



AGENDA REPORT

TO: Edward D. Reiskin
City Administrator

FROM: Joe DeVries, Director,
Interdepartmental
Operations

SUBJECT: Caltrans Annual Report 2021-22

DATE: February 14, 2022

City Administrator Approval

Date: Feb 16, 2022

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive The 2021-22 Annual Progress Report On Caltrans Activities In The City Of Oakland.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-22 annual report on the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) activities in the City of Oakland (City) provides: 1) background on the collaboration between the City and Caltrans, 2) description of maintenance work performed by Caltrans during this period, and 3) highlights recent initiatives, including Clean California Act (Clean CA) Programs, Wildfire Prevention, Land Use and Homelessness. **Attachment A** provides the report from Caltrans detailing the list of relevant maintenance activities conducted by Caltrans in the City. As detailed in that report, Caltrans has increased the level of funding for activities in Oakland.

BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

On January 11, 2006, after a public nuisance action was filed by the City, Caltrans signed a Letter of Understanding (LOU) with a ten-year monitoring and maintenance commitment with the City which created the Caltrans Working Group to foster communication and coordinate efforts around maintenance issues such as illegal dumping, litter, graffiti, overgrown vegetation, homeless encampments, and other fire and health safety hazards on Caltrans property in the City. The collaboration also expanded the scope by creating a separate Land Use subgroup for better coordination between Caltrans' Airspace Leasing and Surplus Property Staff and City Planning, Zoning, and Economic Development Staff to better plan the use of Caltrans property within the City.

Although LOU officially expired in January of 2016, the Working Group continued with less frequent meetings but careful tracking of service requests electronically through Oak311 and specific project-based meetings that have helped to maintain an effective working relationship between agencies. As discussed below, the collaboration has expanded to include new

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partnerships supported by new state resources and legislation. Each year, Caltrans provides the City with a summary of the work performed in the City (see **Attachment A**).

ANALYSIS/POLICY ALTERNATIVES

This progress report on the Caltrans work in the City supports the Citywide priorities of 1) **holistic community safety** and 2) **vibrant, sustainable infrastructure**, as Caltrans' maintenance of its property promotes safe and sustainable infrastructure.

Analysis of Maintenance Work

The year-over-year comparison provided by Caltrans in **Attachment A** shows a consistent and increasing total funding across all reported maintenance efforts. The chart below shows a comparison of individual maintenance categories between FY2020 and FY2021.

Caltrans Maintenance Activities in Oakland Comparison

Activity	FY 2019/20 Production/Cost	FY 2020/21 Production/Cost
Right of Way Swept	3213 Miles Swept / \$580,959.75	2111 Miles Swept / \$534,452.35
Overgrown Vegetation	190.878 Acres Pruned / \$ 869,330.34	389.128 Acres Pruned / \$1,161,569.21
Mowing	252.6 Acres Mowed / \$915,356.18	424.23 Acres Mowed / \$1,176,805.33
Encampment Removal	146 Sites Cleaned 1072.12 Cubic Yards / \$675,716.00	11 Sites Cleaned 644.72 Cubic Yards / \$364,150.59
Fencing Repaired	3827.11 Linear Feet /\$94,754.57	2422 Linear Feet / \$60,389.60
Graffiti Removal	819881 Square Feet Removed / \$365,623.08	904890 Square Feet Removed / \$348,454.84
Illegal Dumping	4290.32 Cubic Yards / \$1,109,418.68	4210 Cubic Yards / \$1,581,765.59
	Total Cost \$4,611,158.60	Total Cost \$5,227,587.51

In terms of output, the areas where Caltrans had notable increases in output for FY21 were Overgrown Vegetation and Mowing, which aligns with the increase in wildfire risks statewide due to climate change. Caltrans is implementing new efforts that shift the focus of fire prevention beyond roadway clearing to a more comprehensive vegetation management approach (discussed below).

The area where Caltrans had noticeable decreases in output in FY21 were the Miles of Right-of-Way Swept, Fencing Repair, and Encampment Removal. Caltrans' efforts regarding encampments in FY 2020-21 shifted away from closures as the homelessness crisis expanded

during the pandemic (discussed below). Often, fence repairs are associated with encampment closures which could explain the similar decline in output.

Efforts were slightly higher for illegal dumping and lower for graffiti removal but generally consistent. However, Caltrans is partnering with the City on newly funded Clean California efforts (discussed below) which should start to exhibit a noticeable difference in 2022.

Recent Initiatives: Clean California Programs

The Clean CA program is providing Caltrans with over one billion dollars to invest in beautification programs across the state. Funds are spread across five program areas: Litter Abatement; State Beautification Projects; Local Beautification Projects; Public Education; and Project Design, Construction, Local Support and Engagement. This has presented multiple new opportunities in Oakland this year:

1. Support for Oakland's Bulky Block Party waste disposal events: The Keep Oakland Clean and Beautiful Division of the Public Works Department has been operating Bulky Block Party events the last Saturday of every month from 9am to 1pm. These are free to all Oaklanders and have become very popular, allowing residents to drop off large household items. Caltrans staff approached the Working Group with a proposal to support these events using Clean CA allocations. In October and December 2021 Caltrans provided a crew with a front loader and two packer trucks and covered all dump fee costs. This effectively doubled the capacity for the event. Everyone involved appreciated getting to partner across agencies. Caltrans will continue to support these events starting this spring, likely on a quarterly basis.
2. The International Boulevard Pedestrian Lighting and Sidewalk Improvement Project: this project addresses deficiencies in the existing pedestrian environment along the corridor and increases the utility of the newly launched East Bay Rapid Transit Project. Along with *pedestrian level* lighting—long needed in these areas, the project will also install solar-powered waste containers and trash capture devices along the corridor. Although OakDOT had designed the lighting and sidewalk portions in the last couple of years, they were not funded and this opportunity brings the project to fruition. Also, by utilizing the cross-departmental Working Group, Public Works was able to add the litter device component which should have a noticeable impact—these devices, unlike a standard container, capture the litter and compact it using solar power which increase capacity. They are designed to avoid people or animals being able to pull items out once deposited and have been shown to significantly reduce litter in commercial corridors where they are installed. Caltrans is providing a total of Nine Million Nine Hundred Twenty-One Thousand Five Hundred Eighty-Seven Dollars (\$9,921,587) for this project.
3. Delegated Maintenance Agreements: the Caltrans local District 4 Office has approximately \$1.85 million in funding that it can use to enter delegated maintenance agreements with local jurisdictions to remove litter and graffiti from on and off ramp areas. Caltrans asked the City to work with organizations that employ formerly incarcerated persons or those having experienced homelessness. City staff are reviewing proposals from two groups that are already under contract: The East Oakland Beautification Project which has a contract that incorporates unsheltered persons in cleaning at encampments in Oakland, and District Works, the organization that implements the Excess Litter Fee Program. District Works partners with Center for Employment Opportunities, a non-profit that places formerly incarcerated persons into employment opportunities.

4. The Clean California Local Grant Program: This program is offering a total of \$296 million in competitive grant funds. Jurisdictions are authorized to submit multiple proposals with a \$5 million cap on each submission, these grants are expected to be very competitive. The City submitted two proposals to improve parks in underserved communities and expects to find out if they are awarded by the end of February. The proposals are as follows:
 - a. Mini Parks Beautification Project: The Project will beautify nine mini parks in Oakland's underserved communities. The goal is to invite recreation and promote healthy social gathering. The Project will install BBQ pits and play structures. Play areas will be re-surfaced and new park furniture and accessible seating will be installed. The Project will also install nine hydration stations (drinking and water bottle filling fountains) to reduce consumption of sugary beverages and use of disposable plastic bottles, 42 shade trees to reduce the urban heat island effect, and landscaping with new irrigation. Fourteen animal-proof trash receptacles and new lighting, fencing and gates will also be installed. These features will provide access for proper litter disposal and deter illegal dumping. These enhancements will significantly beautify and improve these public spaces and promote community connection and recreation in underserved neighborhoods with high concentrations of Black and Brown residents.
 - b. Courtland Creek Restoration Project: will restore 140,000 square feet of public parkland including 950 linear feet of urban stream and 1500 linear feet of recreational trail. The Project will stabilize creek banks to protect properties, improve riparian habitat through native drought-tolerant plantings, abate litter and illegal dumping, and beautify the Park to benefit an underserved community. In addition, the Project will remove waste from the Park and install anti-littering signage, additional waste disposal containers, physical features to deter future littering and dumping, and will provide accessible seating, trail surfacing, curb ramps, gathering places, a creek overlook, interpretative signage/art, and increased nature-based recreation and educational opportunities for the community through partnership with the Oakland Parks and Recreation Foundation. The Project will improve access for people of all ages and abilities and will improve safety and enhance community connection.

Vegetation Management

The Oakland Fire Department's Vegetation Management Unit has utilized the Caltrans Working Group to develop a close relationship with Caltrans staff and ensure that vegetation is cleared in a timely manner along Highways, 13, 24, and 580. While Caltrans has maintained a vegetation management program for decades, it is expanding its historic practices of vegetation control of weeds and grasses along state highway edges to meet policy standards, and transition to fuels reduction prioritization within the operational right of way. To meet this goal, Caltrans is partnering with state and local fire officials for fuel reduction management projects including the Oakland Fire Department. One example of this expanded approach in 2021 was Caltrans doubling the road-side clearance distances on all corridors. As reflected in the reporting above, this was the largest growth area in Caltrans resource expenditures last year.

In June 2021, Caltrans signed District 4's Vegetation Management Plan. Within this plan, portions of Hwy 13 and 24 in the City were identified for enhanced management and removal

efforts. The Caltrans and the City partnership will be vital in ensuring the implementation of this plan.

Homeless Encampment Management

Caltrans faces similar challenges as the City in managing a growing homeless population statewide. Because Caltrans is solely a transportation agency, their budget does not include funding for homeless outreach services or other interventions that would better manage encampments such as health and hygiene services. Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Caltrans procedures were similar to the more traditional methods used to address encampments: they would post a 72-hour notice of removal, and then return to remove encampments entirely with assistance from the California Highway Patrol (CHP). In many of these situations, there was not an offer of shelter and the persons would return and re-encamp the same area.

Due to the pandemic, Caltrans changed strategy and is now mandated to only schedule closures if there is a significant health and safety risk and with direction to work with the local jurisdiction and its providers to locate shelter and perform outreach. Caltrans utilizes a contractor to provide routine cleanings at encampments and only asks for support from the City as a lead up to closures. The City supports Caltrans by providing outreach efforts whenever possible at encampments prior to a closure and will offer shelter beds when available. However, due to the limited capacity, the City cannot reserve spaces exclusively for Caltrans. However, recently Caltrans supported the City's application to the state for grant funds of up to \$8.3 million over two years to cover the construction and operational costs for a 100-person co-governed interim housing site on Wood Street. Since unsheltered persons are living on City and Caltrans property in the area, if successful, the City has agreed to set-aside 40 beds for people on Caltrans land.

The City has advocated to the local District Director and to State transportation officials and the Governor's Office that more funding and better coordination happen between Caltrans and the state Departments of Housing and Community Development and Social Services for a more coordinated approach, similar to the Oakland model.

Land Use

Prior to the Land Use collaborations with City and Caltrans staff, the standard method for Caltrans to lease its available air space was through an auction every two years that would award the highest bidder regardless of the type of use--as long as it met Caltrans regulations and the City's zoning code. Because the lease only had a two-year guarantee, they would not be willing to invest in improvements and often only attracted transitory uses like truck storage with no direct benefit to the surrounding community. The City-Caltrans collaboration has led to better uses, including longer leases to promote improvements, and working directly with future tenants before the leases are developed. For details about past projects using Caltrans parcels, refer to the 2020 Informational Memo which can be found at:

<https://www.oaklandca.gov/search?query=caltrans+annual+report>

A major change to the leasing process occurred with the passage of AB 3139 which requires Caltrans to make available any viable parcels for emergency shelter and feeding programs as at a cost of one dollar per month. Along with the existing Northgate, Mandela, Oak Street, and Beach Street interventions, in 2021 two new projects were implemented. At 3rd and Peralta the

City constructed its second Palette House Co-Governed Shelter on Caltrans property that can house up to 40 people at a time in individual units. At Jackson Street between 5th and 6th streets, the City has entered a lease with Caltrans and then subleased the parcel to Trybe to create an Emergency Food Distribution Center. Trybe is now using multiple storage containers and has room to operate fork lifts safely to maximize distribution efforts and better serve the community. The City is also evaluating other available parcels for additional expanded operations in East Oakland with providers such as Homies Empowerment Network, and the Alameda County Community Food Bank. The growth of food insecurity during the pandemic and Oakland staff connecting with providers identified the need and led to this new approach. Since many of Oakland's most vulnerable communities live along the 880 corridors, the process of converting this space to serve their needs as opposed to using it for storage or truck parking should continue to provide community benefits into the future.

FISCAL IMPACT

This item is for informational purposes only and does not have a direct fiscal impact or cost.

PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST

No outreach was deemed necessary for this report beyond the standard City Council agenda noticing procedures. However, the City uses input it receives from Oak311 service requests and from Neighborhood Council meetings and City Council offices to guide discussions with Caltrans and identify new community needs.

COORDINATION

City of Oakland Departments that participate in the Caltrans Working Group related activities include: Oakland Public Works, Oakland Department of Transportation, the Human Services Department, Oakland Fire Department, the Department of Economic and Workforce Development, and the City Administrator's Office.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: Caltrans addressing litter and debris removal and beautification will improve the physical appearance of Oakland and will help stimulate economic growth, retain business, and promote civic pride. The significant investment of Clean CA funding will provide jobs in the local economy.

Environmental: Removal of dumped materials and litter will reduce the amount of debris that enters the storm drain system, polluting our creeks and waterways. Effective Vegetation Management Plans in the High Fire Severity Zone will protect Oakland's forested areas and habitat. Initiatives to fund tree planting to increase the canopy addresses the problem of heat islands in neighborhoods.

Race and Equity: The neighborhoods most impacted by the negative aspects of freeways in Oakland are neighborhoods of color. The more the City collaborates to ensure proper maintenance, the better the living conditions in those communities. This past year, the Clean CA funds that Caltrans is directing to Oakland will be applied in those very same underserved neighborhoods. All 9 mini-parks in the proposed grant application and the entire length of the International Blvd. project are located in neighborhoods that are the highest Priority Neighborhoods based on the OakDOT Geographic Equity Toolbox Map.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive The 2021-22 Annual Progress Report On Caltrans Activities In The City Of Oakland.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Joe DeVries, Director of Interdepartmental Operations, at (510) 238-3083.

Respectfully submitted,



Joe DeVries, Director, Interdepartmental
Operations, Office of the City Administrator

Attachments:
Caltrans Oakland Annual Report FY2018-21

