

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

Date: January 4, 2017

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
Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: **REPORT ON REQUIREMENTS TO RESTORE DISABLED PARKING PROGRAM/BLUE CURB ZONE PROGRAM (CF 14-1529)**

SUMMARY

This report directs the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), in coordination with the Department on Disability (DOD), the Bureau of Street Services (BSS) and the Bureau of Engineering (BOE), to re-establish City's Accessible Parking Zones (APZ).

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the City Council:

1. Direct LADOT, DOD, BOE, and BSS to establish the City's Accessible Parking Zone program and report back in six months on challenges, number of zones installed, and recommended modifications to the policy and/or approval and installation processes.
2. Authorize LADOT to designate a parking space for public benefit, typically at the beginning of a block, for accessible parking to serve the entire block.

BACKGROUND

For decades, LADOT received, investigated, and authorized blue curb zones for qualified residential, commercial, and other various establishments. An Accessible Parking Zone consisted of a blue painted curb and a sign designating a parking space in front of the requestor's address as a disabled parking space. LADOT suspended the program around 2010 following budget and staffing cuts.

Since 2010, the state and federal government have issued new rules under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA-MUTCD), and Public Rights of Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG). These new rules mandate, in part, that the City must install ADA compliant curb ramps, sidewalk improvements, and remove adjacent obstructions along with new blue curb zones. Meanwhile, the City continues to receive inquiries for blue curb zones, especially from residential areas. Given the various new requirements and potential impacts, the City must establish new public policies before resuming the blue curb program.

The recent Willits Settlement did not address the Accessible Parking Zone program. Rather, it focused on improving accessibility through the installation, upgrade, and repair of curb ramps and sidewalks. The proposed policies in this report for the re-establishment of the blue curb program capitalize on improvements made through the Willits Settlement in order comply with federal rules for the installation

of on-street accessible (blue curb) parking. All access improvements needed for the installation of an Accessible Parking Zone would be consistent with the Willits Settlement.

DISCUSSION

In November 2014, the City Council introduced a motion instructing LADOT to report on the status of installing on-street Accessible Parking Zones and to establish a viable blue curb installation program (Huizar-Bonin, CF 14-1529). This report describes the new requirements and roles and responsibilities to re-establish the program.

Federal and State guidelines including the Public Rights of Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG), the California Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA-MUTCD), and Caltrans Standard Plans have approved accessibility requirements for Accessible Parking Zones. The requirements include provisions for access ramp and sidewalk improvements and the removal of adjacent obstructions.

LADOT worked in partnership with DOD regarding proposed guidelines for processing requests and installation of Accessible Parking Zones. Additionally, LADOT and DOD participated in meetings with BOE and BSS regarding Accessible Parking Zones and other accessibility issues. The primary work for installing new blue zones originates with BOE and BSS, since it primarily entails curb ramp and sidewalk repair and construction.

LADOT receives approximately 30 Accessible Parking Zone requests per month, and DOD receives about 100 Accessible Parking Zone requests per month:

- 50% at single-family residential locations
- 35% at multi-family residential locations
- 15% at commercial/mixed residential-commercial locations

LADOT and DOD recently reviewed these requests and found that approximately 85% of requests are infeasible per federal and state guidelines for a variety of reasons. Most prominently, mid-block blue zones require a sidewalk of at least 14 feet. Most City sidewalks are eight to ten feet wide, particularly in residential locations. The remaining 15% of the requests require significant capital improvements to sidewalks and parkways to meet standards for installation.

Improvements related to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) can be complex and unique to individual locations. Consequently, there is no average cost per Accessible Parking Zone request. Improvements may range from paint to construction of curb ramps, tree removal/root pruning, and streetlight and other utility relocation.

PROPOSED APPLICATION AND INSTALLATION PROCESS

Given the demand, the City worked to identify a way to accommodate requests without deeming them infeasible. New federal and state regulations suggest that a traditional corner ramp can serve an adjacent Accessible Parking Zone, as long as a wheelchair can roll behind the vehicle parked at the Accessible Parking Zone and the curb in-between is free from vehicular activities that create safety issues such as bus zones. LADOT, DOD, BOE, BSS, and the City Administrative Officer (CAO) reached a consensus that an Accessible Parking Zone works best at the beginning of a block. Such a location not only capitalizes on existing infrastructure to satisfy federal and state requirements, but it offers the most economical and expedient method for the installation of an Accessible Parking Zone. Since requests for Accessible Parking Zones may not come from the frontage property, the City would declare this

installation a public benefit where the frontage property owners are informed, but not required to give consent.

Upon City Council approval of this report and the policies contained herein, requests for Accessible Parking Zone on file with LADOT will automatically move forward for evaluation and construction during the initial six months. New requests that arrive during the pilot period will undergo review and initial screening.

LADOT will investigate and determine the location and limit of the Accessible Parking Zone (blue and red curb if necessary). BOE will review for constructability. DOD will set the installation priority for LADOT, BOE and BSS. BOE will design sidewalk and ramp improvements; BSS will schedule and implement. Where confirmed feasible by the departments, the City Sidewalk Repair Program will improve the curb ramps, sidewalks, and access barrier removal for the entire block. DOT will complete the paint and sign installation and notify the requestor once BSS has completed the work.

In the future, requests for Accessible Parking Zone will start by filing a request on DOT's "MyLADOT" website. LADOT will modify the site to include a dedicated space for blue curbs. To eliminate duplicate requests, DOD (or any other council or city department) will refer requestors to the MyLADOT website. DOD will verify the request for the Accessible Parking Zone with the requestor and determine final access needs and forward approved cases to DOT and BOE.

LEGACY BLUE CURB:

As BOE investigates work areas are investigated for the Sidewalk Repair Program, BOE will notify DOD and DOT where existing blue curbs exist. DOD will investigate the need for the blue curb and, if qualified, forward the case to LADOT and BOE for re-installation of the blue curb following the new guidelines.

ACCESSIBLE PARKING ZONES AND THE PLANNING REVIEW PROCESS:

LADOT reviews a large number of development plans that may offer opportunities for adding Accessible Parking Zones as part of the review and approval process. LADOT will integrate Accessible Parking Zone and PROWAG policies into the planning review process to identify opportunities. For example, developments that may not offer on-site Americans with Disabilities Act parking due to limited space can provide on-street Accessible Parking Zones with appropriate ramps. In other cases, major developments are reconstructing curb, gutter, and sidewalk as part of street restoration. Accessible Parking Zones should be considered as well.

STAFFING AND TRAINING

In order to support the reinstatement of the Accessible Parking Zone program, DOD has requested two additional full-time position authorities through the FY 17/18 budget process. LADOT intends to absorb the workload into its existing constituent services programs. BOE and BSS will also perform their responsibilities during the initial evaluation period as part of the Sidewalk Repair Program budget and staffing.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

There is no significant fiscal impact to the General Fund to re-establish the Accessible Parking Zone program as proposed. Implementation cost will be borne by existing programs or incorporated into development and capital improvement projects.

SJR:VJ:vj

- c: Barbara Romero, Deputy Mayor of City Services
- David Hirano, CAO
- Gary Lee Moore, City Engineer
- Nazario Saucedo, BSS
- Stephen Simon, DOD