

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

Date: September 18, 2014

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

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

Subject: **USE OF TRAFFIC OFFICERS FOR CONGESTION RELIEF
(BUDGET INSTRUCTION 14-0600-S208)**

SUMMARY

Budget instructions to the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) to report back relative to how traffic officers are assigned to traffic gridlocked intersections and the metrics used to determine which intersections receive manual traffic control. (14-0600-S208)

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file this report

BACKGROUND

The LADOT implemented a program known as "TOKI" or Traffic Officers at Key Intersections during Fiscal Year 2002-2003. The department hired 30 traffic officers at that time to primarily focus on the Ventura Corridor Project. In addition, it established the criteria for evaluating intersections that could benefit from traffic control services. In addition, a Motion by Councilmember Tom LaBonge (CF 03-0581 attached) which also recommended traffic officers be deployed more often for traffic congestion. Both these initiatives ultimately went away as the department lost many officers due to the economic downturn, early retirement offers and balancing the need for parking enforcement, resulting in turnover of the parking spaces and revenue by the City. The metric at the time was established by conducting a time/travel study of the proposed intersection. (Attached is a copy of how to conduct the survey). There was also a discussion at the time as to the effectiveness of the program as some thought adjusting traffic light timing via ATSAC may prove more effective; however, traffic is dynamic and is affected by many factors from construction, to special events and other weather and road impacts.

RESPONSE

The department currently deploys officers to intersections by request of LAPD, LAFD and council district offices to address a specific problem. For example, a collision blocking the roadways, a fire or police request for the establishment of a perimeter, the Hollywood/Beachwood Canyon on some weekends, Venice Beach areas during summer holiday weekends and an officer assigned routinely to a school near

a freeway off-ramp. From June 1, 2014 to August 31, 2014, we have provided nearly 7000 hours (6910) of traffic control for the above referenced responses.

In addition, construction projects, special events and protests have resulted in an additional 24,626 hours of traffic control. Of those, 21,099 are for non-reimbursed services (City events such as, 1st amendment protests, 4th of July events, water main breaks resulting in extended closures) and 3527 are reimbursed (Metro/Expo construction projects and commercial venues).

Going forward, LADOT can utilize traffic officers to peak hour traffic control assignments and based on collaboration with ATSAC engineers, a new and more extensive criterion should be establish to determine where officers are located and the level of effectiveness the officers may provide.

Preliminary to the discussions on new metrics, it should be understood that traffic officers directing traffic in a **signalized intersection** work to support the function and phases of the signal. It is not recommended that a traffic officer "pull against a light" due to increased liability and limited opportunities.

Traffic officers in intersections can help to alleviate the "blocking of the box" or intersection "gridlock", which helps alleviate driver frustration, yet deployment decisions would determine if time of travel is reduced and would likely require "corridor" deployment.

Should the City Council reinstate the TOKI program LADOT staff recommends the following metrics be considered for future assignments of traffic officers;

Volume

(number of vehicles traversing the intersection)

Capacity

(number of lanes available for vehicles)

Collisions

(number and frequency of collisions in the intersection)

Phases

(number of movements facilitated by the signal; ie left turn only phases, pedestrian crossings, through traffic only, etc.)

Location

(Close to freeway ramps, schools, hospitals etc.)

Once a location is determined, as with the first metrics used, evaluation of surrounding intersections should be performed to determine if the traffic officer is creating a problem in a neighboring intersection, thus requiring pre, during and post reviews.

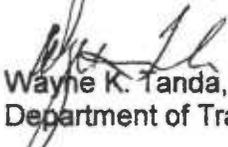
SJR/GS/BH

Attachments

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
Intra-Departmental Correspondence

DATE: June 28, 2005

TO: The Honorable City Council
c/o City Clerk, Room 395, City Hall
Attention: Transportation Committee Chair

FROM: 
Wayne K. Tanda, General Manager
Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: **TRAFFIC OFFICERS AT KEY INTERSECTIONS (CF#03-0581)**

This is in response to the Council Motion (CF#03-0581) introduced by Councilmember Tom LaBonge on March 26, 2003. The motion instructed the Department of Transportation to: identify appropriate intersection locations for placement of dedicated traffic control officers; present an implementation plan that includes existing Department of Transportation staff on a six and two schedule (six [6] hours of parking enforcement, two [2] hours of traffic control); provide the costs associated with implementing such a program. The Department was directed to report back to the Transportation Committee.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Department of Transportation implement the Traffic Officer Deployment Warrants (detailed below) to determine the need for fixed post placement of Traffic Officers at intersections for traffic congestion relief purposes.

Discussion

In fiscal year 2002-2003, 30 Traffic Officer positions were added to provide citywide traffic control. Ten of these positions are currently assigned exclusively to the Ventura Corridor Project. The remaining 20 positions are assigned proportionately to the five enforcement offices and respond to traffic control requests on a daily basis as they arise. This deployment has worked extremely well because it dedicates a contingent of Traffic Officers to address traffic control exclusively while allowing Traffic Officers assigned to regular patrol to devote their time to parking enforcement duties.

Due to increased ad hoc traffic control needs, Traffic Officers assigned to regular parking enforcement patrol duties occasionally perform emergency traffic control duty as well. In fiscal year 2002-2003, Traffic Officers assigned to regular parking enforcement patrol collectively spent a total of 32,242 staff hours performing emergency traffic control duties.

Fiscal Impact of Six (6) and Two (2) Proposal and Recommended Alternative

The Department of Transportation recommends against deploying Traffic Officers to work fixed post traffic control for two hours a day because of the negative fiscal impacts that would occur. If the 350 Traffic Officers assigned to daily regular parking enforcement patrol (FY 02-03 deployment figures used) were assigned to work fixed post traffic control for two hours each day, it would result in an increase of 142,271 traffic control hours annually. Added to the 32,242 traffic control hours currently performed by regular parking enforcement patrol officers, the total annual traffic control hours performed by regular patrol officers annually would be 174,513. The increase in traffic control hours

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and concurrent loss of patrol hours would result in 622,436 less parking citations written which would result in a net revenue loss of approximately **\$20.7 million** per year. In addition to the fiscal impact, such redeployment would also hinder the Bureau of Parking Enforcement and Traffic Control's ability to adequately perform their other critical parking enforcement duties, including emergency traffic control.

As an alternative to the "six and two" deployment, the Department of Transportation developed Traffic Officer Deployment Warrants (described below) to evaluate traffic congestion at intersections to determine whether fixed post placement of Traffic Officers is necessary. The Department also worked in coordination with the various Council Offices to identify and survey intersections using the Traffic Officer Deployment Warrants.

Using a listing of 500 intersections provided by Department's Office of Transportation Development and Transit Services, the Bureau of Parking Enforcement and Traffic Control staff contacted each of the Council Offices for the purpose of identifying those intersections on the list that should be surveyed. Approximately 150 intersections were selected and surveyed. Of the 150, 50 met the warrant criteria for placement of at least one Traffic Officer for traffic control purposes for at least one peak hour period of the day. Because the Department did not have sufficient staffing resources to provide traffic control at intersections that met warrant criteria, the Department submitted a budget package in the FY 2005-2006 requesting the addition of 44 Traffic Officers and six enforcement supervisors. The budget package, which totals approximately \$2.4 million, was approved. Funding for this package will be provided from two sources: \$1.9 million from General Fund and \$1.5 million Prop C. The program qualifies for Prop C funding because many of the intersections that have been identified and meet warrant criteria are located on bus transit routes. Since the budget package is revenue neutral, no negative impact to the City is anticipated. The Bureau of Parking Enforcement and Traffic Control anticipates the additional personnel to be deployed by October 1, 2005.

Traffic Officer Deployment Warrants

A study of traffic conditions, existing traffic controls, signal timing, pedestrian behavior, physical characteristics and downstream blockages near a signalized intersection shall be performed to determine whether deployment of a Traffic Officer is justified to control recurrent congestion at a particular location. All potential signing and signal timing solutions should be explored before Traffic Officer deployment is considered. The investigation of the need for manual traffic control shall include an analysis of the applicable factors contained in the following Traffic Officer Deployment Warrants and other factors related to the existing operation and safety of the study location.

The satisfaction of Traffic Officer Deployment Warrants alone shall not mandate the deployment of a Traffic Officer. A Traffic Officer should not be deployed unless an analysis indicates that other remedial measures are not feasible and deployment of a Traffic Officer would improve the overall safety and/or operation of the intersection. A Traffic Officer should not be deployed to address recurrent congestion unless one or more of the following warrants are satisfied:

Warrant 1 – Intersection Blockage

This warrant is met at a signalized intersection of two arterial streets, which is experiencing significant intersection blockage due to vehicles queuing from an adjacent signalized intersection.

Threshold Criteria – Significant intersection blockage is defined as vehicles blocking one or more lanes of a conflicting traffic movement momentarily during each of at least 25 percent of the signal

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cycles in one hour (e.g., for a 90-second cycle there are 40 cycles per hour, and this threshold would be met if momentary blockage occurred during 10 or more of these cycles).

Warrant 2 – Pedestrian Conflicts

This warrant is met at signalized intersection that includes at least one arterial street and that is experiencing significant pedestrian/vehicular conflicts that are interfering with one or more turning movements.

Threshold Criteria – Significant pedestrian/vehicular conflict is defined as pedestrians entering the crosswalk after the Walk phase and blocking one or more turning vehicles momentarily during each of at least 25 per cent of the signal cycles in one hour.

JP:PGC

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Bureau of Parking Enforcement and Traffic Control

FY 06-07

Expanded the Traffic Officer Key Intersections program by (13) locations, currently staffing (51) intersections, deploying (70) Traffic Officers Monday – Friday, for the purpose of direct traffic during the rush hours (7A-9A and 4P-7P) to reduce congestion.

Launched the Tiger Team program deploying (15) Traffic Officers and (10) OPG's which patrol the Wilshire corridor during rush hour (7A - 9A and 4P – 7P), enforcing posted restrictive parking (i.e. No Stopping Peak Hour Tow-Away and/or Anti-Gridlock signs) on Metro Rapid Bus activity routes, to reduce traffic congestion. Tiger Team expanded to Ventura Blvd in April 2007 during the morning peak hour.

Coordinated with the LAPD Police Commission and OPG's to launch a (6) month Pilot Program providing road side services which assist disabled motorist and reduce traffic congestion during rush hour (7A – 9A and 4P - 7P) on "Tiger Team" routes.

FY 07-08

TIGER Team Program was expanded to Crenshaw Bl and Sunset Bl for the morning and evening peak hours. The License Plate Recognition Units were incorporated into the travel time surveys to reduce the number of personnel needed to obtain the survey information.

Deployed 77 traffic officers at 55 locations for the Holiday Traffic Plan throughout the city to assist with traffic at shopping malls and other heavily congested corridors.

FY 08-09

The Mayor's TIGER Team Program was expanded to include Hot Spot throughout the City during the morning and evening peak hours.

FY 09-10