



AGENDA REPORT

TO: Steven Falk
Interim City Administrator

FROM: Joe DeVries
Deputy City Administrator

SUBJECT: Caltrans Annual Report 2022-23

DATE: April 24, 2023

City Administrator Approval

Date: Apr 27, 2023

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive The 2022-23 Annual Progress Informational Report On Caltrans Activities In The City Of Oakland.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This annual report on the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) activities in the City of Oakland (City) covers activity that occurred in fiscal year (FY) 2021-22, including 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.

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 scope of the City's and Caltrans' collaboration expanded further when the groups created a separate Land Use subgroup, to support better coordination between Caltrans' Airspace Leasing and Surplus Property staff and the City's Planning, Zoning, and Economic Development staff to plan the use of Caltrans property within the City.

Though the LOU officially expired in January 2016 and the Working Group met less frequently, careful tracking of service requests electronically through Oak311 and specific project-based meetings have helped to maintain an effective working relationship between agencies. As discussed below, the collaboration has expanded to include new 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 AND 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 consistent and increasing total funding across most reported maintenance efforts. **Table 1** below shows a comparison of individual maintenance categories between FY 2021 and FY 2022.

Table 1: Caltrans Maintenance Activities in Oakland Comparison

Activity	FY 2020/21 Production/Cost	FY 2021/2022 Production/Cost
Right of Way Swept	2111 Miles Swept / \$534,452.35	3596 Miles Swept/ \$844,689.28
Overgrown Vegetation	389.128 Acres Pruned / \$1,161,569.21	780.024 Acres Pruned/ \$1,214,415.13
Mowing	424.23 Acres Mowed / \$1,176,805.33	5.8 Acres \$11,089.87
Encampment Removal	11 Sites Cleaned 644.72 Cubic Yards / \$364,150.59	45 Sites Cleaned 13,518.04 Cubic Yards / \$3,590,095.01
Fencing Repaired	2422 Linear Feet / \$60,389.60	4780.8 Linear Feet / \$157,858.67
Graffiti Removal	904,890 Square Feet Removed / \$348,454.84	1,160,509.8 Square Feet Removed / \$407,507.37
Illegal Dumping	4210 Cubic Yards / \$1,581,765.59	5175.86 Cubic Yards / \$2,504,428.61
Total Cost	\$5,227,587.51	\$8,816,083.94

In terms of output, Caltrans notably increased output in FY 2022 in the category of overgrown vegetation, consistent with the increase in wildfire risks statewide due to climate change. In 2021-22 Caltrans developed a statewide Vegetation Management Plan to expand and adapt its approach to managing its parcels due to the ever-increasing risk of wildfires (discussed below). Caltrans also significantly increased work activity in the area of encampment removal, largely attributed to the State's effort in early 2022 to close the large encampment that spanned several acres of Caltrans property on Wood Street. The increase in the fencing repaired category also mostly related to that effort, as Caltrans installed several hundred feet of fencing to secure its Wood Street parcels after the closure operation. With that encampment closed, Caltrans has refocused encampment removal efforts at smaller sites citywide.

The one area where Caltrans had a noticeable decrease in output in FY 2022 was in the number of acres mowed, but this was due to equipment problems and shortage of staff trained to use specialized mowing equipment. Caltrans still performed increased levels of vegetation management, but those increases are captured in the acres pruned section.

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. The City was successful in applying through the statewide grant program, and in seeking additional funding directly from the local Caltrans District Office:

1. International Boulevard Pedestrian Lighting and Sidewalk Improvement Project: directly funded by the Caltrans District 4 Office Clean CA Allocation, 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 this is primarily an OakDOT project, because the City team drafting the proposal was a cross-departmental working group, Oakland Public Works successfully added the litter device component to the project which should have a noticeable impact—these devices, unlike a standard container, capture the litter and compact it using solar power, increasing the bin’s total capacity. Caltrans is providing a total of nine million nine hundred twenty-one thousand five hundred eighty-seven dollars (\$9,921,587) ([Resolution 89040](#)).
2. Clean California Maintenance Agreement (CCMA) (\$1,280,000): the Caltrans District 4 Office awarded the City 1.28 million (\$640,000 per year for two years) in funding to enter a delegated maintenance agreement to remove litter from on- and off-ramp areas. Caltrans asked the City to work with organizations that employ formerly incarcerated persons or individuals experiencing homelessness. The City expanded its existing contract with the Beautification Council that incorporates hiring unsheltered persons to assist with cleaning encampments in Oakland. This expanded contract employs the Beautification Council to clean on- and off-ramps to improve conditions throughout Oakland ([Resolution 89279](#)).
3. The Clean CA Local Grant Program: This program offered a total of \$296 million in competitive grant funds. Jurisdictions were authorized to submit multiple proposals with a \$5 million cap on each submission and Oakland was successful in its two applications:
 - a. Mini Parks Beautification Project (\$4,992,380.00): This project will beautify nine mini parks in Oakland's underserved communities by installing BBQ pits and play structures, re-surfacing play areas and installing new park furniture and accessible seating. The project will also install the following features:
 - i. Hydration stations at each of the nine parks (drinking and water bottle filling fountains) to reduce consumption of sugary beverages and use of disposable plastic bottles
 - ii. Forty-two shade trees to reduce the urban heat island effect, and landscaping with new irrigation.
 - iii. Fourteen animal-proof trash receptacles and new lighting, fencing and gates.

These features will provide access to proper litter disposal and deter illegal dumping. These enhancements will significantly beautify and improve these public spaces and promote community connection and recreation, all in Neighborhoods that are identified as Highest Priority Neighborhoods according to the Oakland Department of Transportation’s Geographic Equity Toolbox Map ([Resolution 89232](#)).

- b. Courtland Creek Restoration Project (\$2,033,575): will restore 140,000 square feet of public parkland including 950 linear feet of urban stream and 1500 linear feet of recreational trails. The project will stabilize creek banks to protect properties, improve riparian habitat through native drought-tolerant plantings, abate litter and illegal dumping, and beautify Courtland Creek Park to benefit an underserved community in City Council District 5. 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 ([Resolution 89231](#)).

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, in 2022 it expanded its historic practices of vegetation control of weeds and grasses along state highway edges to meet updated policy standards, such as prioritizing reduction of fuels (overgrown vegetation) within the operational right-of-way. Caltrans adopted a statewide Vegetation Management Plan to expand its work, and a separate team is implementing that plan above and beyond what Caltrans' local maintenance teams are responsible for addressing. In 2022, Caltrans expanded its roadway vegetation clearance from 4 feet to 8 feet from the edge of the roadway and in 2023, with the implementation of the new plan, is expanding that area to 28-foot clearances from the edge of roadway. This new plan incorporates environmental standards to protect native species and wildlife while mitigating wildfire hazards further from the roadway. The plan mostly covers State Highways 13 and 24, the primary areas in Oakland within High or Very High Fire Severity Zones as defined by CalFire. Oakland's Fire Marshall secured a commitment from the Caltrans District Office to expand mitigation efforts along State Highway 580, with an emphasis on the areas in East Oakland where three brushfires occurred in 2022 caused by vehicles near the edge of roadway.

Land Use

Prior to the Land Use collaborations between City and Caltrans staff, Caltrans' standard method to lease its available parcels that are under or adjacent to freeways was through an auction every two years that awarded the highest bidder regardless of the type of use--as long as it complied with Caltrans regulations and the City's Zoning Code. Because the lease only guaranteed two-years, many tenants were reluctant to invest in improvements and often Caltrans 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 encourage 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 at: <https://www.oaklandca.gov/search?query=caltrans+annual+report>

A major change to the leasing process occurred with the passage of Assembly Bill (AB) 3139 (2018) which requires Caltrans to make available any viable parcels for emergency shelter and feeding programs at a cost of one dollar per month. Currently the City leases space for five emergency shelter interventions: Northgate, Mandela, Oak Street, Beach Street, and 3rd and Peralta. In 2021, the City also leased space at Jackson Street between 5th and 6th Streets, which the City has subleased to Trybe to create an Emergency Food Distribution Center. Trybe is using multiple storage containers and has room to operate forklifts safely to maximize distribution efforts and better serve the community. The City has evaluated other available parcels for additional expanded operations in East Oakland and will continue to pursue this model of land use as it has a direct benefit for the surrounding community.

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 received 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 and 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 improves the physical appearance of Oakland and helps 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 reduces the amount of debris that enters the storm drain system and pollutes creeks and waterways. Effective Vegetation Management Plans in the High Fire Severity Zone 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: Neighborhoods of color are disproportionately impacted by pollution and other harms caused by freeways and traffic congestion in Oakland. Frequent, ongoing collaboration with other agencies to ensure proper maintenance, accessibility, and safety, can

help to improve living conditions in those communities. This past year, the Clean CA funds that Caltrans directed to Oakland will be applied in those very same underserved neighborhoods. All nine mini-parks in the proposed grant application and the entire length of the International Blvd. project are located in neighborhoods that are identified as Highest Priority Neighborhoods according to the Oakland Department of Transportation's Geographic Equity Toolbox Map, available at the following website: <https://arcg.is/91GGb>.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive The 2022-23 Annual Progress Informational Report On Caltrans Activities In The City Of Oakland.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Joe DeVries, Deputy City Administrator, at (510) 238-3083.

Respectfully submitted,



JOE DEVRIES
Deputy City Administrator
Office of the City Administrator

Attachment:
A: Caltrans Oakland Annual Report FY 2019-2022