



Board Agenda Item 44

DATE: October 22, 2024

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBMITTED BY: Steven E. White, Director
Department of Public Works and Planning

SUBJECT: Adopt County Plans and Specifications for Public Works Transportation Projects

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

- 1. Adopt Modified 2023 Caltrans Standard Plans and Specifications as County Standard Plans and Specifications for Public Works Transportation Projects.**
- 2. Authorize the Director of Public Works and Planning to update the County Standard Plans and Specifications to best serve the County's needs.**

Approval of Recommended Action No. 1 allows the County to comply with new California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) regulations, which require the County to either use the most current Caltrans Standard Plans and Specifications (Caltrans Standards) or to adopt their own local standards for plans and specifications (County Standards). Approval of Recommended Action No. 2 authorizes the Director of Public Works and Planning to update the County Standards to best serve the County's needs.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

Should the Board not approve Recommended Action No. 1, the County will be required to use the most recent version of Caltrans Standards, which change annually, resulting in significant wasted efforts particularly on multi-year projects. Not approving Recommended Action No. 2 would limit the Department's ability to make updates to the County's Standards to best meet the needs of the County to adapt to future regulation, new innovations, or local needs in a timely fashion.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no Net County Cost associated with this action. However, there will be unspecified salary savings and consultant costs associated with adopting County Standards and not having to update Plans and Specifications for multi-year projects every time Caltrans changes their standards.

DISCUSSION:

Caltrans sets design standards and practices to facilitate statewide consistency, efficiency, and quality in transportation construction. In the past, a set of standard plans and specifications were issued by Caltrans every few years and each County could specify on a per project basis, which set of Caltrans Standards the project plans and specifications were based on. Projects typically span several years, and those with considerable environmental regulation and/or significant right of way needs can span more than a decade. In the past, a complex, multi-year project, such as a large bridge could be designed based on the Caltrans Standard in use at a project's initial design, incorporating innovations and updates as needed but without

having to update every section of the specifications and plans, regardless of their relevance or irrelevance for the specific project.

Recently, Caltrans required agencies which receive funding from them to either adopt Caltrans Standards for transportation projects, which now update on an annual basis, or adopt the agency's own standard plans and specifications. If the County takes no action, under this requirement, the County will have to adjust project Plans and Specifications to conform to the Caltrans Standards every time an update occurs. This would result in the County having to update project Plans and Specifications several times throughout the design of a project including minute details which may or may not have relevance for each project, and direct County consultant engineers to do the same. This would lead to additional costs and delays in project delivery.

Recommended Action No. 1 would enable the County to base the County Standards specifically on the Caltrans Standards of 2023. By adopting County Standards, the specific plans and specifications can incorporate updates and innovations on specific project specifications and plans based on County's needs on a project-by-project basis. Recommended Action No. 2 would authorize the Director to update the County Standards from time to time in the future when the changes to the Caltrans Standards are substantive and at a pace determined in response to the County's project needs, incorporating new innovative processes and technology, responding to regulatory changes, all while continuing to meet Caltrans's funding requirements.

The Caltrans Standards of 2023 proposed to be adopted as the County Standards can be found at: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/design/july-2023-ccs-standard-plans-and-standard-specifications>

OTHER REVIEWING AGENCIES:

Caltrans is responsible for reviewing County Plans and Specifications for Federal Aid Transportation Projects.

CAO ANALYST:

Salvador Espino