

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: February 25, 2009

TO: Farid Saffar, Director of Auditing
Office of the Controller

FROM: 
Rita L. Robinson, General Manager
Department of Transportation

**SUBJECT: PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION'S TRAFFIC SIGNAL SYNCHRONIZATION
PROJECT**

LADOT has undertaken efforts to provide a sound program for the Traffic Signal Synchronization Project and we believe your Audit has been helpful in identifying areas for potential improvement. We submit the following responses to the recommendations in your Audit of February 24, 2009.

Recommendation No. 1 – LADOT should develop a formalized plan and schedule, and ensure necessary resources for before-and-after studies of the Prop 1B synchronization project.

LADOT Response:

Before-and-after studies are conducted shortly after all ATSAC systems are brought on-line. LADOT has aligned the Priority Arterials Initiative with the implementation of ATSAC projects funded with Prop 1B so that the improvements derived from both efforts can be realized sooner and at the same time. In doing so, staff has been conducting the "before" portion of the before-and-after studies along major corridors in all of the upcoming and under-construction ATSAC projects. As projects are completed, staff returns to conduct the "after" portion of the study, and prepares formal written reports describing the benefits obtained from the project. In doing the studies in this fashion, we have been able to maximize the return on the resource investment, and have results to show for the Prop 1B projects shortly after they are completed. LADOT conducts the before-and-after studies on most Major highways in the project area. With the current hold on State Prop 1B funding for construction, we are unable to provide exact dates for the completion of these studies. However, LADOT is committed to completing the projects and studies as funding becomes available.

Recommendation No. 2 – LADOT should consider outsourcing the design of the ATCS retrofit projects if cost and schedule savings could be realized.

LADOT Response:

LADOT did consider the outsourcing of some or all of the ATSAC and ATCS design work as part of the development of our plan to utilize the Prop 1B funding. In our evaluation we considered both the compressed timeline and complex nature of the design. While we do not dispute the ability of outside consultants to prepare traffic signal plans, past experience on two major projects demonstrated that their knowledge of the intricacies of complex design associated with the ATSAC system is limited. LADOT staff that reviewed the work spent a much larger percentage of their time in the review process correcting errors than would have occurred if the plans were designed in-house. In both of these projects, the selection of the outside consulting firm was done with the Bureau of Engineering's on-call list, but required the preparation of an RFP for the selection process. This alone took over 12 months to complete and LADOT was very concerned that this lengthy process could significantly delay the Prop 1B projects. Therefore, to expedite the delivery of new ATSAC projects without the protracted learning curve associated with contracting out the design, the Mayor and Council approved LADOT's recommendation to use in-house staff.

As indicated in your audit, LADOT has taken steps to utilize outside consultants for the design of ATCS projects, which sequentially follows the ATSAC design in the Prop 1B project schedule. We agree that outsourcing some of the design effort may speed delivery and eliminate the need for any additional city staff, and we have been diligently working with the Bureau of Engineering to develop a new on-call consultant list that we can utilize to complete this portion of the Prop 1B projects.

Recommendation No. 3 – LADOT should discontinue using non-participating change orders for unrelated work and ensure a competitive bidding process is followed for all construction related projects.

LADOT Response:

LADOT has occasionally utilized the change order process to implement TPS, bikeways and urgent, traffic safety-related projects that could not be immediately constructed by City forces due to staff shortages. LADOT recognizes that the non-participating change order process bypasses the formal competitive bidding process, and therefore we always solicit at least two bids from active contractors before authorizing the change order to ensure we are getting the best price for the work. The bids are received in writing, and become part of the change order package submitted to the Board of Public Works for approval to document the process. LADOT will be mindful of the need to limit the number of non-participating change orders for work unrelated to the ATSAC/ATCS construction projects.

Recommendation No. 4 – The City should work with the County to assume a more significant leadership role in forging a regional strategy for traffic light synchronization and coordination.

DOT Response:

LADOT has and continues to play a leadership role in the Los Angeles region in developing strategies for traffic light synchronization and coordination across jurisdictional boundaries. LADOT was the first agency to implement the Smart Corridor project along the I-10 freeway in 1994 and has guided all regional traffic forums and projects not only in the County, but in the SCAG region as well. LADOT manages the signal timing on all State Highways in the City, at all freeway ramps, in unincorporated Marina del Rey and in portions of Culver City. We continue to coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions as projects are planned and constructed.

LADOT has been a guiding force in the development of the Regional Integration of Intelligent Transportation Systems (RIITS) and the Los Angeles County's Information Exchange Network (IEN). Our vision is to provide seamless coordination across jurisdictional boundaries and provide motorists with information on real-time traffic conditions throughout the network of surface streets and a transportation network that is responsive to changing traffic patterns. We have invested a significant amount of resources to build a foundation upon which programs such as these can be implemented. LADOT will continue to work with the County as well as surrounding cities in forging a regional strategy for traffic light synchronization and coordination, including participation on regional and sub-regional forums on traffic and transportation.

cc: Robin Kramer, Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor
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