpose.

SJR:BH:fn