

**REPORT OF THE
CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST**

DATE: January 3, 2022

TO: Honorable Members of the Rules, Elections, and Intergovernmental Relations Committee

FROM: Sharon M. Tso 
Chief Legislative Analyst

Assignment No.: 21-11-0865

SUBJECT: Bureau of Engineering 2021-2022 Legislative Proposal

CLA RECOMMENDATION: ADOPT the attached Resolution to include in the City's 2021-2022 Federal Legislative Program SUPPORT or SPONSORSHIP for any legislation or administrative action that would allow for the use of local and regional standards for projects in the National Highway System.

SUMMARY

The Mayor and Council President requested that City departments submit recommendations for legislation to be included in the 2021-2022 Federal and State Legislative Program. In response, the Bureau of Engineering (BOE) submitted a proposal recommending that the City support legislation or administrative action allowing for the use of local and regional standards for projects in the National Highway System. Our office recommends that Council support this proposal.

BACKGROUND

According to BOE, over 200 streets within the City are a part of the National Highway System, totaling over 700 miles. For decades, the City and other agencies in the region have used the Standard Specification for Public Works Construction, which is a set of standards actively managed by the Southern California Chapter of the American Public Works Association. The State Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has allowed for the use of these specifications on projects since the mid-1980s, including projects within the National Highway System.

In February 2021, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) notified the City of its intent to only allow the use of Caltrans standards for projects in the National Highway System. Per the notice, the use of local or regional standards would no longer be acceptable for any projects in the National Highway System in order to comply with various sections of the Code of Federal Regulations that require the FHWA to solely allow the use of State standards.

Caltrans Standard Specifications are general standards intended for major highways and do not conform to the needs and uses of City streets. Using these State standards, the City would see substantial cost increases for projects as Caltrans requires larger signal poles and foundations, which are applicable for highways, but do not take into account space constraints on narrower streets or maintenance or public right-of-way considerations.

Additional issues that would arise from the use of Caltrans Standards that BOE identified include:

- City streets have a greater number of uses and demands including walking, biking, public transit operations, which Caltrans Standards do not take into account;
- Existing street infrastructure, including traffic signal controllers, may not be compatible with the Caltrans Standards;
- The conductor color codes that the City uses for wiring traffic signal equipment do not align with the same code system used by Caltrans and the use of two separate code systems could disrupt traffic operations and potentially create safety risks; and
- Caltrans' curb ramp requirements are more restrictive than the requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act and may be infeasible to implement on streets that have narrower sidewalks.



Matthew Shade
Analyst

Attachment: 1. Resolution

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, any official position of the City of Los Angeles with respect to legislation, rules, regulations or policies proposed to or pending before a local, state or federal governmental body or agency must have first been adopted in the form of a Resolution by the City Council with the concurrence of the Mayor; and

WHEREAS, for decades the City and other agencies in the region have used the Standard Specification for Public Works Construction, which is a set of standards for public works construction projects that is actively managed by the Southern California Chapter of the American Public Works Association; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Highway Administration has notified the City of its intent to only allow for the use of State Department of Transportation (Caltrans) standards for projects within the National Highway System in order to comply with federal regulations; and

WHEREAS, Caltrans Standard Specifications are general standards intended for major highways and do not conform to the needs and uses of City streets; and

WHEREAS, over 200 streets within the City are a part of the National Highway System, totaling over 700 miles; and

WHEREAS, the use of Caltrans standards would significantly increase City construction costs, reduce efficiencies, potentially disrupt traffic control operations, and do not take into account the diverse needs and uses of City streets;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, with the concurrence of the Mayor, that by the adoption of this Resolution, the City of Los Angeles hereby includes in its 2021-2022 Federal Legislative Program SUPPORT or SPONSORSHIP for any legislation or administrative action that would allow for the use of local and regional standards for projects in the National Highway System.