


CLA Memorandum

February 4, 2009

To: Honorable Members of the Transportation Committee

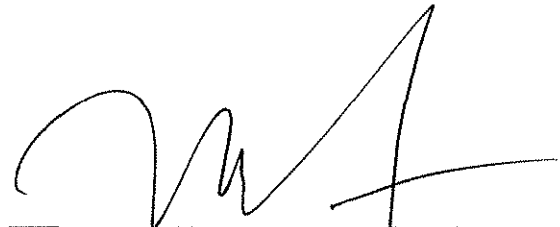
From: Gerry F. Miller 
Chief Legislative Analyst

Assignment No. 09-02-0173
Council File No. 08-1984

Report from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Relative to Information on the Condition of the Freeway System in Los Angeles

The attached report was submitted for Council consideration via this Office, per the Council's direction at the October 1, 2008 meeting.

If we may be of further assistance, please let us know.



Maria Souza-Rountree
Analyst

California Department of Transportation

Report to the City of Los Angeles



**Prepared by Caltrans District 7 Division of Maintenance
January 26, 2009**

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Introduction

This report has been prepared at the request of the City of Los Angeles Transportation Committee to address concerns with the State Highway System.

The key concern presented by the City of Los Angeles (City) is the condition of the freeway system within the downtown area and the need for improvement of this area. The areas of interest presented by the City are:

1. Downtown Los Angeles areas where the freeway system is deteriorating
2. How Caltrans responds to requests for service
3. How funding is allocated
4. How the deficiencies in Los Angeles freeway system can be remedied
5. How the Los Angeles freeway system compares to other urban freeways in the state

The City's concern appear more directed to the aesthetic aspect of the freeway system as opposed to the operational and safety aspects. As such, the report focuses on roadside features, such as landscaping, litter, and graffiti. Other roadway aspects, such as safety and congestion, are not covered in this report.

While the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) understands and shares the City's concern, Caltrans is doing what it can to maintain and improve the freeway infrastructure. The City's efforts to better understand how Caltrans manages its freeway facilities are appreciated and we look forward to working cooperatively with the City to resolve its concerns.

Since the state highway system covers over 50,000 highway lane miles and is used by millions of motorists on a daily basis, Caltrans has developed a broad mission and goals statement that help guide the planning and decision-making process. This Mission and Goals statement provide general guidance to the various departments that comprise Caltrans. Each department, such as the Division of Maintenance, further develops these broad concepts with strategic goals, objectives, and policies to be deployed consistently throughout the state.

Caltrans Mission and Goals

Caltrans Mission:

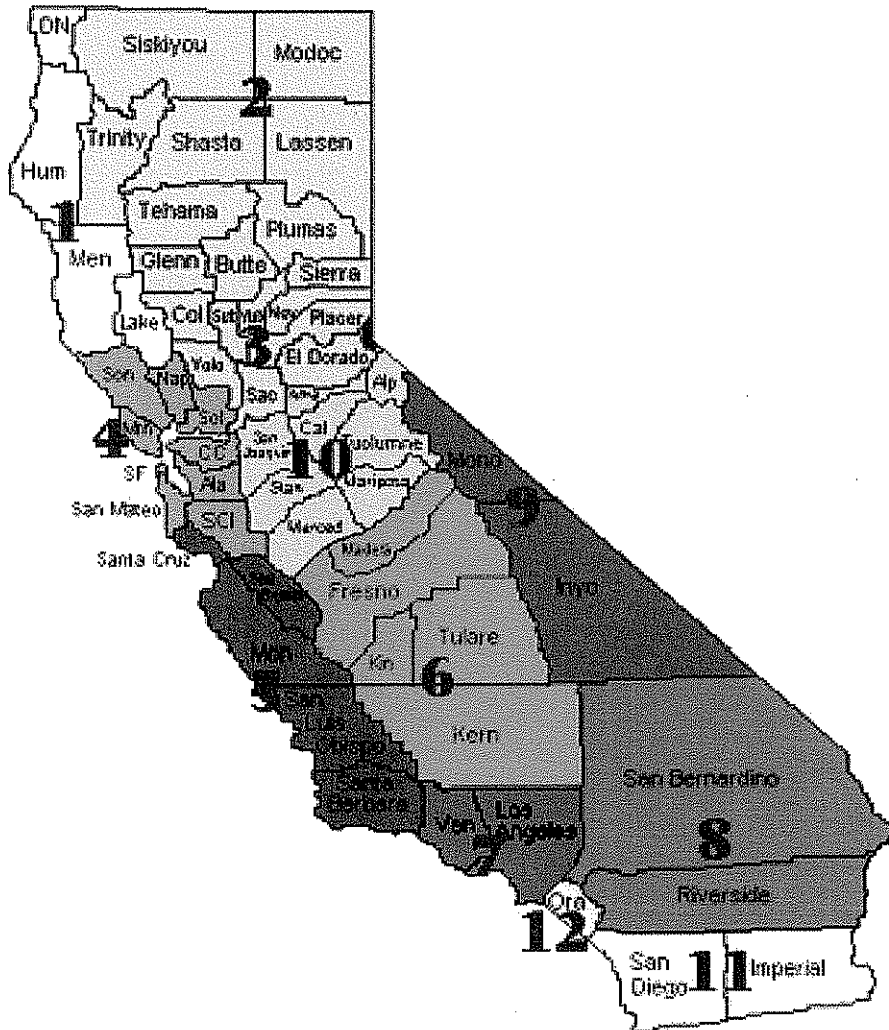
Caltrans Improves Mobility Across California

Strategic Goals:

- **SAFETY -**
Provide the safest transportation system in the nation for users and workers.
- **MOBILITY -**
Maximize transportation system performance and accessibility.
- **DELIVERY -**
Efficiently deliver quality transportation projects and services.
- **STEWARDSHIP -**
Preserve and enhance California's resources and assets.
- **SERVICE-**
Promote quality service through an excellent workforce.

About Caltrans

Caltrans is organized into twelve districts with a statewide headquarters located in Sacramento, California.



Los Angeles and Ventura County, and the 98 cities within the counties, make up Caltrans, District 7. The district includes a wide range of topography, including mountainous terrain, deserts, valleys, and coastal regions. This district also includes areas that are densely populated and areas that are more sparsely populated. The district also generates about 25% of all statewide traffic volumes and accounts for about 30% of statewide freeway congestion.

This makes District 7 the most densely populated and heavily traveled Caltrans district in the state of California.

Within this area, Caltrans District 7 maintains over 1,100 center line miles (equal to 6,200 lane miles) of freeways and conventional highways. This is the highest amount of roadway in the state. The district also maintains 2323 bridge structures. This is also the highest number of bridge structures in the state. The district also has the highest amount of distressed pavement and the most vehicle miles of travel.

The district does all this with a staff of about 900 highway maintenance workers. This comes to an average of more than one mile stretch per maintenance worker. Of the 1,100 miles, about 420 of the freeway and highway miles are within the boundaries of the city of Los Angeles.

Since Caltrans is organized and directed by our Headquarters office, there is no practical way to segregate precise expenditures in the downtown area or the city of Los Angeles from the rest of the district (Los Angeles and Ventura Counties). This is because Caltrans' Maintenance database sorts production and cost entries by routes within the district, not by municipal boundaries. We have been able to collect some data specific to the city of Los Angeles, and it is included in this report.

Caltrans District 7 Maintenance Region Map

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North Regional Office
28820 N. Old Road
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South Regional Office
5360 W. Imperial Hwy.
Los Angeles, CA 90045

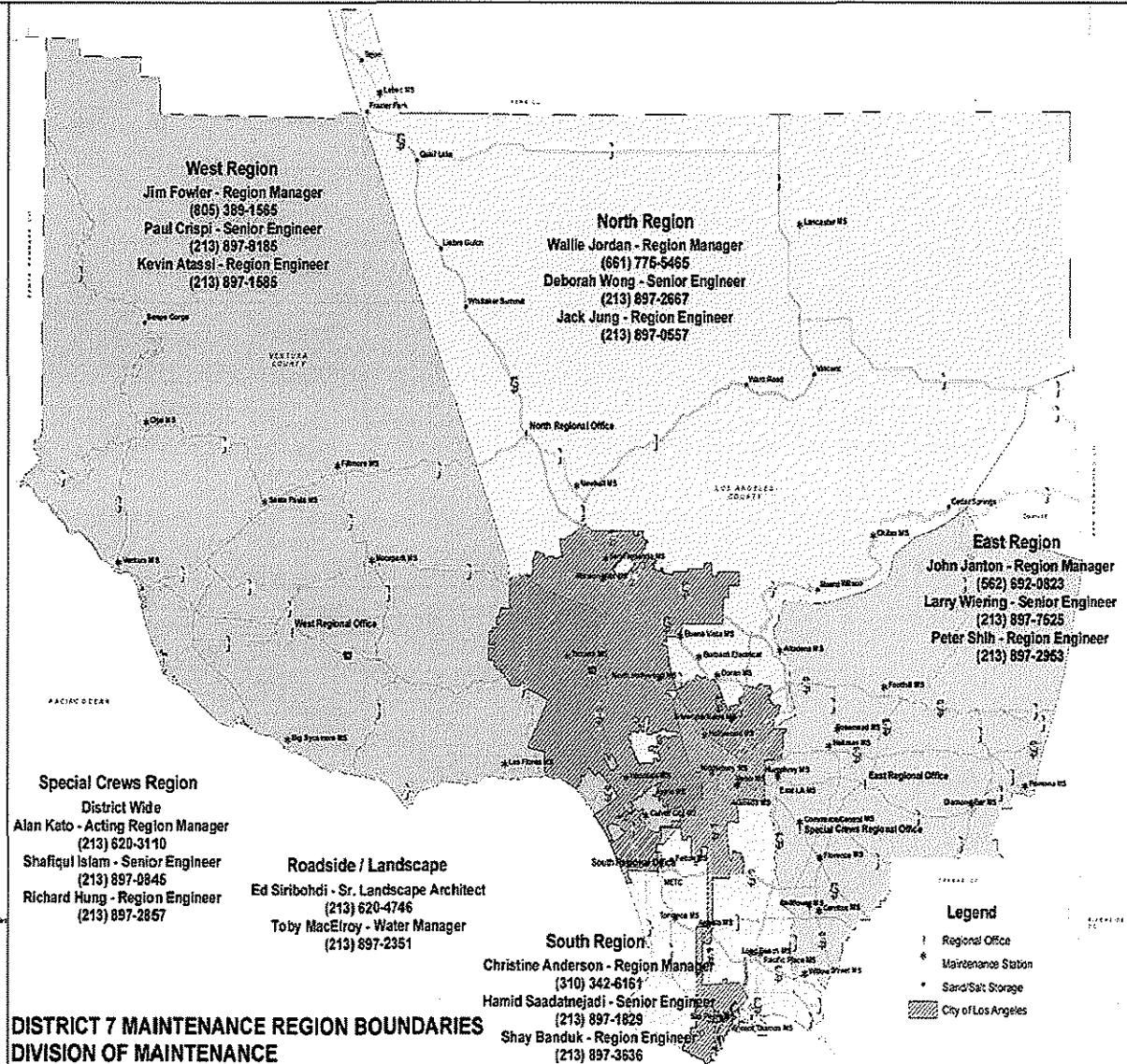
East Regional Office
1940 S. Workman Mill Rd.
Whittier, CA 90601

West Regional Office
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Special Crews Regional Office
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Commerce, CA 90040



LAST UPDATE 01/12/2006
BY: THAVAKA PANCHSARAT



Funding and Staffing

The State allocates funds to the districts based on Safety, Preservation and Service. Caltrans District 7 receives about \$154,000,000 annually for maintenance of the freeway and highway infrastructure. This budget is broken down as follows:

\$74,000,000 for staffing
\$48,000,000 for operating expenses, utilities, and equipment
\$32,000,000 for projects

Staffing resources fund about 1000 positions, most are maintenance field personnel located in maintenance facilities throughout the district. About 100 are located in the District 7 Headquarters located in downtown Los Angeles across from City of Los Angeles City Hall.

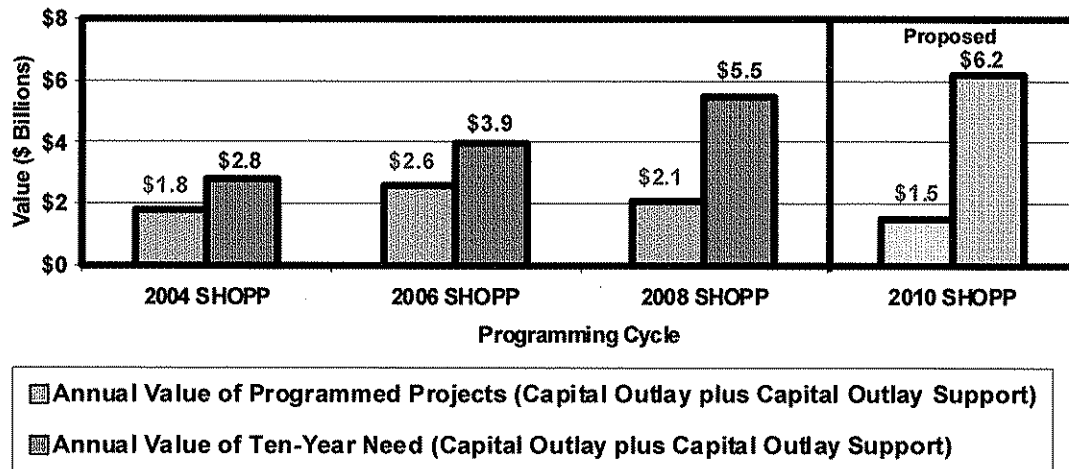
Of the 900 field positions, there are 81 landscape and road crews which maintain the roadway and roadside in District 7. Of these, 34 landscape and road crews maintain portions the roadway and roadside within the boundaries of Los Angeles City. Nine of these crews have responsibilities only within the city of Los Angeles; 25 crews have responsibilities in other cities as well.

The average crew size is seven employees and the 34 crews that maintain the roadway and roadside within the City currently have 34 vacant positions due to work injuries, military service, and hiring restrictions based on budget shortfall. This is further complicated by the relatively low pay to highway workers and the high cost of living in the Los Angeles area.

On a long term basis, Caltrans relies on the State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP) to fund the maintenance and preservation of the existing highway infrastructure. The source of funding for the SHOPP is the State Highway Account (SHA), funded primarily through State and federal excise taxes on gasoline and diesel fuel. This funding source has been shrinking for several years and continues to diminish as the state economy suffers through this recession. In addition to the shrinking availability of SHOPP funds, the costs of maintaining and preserving the state Highway System are increasing due to the cumulative effects of an aging system, growing traffic demands, and the rising cost of construction. While this funding is not directly used for maintenance activities and staff, it results in projects that reduce maintenance resource needs. For example, a SHOPP project to re-landscape a segment of highway would significantly reduce the need for Maintenance Landscape workers to maintain that segment. The resources can then be used to focus on other maintenance needs.

The graph below illustrates the wide and increasing gap in funds needed vs funds available. For the 2008 SHOPP (projects from 2008 to 2012) only about 38% of the needed funds are projected to be available. For the proposed 2010 SHOPP only 24% of the funding is projected to be available. Caltrans District 7 generates about 29% of the SHOPP revenues but only gets back about 22%.

Comparison of Needs versus Programmed SHOPP (\$Billions)



Furthermore, Caltrans has set SHOPP funding priorities for the various programs within the SHOPP. The highest priorities include emergencies, safety, and bridges while roadside improvements, such as landscaping, are low on the SHOPP priority. This limits funding for landscaping projects and other types of projects that can improve the visual aspects of our highway system.

Landscape Issues

Caltrans district 7 encompasses 9,000 acres of roadside. Much of this roadside was planted over 40 years ago and has reached the end of its intended life. The City of Los Angeles contains only a portion of the 27 named freeway corridors in the entire county of Los Angeles. Of those corridors, 14-corridor sections within the Los Angeles City limits were built and landscaped over 40 years ago. The incorporation of landscape is primarily a functional feature to help stabilize slopes, glare screen, and assist in drainage. The landscaping was never designed to be ornate or to provide for aesthetics as a primary reason for installation.

To manage the existing landscaping Caltrans has a staff of 171 landscape workers that handle the entire district. This means that each landscape worker must maintain about 52 acres. Within the City of Los Angeles, there are 20 crews that handle routes within the City. For the downtown area, there are 3 crews in charge of landscaping. This compares poorly with many other agencies that have larger landscape forces and less challenging work environments.

As with most of the District, routes have expanded significantly to add capacity since they were first built 40 years ago or more. Roadway features such as High Occupancy Lanes (HOV), mixed flow lanes, and auxiliary lanes have added roadway capacity, but diminished landscaping and the ability for our workers to maintain the landscaping. Sound barrier exposes blank canvas for graffiti taggers. In addition to reduced workspaces, highway speeds and congestion have created limited work windows and increased the need for safety equipment and time needed to maintain the landscaping. Statewide, Caltrans has suffered 167 deaths of highway workers – mostly due to errant or impaired drivers.

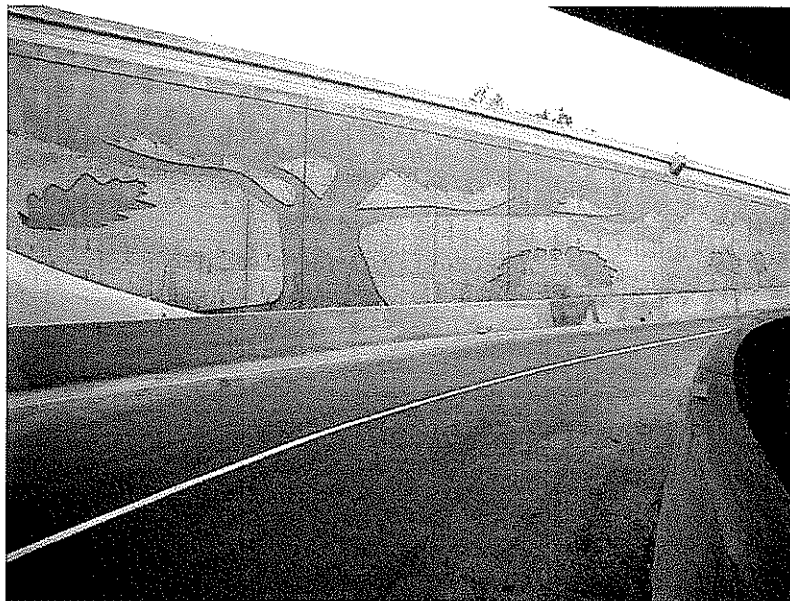
In many landscaped portions of freeway, the functional use of landscaping has reached its maximum potential of mortality. Currently, 75% of all freeway landscaped acreage within the city of Los Angeles is in need of rehabilitation.

The harsh conditions of the freeways do not provide the prime conditions for ornate landscape along with the frequent care that is needed to sustain lush growth. The high amounts of water, fertilization, chemical control of invasive growth have reached the limitation of today's standards. 90% of the existing landscape on the freeway within the City of Los Angeles has reached its mortality limitations.

In the past years Caltrans Dist. 7 Landscape Architecture has been implementing some roadside improvements in the LA. City limits. To reduce maintenance work and expose our workers to live traffic, a solution such as hardscaping is being implemented. We also apply aesthetic to soundwall, concrete median barrier, and bridge. Where slope is disturbed on projects mulch and some groundcover are being planted for erosion control and add some colors to slope plane.



Rte 101 gore area paving with colored stamped concrete



Rte 405, Sherman Oaks , Mural on retaining wall

Graffiti Issues

Graffiti removal is a high priority for Caltrans and the City and the public can call 213-897-3656 to report graffiti. As with litter and landscaping, access to the graffiti locations requires resources not just for removing the graffiti, but also to close lanes and reduce the possible impact to the traveling public. For the downtown area, this means that most graffiti removal takes place at night or early in weekends. As a result, removing the graffiti is not performed as expediently as Caltrans would like.

The Caltrans Superintendent responsible for graffiti removal in the downtown and East LA interchange area dedicates three of his 25 employees to graffiti removal seven days a week. The murals on Route 101 are of particular public concern, so they are accorded some priority although personnel reductions and traffic volumes no longer allow daily attention to 101 alone.

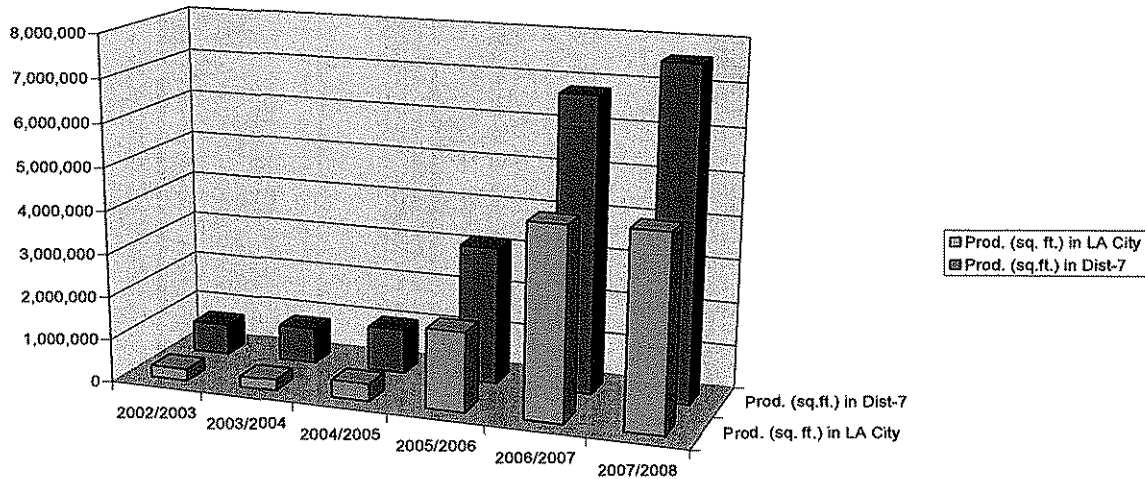
Caltrans is working with the Los Angeles County Sheriff (LASD) and CHP to assist law enforcement agencies in their expanding efforts to apprehend and prosecute taggers. On January 20, Caltrans management met with LASD and accepted the Sheriff's offers to link into the Orange County graffiti database. This system will allow ready accumulation and rapid recovery of pictorial files of tags/logos, the dimensions of the damage, and the GPS site. The easy input to this system is expected to expedite tracking and identification of taggers for prosecution and restitution in Los Angeles as it has begun to do in Orange County. Caltrans is purchasing the cell phones that have linkage capability to the database, and with LASD's assistance, we expect to have them programmed and in use by mid-March.



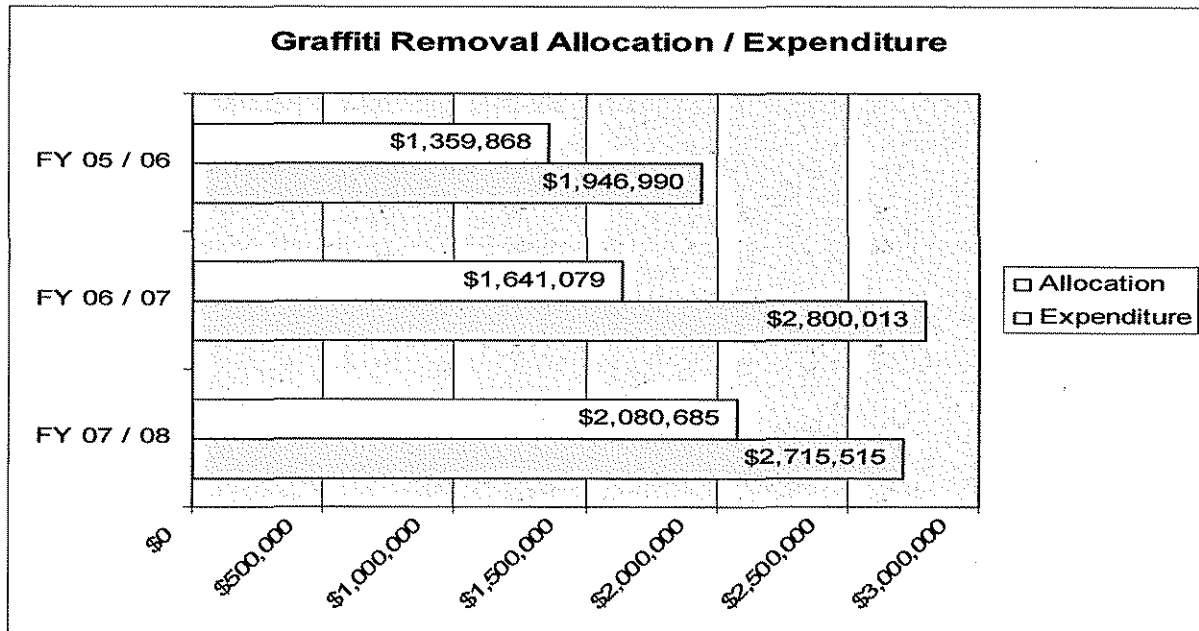
Mural restoration on Route 101, Downtown Los Angeles, 2005

The graph below illustrates the increasing effort by Caltrans to eliminate graffiti district-wide and within the City of Los Angeles. Of the 7,622,324 square feet of graffiti removed district-wide last year, 4,479,674 square feet was in the City of Los Angeles.

Graffiti Production in Square Feet

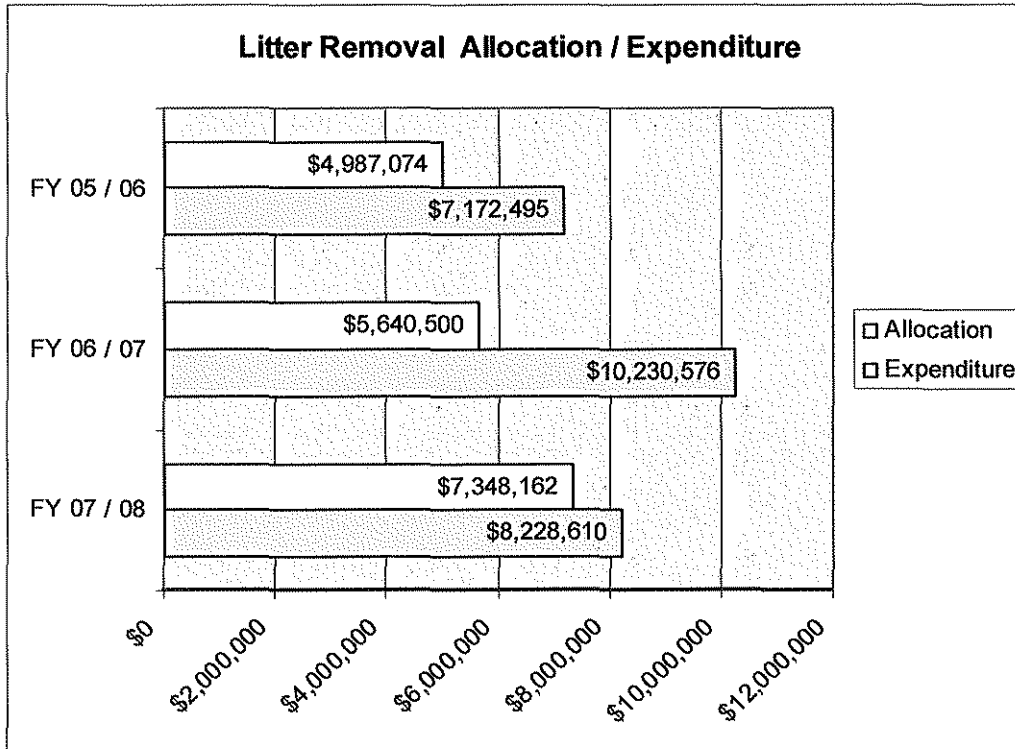


The resources expended for graffiti removal have also increased in the past three years, even exceeding the allocation for this task. The additional expended resources come from other areas of our budget, not additional funding from Headquarters.



Litter and Debris

Last year the district spent more that \$8,000,000 on littler and debris removal. This resulted in 60,743 cubic yards removed district-wide, including 14,438 cubic yards within the city. Litter and debris is a quality of life issue that requires constant attention. In urban environments, this cleaning of the freeways needs to be balanced with the need to keep traffic moving. Removal is also complicated by homeless camps. Last year Caltrans cleaned up 599 camps district-wide, including 194 camps in the city of Los Angeles.

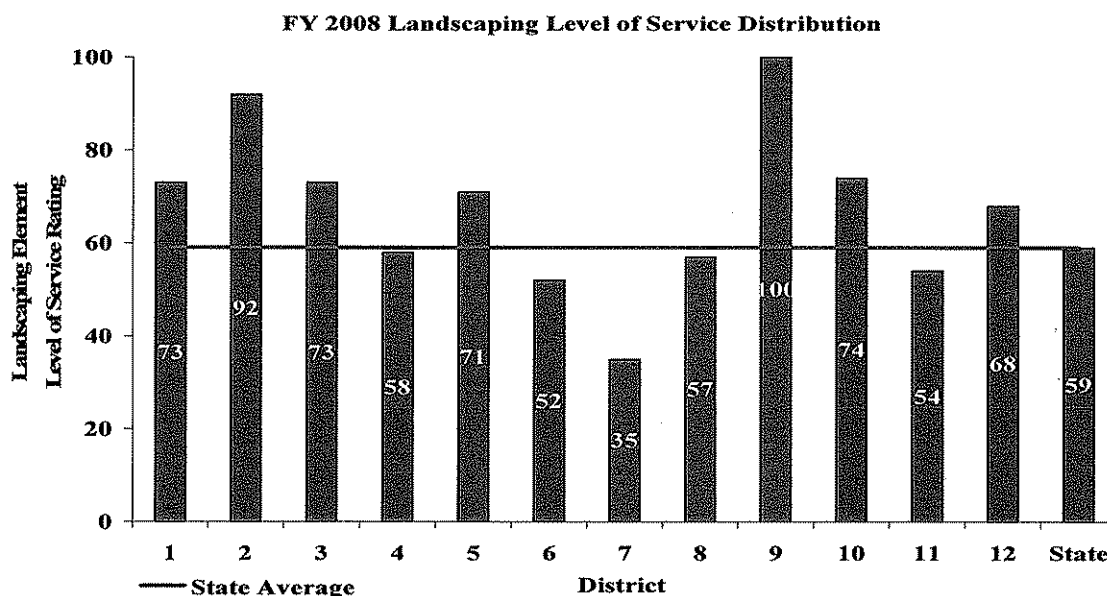


How the district compares to the rest of the state

Caltrans uses a program called Maintenance Level of Service (LOS) to assess the condition of the State Highway System. The LOS score is a measure of our maintenance staff's ability to keep up with maintenance demands. The assessment is made each year and is managed by our Headquarters' Maintenance Division. The LOS program is useful in comparing different districts and also in comparing goals vs. accomplishments. The program works by dividing the state highway inventory into one-mile segments and then randomly evaluating 10% of the samples within each district. The field evaluation is done by staff that has been specifically trained to assess the specific items under review, such as litter and debris, graffiti, and landscaping. The evaluation period begins in the month of April and concludes in July. The data is then analyzed by Headquarters and the reports produced by September. Reports are produced for each district as well as a statewide report. The reports are available by request.

Since only 10% of the district's highways are evaluated for the LOS reports, they are not used to generate specific locations where improvements are needed. The 10% sample draw is intended to provide a snapshot of the current condition of our highway inventory. LOS data is used as a tool by Caltrans to identify deficiencies, analyze trends, make resource adjustments, and to justify need for a budget increase.

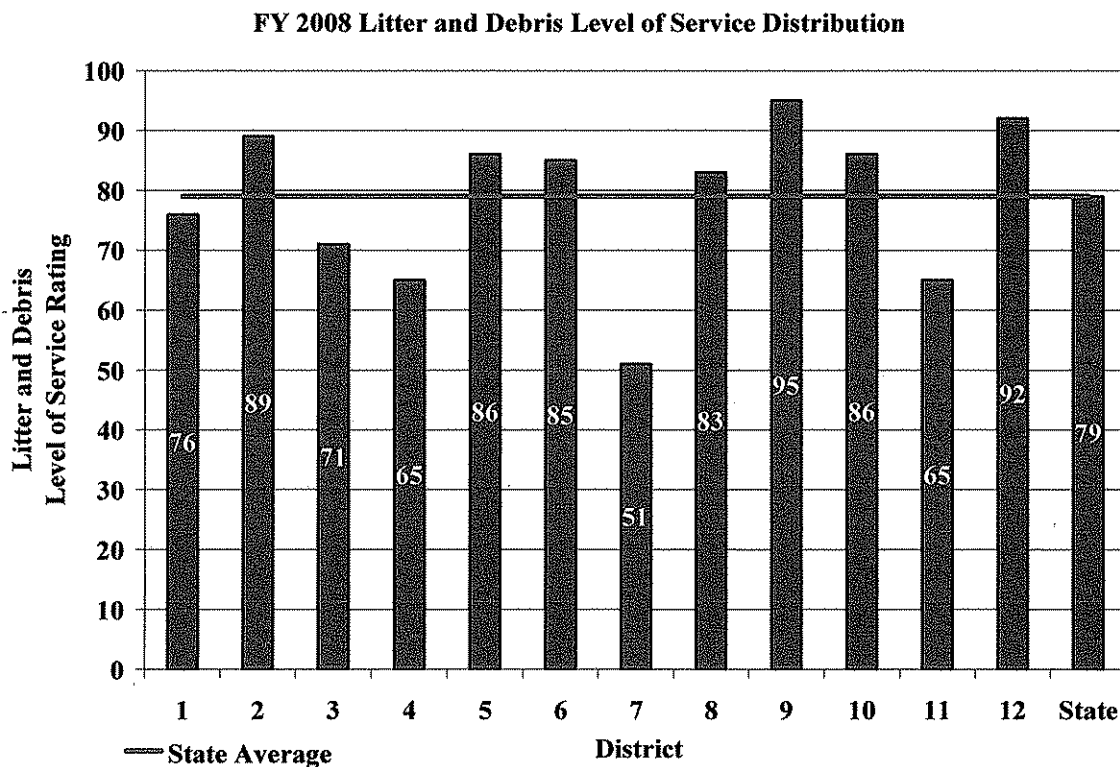
The chart below shows a district comparison of landscape LOS scores statewide. The red bar indicates the average LOS score of 59. The highest score of 100 (no maintenance required) is District 9 (Mono/Inyo/East Kern/North San Bernardino Counties) and the lowest score of 39 is District 7. District 9 currently evaluates one (1) landscaping area which represents 0.2% of their total landscaping segments in LOS evaluation. District 7 currently evaluates 52 landscaping areas which represent 10.6% of the total landscaping segments in LOS evaluation.



The chart below shows a district by district comparison of litter and debris LOS scores statewide. The red bar indicates the average LOS score of 79. The highest score of 95 (very little maintenance required) is District 9 (Mono/Inyo/East Kern/North San Bernardino Counties) and the lowest score of 51 is District 7. The score is determined by the level of debris found within the one mile segment under evaluation. If there is one instance of litter, the score given is Need 1 (50%) and if there are two or more instances, the score is Need 2 (0%). In District 7, it would be quite challenging to drive a mile of freeway and not find any litter.

District 9 is responsible for 739 centerline miles (1,777 lane miles) of the state's highway inventory. This represents approximately 5% of the centerline miles and 4% of the lane miles maintained by Caltrans in the state. About 32% of District 9 centerline miles are designated Class 1. This entire Class 1 highway inventory is rural, and is located in desert terrain. None of District 9's centerline miles are urban. The average number of lanes per mile is 2.4.

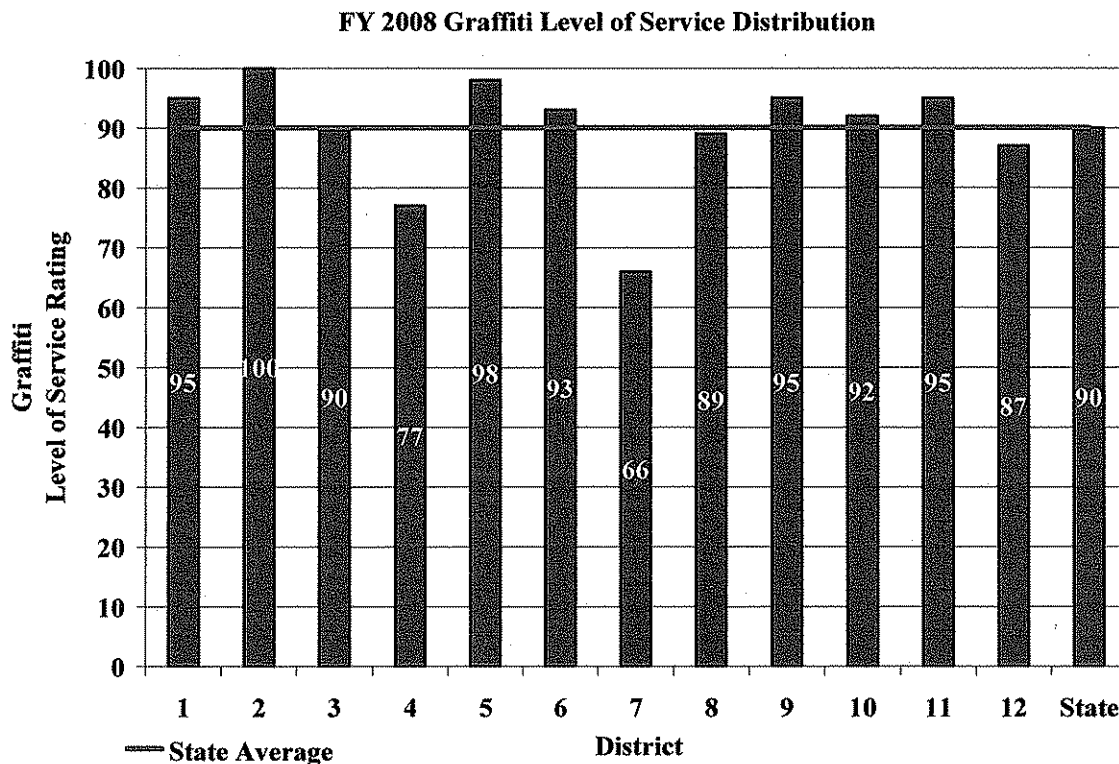
District 7 is responsible for maintaining approximately 1,075 (6,267 lane Miles) of the state's highway inventory. This represents 7% of the centerline miles and 13% of the lane miles maintained by Caltrans in the state. Almost half of District 7's centerline miles are designated Class one (1). Most of this Class 1 highway is urban and located in southwest terrain. Overall approximately 65% of District 7's centerline miles are urban. The average number of lanes per centerline mile is approximately 5.8.



The chart below shows a district comparison of graffiti LOS scores statewide. The red bar indicates the average LOS score of 90. The highest score of 100 (no maintenance required) is District 2 (Lassen, Shasta, Tehama, Trinity Counties and portions of Butte and Sierra Counties). The lowest score of 66 is District 7.

District 2 is responsible for, 719 centerline miles (3,995 lane miles) of the state's highway inventory. This represents approximately 12% of the centerline miles and 8% of the lane miles maintained by Caltrans in the state. About 40% of District 2 centerline miles are designated Class 1. Most of this Class 1 highway is rural; split about equally between that located in mountain and desert terrain. The average number of lanes per mile is 2.3.

District 7 is responsible for maintaining approximately 1,075 (6,267 lane Miles) of the state's highway inventory. This represents 7% of the centerline miles and 13% of the lane miles maintained by Caltrans in the state. Almost half of District 7's centerline miles are designated Class one (1). Most of this Class 1 highway is urban and located in southwest terrain. Overall approximately 65% of District 7's centerline miles are urban. The average number of lanes per centerline mile is approximately 5.8.



How Caltrans Responds to Requests for Service

Caltrans takes its customer service responsibilities very seriously. Caltrans responds professionally and expeditiously to meet our customers' needs. Caltrans generally tracks requests for service to ensure that they are promptly addressed. There are several ways Caltrans does this, including the use of a web-based on-line internet system.

The method used by the public or city depends on the urgency of the situation. For emergencies, the city should call 911 as this number is directly linked to the CHP. If the CHP believes that Caltrans assistance is necessary, they will communicate directly with Caltrans.

For non-emergencies, the City can submit a Maintenance Service Request via the internet Caltrans website at web address:

<http://www.dot.ca.gov>

A copy of the service request form is attached below for reference.

In a typical year, Caltrans District 7 responds to over 3,000 Maintenance Service Requests. This is the most in the state.

Further assistance can be obtained by calling the Traffic Management Center (TMC) at 323-259-1971. The TMC can be used for non-emergency situations that the City believes need to be addressed quickly – such as debris on the highway.

In addition, the City can send Caltrans District 7 a letter for situations that are more complex and would benefit from additional consideration. Letters are also monitored within the District by a centralized system to ensure that Caltrans responds promptly.

The City can also call Caltrans District 7 Public Affairs 213-897-3656 and speak to a Caltrans representative.

Maintenance Service Request Form

Caltrans :: Report a Problem

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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

[Caltrans](#) > [Contact Us](#) > [Report a Problem](#)

Submit a Maintenance Service Request

You can use the form below to submit a request for maintenance service. Requests are limited to the drop down list. If you do not find what you want to report on the drop down list then submit your request [here](#).

All of the fields in the form are **required** fields. Please fill out the information completely and submit the service request. The location will be reported to the nearest maintenance facility for evaluation and repair.

Maintenance Service Requests are handled Monday through Friday, 8AM to 4PM. This form should NOT be used to report any kind of highway emergency. Report highway emergencies to 911 or the California Highway Patrol immediately.

State Highway Number (Route) (Required):

California County (Required):

Town or City Nearest (Required):

Nearest major cross street, or overcrossing (Required):

Direction of Travel (Required):

What time of day did you notice this problem? (Required)

Please select the type of Maintenance Service from the drop down list: (Required)
Service Request must match drop down list. If your request is not listed use [this form](#).

Please describe the geographic location and description of the problem (Required):

Enter your complete e-mail address *yourname@domain.type* (Required)

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How Deficiencies Can Be Remedied

While Caltrans makes every effort to properly maintain the highway system, there are several constraints that challenge our efforts. Most critical is the lack of sufficient funding to maintain aging infrastructure. In addition, congestion and limited work windows prevent quick response and increase the cost of performing the needed maintenance.

To address funding shortages, Caltrans periodically requests to the legislature budget increases to deal with increases in inventory and other special situations. Oftentimes the requests are denied before getting far along in the process.

Caltrans is also working with agency staff to inform the Governor and Legislature of the dire funding shortfalls needed to adequately maintain the State Highway System. These efforts are largely carried out by Caltrans via the Headquarters programs.

To help offset these issues, Caltrans has programs aimed at allowing public and private sector groups and organizations to assist with the maintenance of highway system. This includes the popular Adopt-A-Highway Program. Caltrans also works with cities via the Caltrans encroachment permit process for improvements, such as landscaping at ramps. The city is encouraged to explore these opportunities as a way of addressing some of the city's concerns.