

INFRASTRUCTURE LA

T A S K F O R C E

Infrastructure LA Task Force Teleconference

April 16, 2020, 3:30 – 4:30pm

Attendance

Municipalities

- Irwindale
- Santa Clarita
- Lynwood
- La Canada
- Temple City
- Monrovia
- Signal Hill
- San Dimas
- Gardena
- Los Angeles
- City of Industry
- Public Water Agencies Group
- Covina
- LA Mayor's office
- Santa Monica
- La Verne
- Agoura Hills
- Lakewood
- Redondo Beach
- Sierra Madre

Water Agencies

- Palmdale Water District
- Las Virgenes Municipal Water District
- Antelope Valley – East Kern Water Agency
- Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency
- Golden State Water
- San Gabriel Valley Water Company
- Foothill Water

Sanitation Districts

- Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County

Councils of Government

- San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments

Labor and Industry Groups

- LA/OC Building Trades
- Southern California Partnership for Jobs (SoCal Works)
- Building Industry Association (BIA)
- Associated General Contractors of California

Utilities

- SoCal Gas
- Edison

Corporations

- Chevron
- Sprint
- CenturyLink

Consultants and Contractors

- Infrastructure Engineers
- Interwest Consulting Group
- Mike Bubalo Construction Co.
- CPM Logistics
- PC Consultants
- SA Associates

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Notes

Introduction

Phil Doudar, Assistant Director of LA County Public Works, welcomed all attendees and thanked them for participating. Mr. Doudar shared that the purpose of Infrastructure LA is to foster collaboration by sharing information and best practices, support one another, and pool resources when needed. The COVID-19 crisis is something we have not seen before and is changing the way we do business. The Infrastructure LA team is always open to suggestions about how to better foster effective dialogue and outcomes. Mr. Doudar introduced LA County Public Works Director Mark Pestrella.

Mark Pestrella thanked everyone for joining the call. Mr. Pestrella noted that these are unprecedented times and an opportunity to jump start efforts such as Infrastructure LA to speak with one voice on matters related to infrastructure. Mr. Pestrella acknowledged all partners and agencies, big and small, across all sectors of infrastructure who continue to share their thoughts and interest in continuing this dialogue. Everyone should have received an email directing to the [Infrastructure LA website](#), which Public Works will continue to update with information and responses to questions received. Public Works is also working on developing an interactive portal to allow everyone to communicate in real-time. Anyone with questions about the [website](#) or how to join the mailing list is asked to contact Edel Vizcarra at evizcarra@dpw.lacounty.gov.

COVID-19 Response

Mark Pestrella shared that LA County Public Works continues to combat spread of COVID-19 by implementing the orders of the County Health Officer and coordinating with Operational Area partners. LA County Public Health has identified 9,420 cases of COVID-19 across all areas in LA County, including 320 deaths. The County “Safer at Home” order, closing all nonessential businesses has been extended until May 15.

Mr. Pestrella noted that all government agencies, including Public Works, are considered “Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers” and are exempt from State and local orders. LA County Public Works continues to deliver essential infrastructure and municipal services while maintaining business continuity to support our local economy. Public Works’ Department Operations Center (DOC) is activated to Level 1, with staff also participating on the Plans/Intel, Housing and the Joint Information Center (JIC) units at the CEOC. Infrastructure LA is housed in the Plans Intel unit of the CEOC. San Gabriel Valley airport in El Monte has been identified as a possible testing site. Public Works will keep this group updated on COVID-19 impacts to the workforce, water resources, transportation, environmental services, and finances, as the information becomes available.

Legislative Update

Federal

Mark Pestrella shared that to date, Congress has approved three COVID-19 relief measures. These measures focused on providing immediate relief to the healthcare sector, individual workers, small and large businesses, and State/local governments’ operating costs. Infrastructure has not been a significant

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component of Congressional COVID-19 relief packages to date, but the \$2 trillion CARES Act passed last month did include relief for some sectors of the transportation and maritime sectors: \$10 billion to publicly-owned commercial airports, \$25 billion in operating assistance for transit agencies, and \$1.2 billion to LA Metro for operating expenses and administrative leave for transit personnel due to reductions in service – this will help keep LA Metro in operation. House Democratic leadership recently announced its support for a \$760 billion infrastructure component in the 4th response package. However, they have withdrawn support pending more information how the first three stimulus packages impacted the economy.

Public Works is monitoring to see if the pandemic will affect the Congressional timetable for two major infrastructure laws: reauthorization of the surface transportation bill – Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, and the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). The FAST Act expires on September 30th with only the Senate’s Environment and Public Works Committee approving the highway portion of the bill last July. The House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee continues to draft its reauthorization bill, but it is not yet clear when the Committee will consider it. Staff for both the Senate’s Environment and Public Works Committee and the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee continue to draft their WRDA 2020 bills. Committee leadership has stated that WRDA will be moving separate from any future COVID-19 relief packages, but it is possible that WRDA could get folded into a larger package later this year. The Environment and Public Works Committee had earlier expressed an interest in releasing a draft WRDA bill around April 22nd, but with Congress out of town, those plans remain to be determined. To support WRDA 2020, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues to review and sign Chief’s Reports.

Any COVID-19 stimulus package to support infrastructure will likely provide programmatic funds to agencies for grant programs. Current congressional rules ban earmarks.

State

The Legislature has formally announced they will be on recess until at least May 4th, pending updates on the state of COVID-19 in California. Senate and Assembly priority bills should be known in the next few weeks. Bills related to COVID-19, job stimulus, or wildfire are the most likely stimulus packages to move forward.

The chair of the Assembly Budget Committee has outlined what the budget process and priorities will look like when the legislature reconvenes. The May Budget Revision will reflect this year’s levels and will not include new programs outside of COVID-19 response. Two other priorities will be wildfire prevention and resources to address homelessness. Special funds, such as the cap and trade revenues, will be considered after June 15th, and an August Revision to the budget is likely once the State has a better picture of personal income tax receipts and sales tax revenues.

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LA County Public Works Operation During COVID-19

Mark Pestrella noted that 60% of Public Works' 4000-person-workforce is teleworking and Public Works is monitoring productivity. Mr. Pestrella initiated weekly video messages to all employees to keep them updated on matters related to COVID-19. Public Works continues to collect trash from 1.1 million residences and 2,000 businesses and continues to provide water to 240,000 customers. Public Works also continues to award SB1 funds and other contracts. Mr. Pestrella acknowledged the general concerns regarding budget and how infrastructure will be impacted for the rest of year. LA County is requiring every department to conduct an analysis assuming a 50% reduction in revenue. An early look at gas tax impacts shows at least 50% reduction due to COVID-19. Property tax and sales tax hits look daunting as well. Mr. Pestrella acknowledged that many partner agencies rely on LA County Public Works to provide services and contracting opportunities, and that the results of these analyses will be shared with everyone via the [Infrastructure LA website](#). Mr. Pestrella also noted that there has been an interest in forming subcommittees on State and Federal budget and revenues.

Mr. Pestrella shared that 60% of LA County Public Works' workforce is teleworking and kept updated and focused through a weekly video message and internal website on COVID-19. Every government employee in the State is considered a Disaster Service Worker and can be reassigned at any time. LA County Public Works is providing uninterrupted water, waste, sewer, and development support services and continues to support the regional economy through our contracting portfolio and allocation of SB1 and Measure W funds. For those who are curious about whether Measure W will move forward as planned – the funds are sourced from property taxes, which have been collected. LA County Public Works intends to distribute funding to cities on schedule, with no reductions due to COVID-19.

Mr. Pestrella continued by emphasizing LA County Public Works' focus on keeping power, water, sewer, and trash services active during the Safer and Home order. Public Works has received many questions from residents about these services, and the 24/7 dispatch service is available to all residents and partners.

Construction Activities during COVID-19 Crisis

Phil Doudar noted that the topic of construction activity is one that many attendees expressed an interest in discussing. Mr. Doudar welcomed Marty Adams, General Manager of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), to discuss LADWP's challenges and response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Adams shared that LADWP's initial response to COVID-19 was a focus on telecommuting and creating safe working conditions for the agency's critical services, which include field crews, as well as payroll and other office workers that are necessary to keep water and power services going. While there are benefits to working during this time, such as reduced traffic and fewer restrictions on construction work, there are challenges related to worker safety concerns and parked cars in residential areas, which hinder water main construction and repairs. Until this week, LADWP was fully staffed in the field doing regular work. Beginning this week, field crews have been rotating shifts, spacing out, using assigned vehicles, and avoiding intermixing with other crews to reduce the chances of transmission. When field crews are assigned to at-home work, they are on call, but primarily working on classroom-type curriculum and

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essential trainings. As of now, there is no known spread of COVID-19 within LADWP. For control rooms and water treatment centers, LADWP is preparing for the possibility of sequestering operators, and have trailers in place if necessary, though they hope these are will not be needed. As we move closer to the summer months, there is some concern about an increasing power demand from residences, though Mr. Adams did note that power usage from businesses is reduced.

Phil Doudar welcomed Mark Christoffels, Director of Capital Projects and Chief Engineer of the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments (SGVCOG), to provide SGVCOG's perspective.

Mr. Christoffels noted that SGVCOG has a \$1 billion capital improvement program, and due to exemptions for construction during this time, they are continuing to move forward on projects while reevaluating how to do so considering the current situation. Mr. Christoffels noted that safety plans are being updated nearly every week, and that so far there has been no contamination on any project sites. The biggest hurdle SGVCOG has faces is with utility outages. With so many people working from home, there is more hesitancy to disrupt internet, power, and other services, which are often needed during construction activities. As a precaution, some work sites require workers to complete a questionnaire regarding recent travel and potential exposure to COVID-19. Another challenge SGVCOG is facing is that of eminent domain and right of way acquisition, due to the current court closures. Moving payments and authorizing documents has also been challenging, as these systems need to be transitioned to electronic processes.

Phil Doudar welcomed Ron Miller, Executive Secretary of the Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council, to share his thoughts.

Mr. Miller began by noting that this has been a learning process, with procedures and policies constantly changing. LA/OC Counties Building and Construction Trades Council has been working with the cities, Mayor Garcetti, LA County Supervisors, and the Governor's office to update procedures. The organization represents over 100,000 people, and most of their work is ongoing, including commercial, affordable housing, Metro, school district partnerships, and refineries. Mr. Miller acknowledged that budget concerns are going to be an issue very soon, but that developers are still coming in with new projects. Contractors have been working with trades very well during this pandemic by staggering start times to lessen impacts on the job. On some sites, like the Inglewood stadium, in addition to general social distancing practices, all workers have their temperature measured in the morning. Mr. Miller ended by noting that we are all learning as we go.

Phil Doudar shared that all construction operations, including housing, are exempted from the Safer at Home order and inspectors and contractors have been instructed to follow all COVID-19 guidelines. Construction projects are moving forward, and project managers are working with contractors to troubleshoot issues related to COVID-19 that could slow down construction activity. Public Works also implemented fully electronic bidding and RFP submittals for future projects. Public works' permitting services continue online through EPIC-LA. Social distancing provisions are in place for customers who choose to submit physical plans and virtual inspections are also available. Public Works also established a committee comprised of a group of construction industry organizations to discuss COVID-19 emerging

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issues to ensure the impact to construction projects are minimized and addressed proactively. Topics discussed to date include interpreting State and local public health orders and providing recommendations for amendments to address supply chain issues; discussing online bidding for County Public Works projects and ensuring prompt payment to contractors and subcontractors; and discussing SCE's planned outages and its impact on construction projects.

Phil Doudar invited Massood Eftekhari, Deputy Director of LA County Public Works, to provide an update on Public Buildings work by the County.

Mr. Eftekhari noted that there were concerns when guidelines were first issued, but that contractors in the industry have been handling them very well. Out of roughly 70 projects, only a small handful of hospital projects have been put on hold, which was done intentionally to avoid impacts to hospitals during this critical time. Mr. Eftekhari acknowledged and thanked the construction industry for providing PPE when requested. Public Works is providing proactive recommendations to change guidelines if necessary, but all work is moving forward. Mr. Eftekhari noted that there may be some minor delays due to extra work site precautions, but that this so far is not expected to impact project delivery.

Phil Doudar next welcomed Shari Afshari, Deputy Director of LA County Public Works to provide an update on waste management in LA County.

Ms. Afshari shared that LA County is continuing to provide solid waste services. The only change has been that some haulers are allowed to comingle trash with recycling due to the closure of recycling facilities. Ms. Afshari noted that this is approved on a case-by-case basis and that the County is requesting justification for each instance. LA County has also asked haulers to refrain from stopping services due to nonpayment during this time and to contact the County in such cases. LA County continues to encourage residents to separate recyclables despite these temporary changes so that there are no delays in returning to normal operations when possible. Overall, the County is seeing higher volumes of waste generated from residences, and less from businesses.

Questions

Phil Doudar opened the meeting for questions.

Q: Susan Cline, Director of Santa Monica Public Works, asked if agencies are designating any Public Works classifications (water, wastewater, solid waste, etc.) as "essential" with expanded FMLA under FFCRA (12 weeks off with 2/3 pay).

A: Alma Martinez, Administrative Deputy of LA County Public Works, responded that clarification received from the Department of Labor categorizes emergency responders as anyone assisting in limiting the spread of COVID-19, including individuals with specialized skills (e.g. operating equipment) and support operations (e.g. Administration). LA County Public Works has designated all employees as essential, and therefore ineligible for FFCRA. Exceptions may be granted but are being evaluated on a case-by-case basis for employees who have tested positive for COVID-19 and are ill.

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Q: Lisa Rapp, Director of Lakewood Public Works, asked if we can urge CalRecycle to delay the implementation of SB 1383 for curbside collection of organics and food waste, considering the significant budget impacts expected.

A: Shari Afshari, Deputy Director of LA County Public Works, answered that CalRecycle has not provided any updates and that LA County is trying to work with the Governor's office on this. Mark Pestrella added that this type of collaborative unified action is what we hope to achieve with this group.

Q: Robert Newman, Director of Santa Clarita Public Works, asked what the County is doing for PPE for staff working in the office and field.

A: Dan Lafferty, Deputy Director of LA County Public Works and the current Director of Public Works' Department Operations Center, replied that Public Works continues to follow normal procurement processes for securing PPE. The COVID-19 pandemic presents a special case and increased need for masks, hand sanitizer, and gloves, which have been a challenge to attain. Public Works ordered 3,600 face coverings for employees two weeks ago, but we are seeing delays in delivery. Though challenging, the challenge is not unique to us, and unfortunately due to unprecedented global demand for these items, there is no 'magic answer' to acquiring them. Phil Doudar added that everyone in Public Works buildings are required to wear masks and elevators are limited to carrying 2 people at a time. Mark Pestrella added that Public Works can share current employee guidelines on the [Infrastructure LA website](#).

Q: Robert Newman, Director of Santa Clarita Public Works, asked if Southern CA Edison (SCE) and SoCal Gas have improved coordination with respect to utility outages.

A: Rossana D'Antonio, Deputy Director of LA County Public Works, answered that these are challenging times for everyone, including utility companies. SCE is under continued pressure regarding wildfire prevention efforts. COVID-19 presents a conflict with their program, as more people are home and using electronic devices. LA County has recommended that these companies increase outreach to give customers ample time to prepare. We have found that people typically understand the need for outage but need plenty of notice. In the last few weeks, SCE has improved its outreach and has been very cooperative with the County.

Q: Chuck Heffernan, Director of Palmdale Public Works, asked if there is a possibility of delaying implementation of SB 743 and whether the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) has flexibility.

A: David MacGregor, Deputy Director of LA County Public Works, answered that the County is continuing to move forward with SB 743 implementation, and it is not clear if there is flexibility from OPR. Mr. MacGregor also noted that only the cities of Pasadena and Los Angeles have completed. Mr. MacGregor will investigate the matter and notify Mr. Heffernan of the results.

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Upcoming Survey on Future Topics

Phil Doudar, Assistant Director of Public Works, reiterated to the group that LA County Public Works looks to continue to engage everyone to make Infrastructure LA a regional effort and platform at the leadership level. LA County Public Works wants to hear from everyone about their topics of interest and challenges that we can work together to address. Mr. Doudar mentioned that a survey will be sent to all participants to poll what topics should be covered in the next call.

Adjourn

Mark Pestrella and Phil Doudar thanked all partners for participating in the call. Mr. Pestrella noted that in this unprecedented time, things are going to change, but great things can come out of this in terms of how we operate as an industry. Mr. Pestrella extended his thanks to the labor partners in attendance for their leadership during this time.