

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

DATE: March 03, 2026

TO: Honorable Members of the City Council

FROM: Sharon M. Tso *SMTso*
Chief Legislative Analyst

Council File No.: 20-0875
Assignment No.: 25-07-0580

SUBJECT: Traffic Fines and Fees

SUMMARY

On November 30, 2023, the City Council received the recommendations of the Traffic Enforcement Alternatives Project findings from an Advisory Task Force formed by the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) that met from June 2022 through September 2023 to convene community meetings and make recommendations for traffic safety alternatives based on community needs. Subsequently, at its meeting on June 12, 2024, the City Council adopted a joint Transportation and Public Safety Committees report relative to the Traffic Enforcement Alternative Project that made numerous requests to evaluate police traffic stop practices in Los Angeles and to implement potential reforms. As part of the Council Action, this Office, in collaboration with the City Administrative Officer, the LADOT, the City Attorney, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), any other relevant departments, community experts, and other members of the Traffic Enforcement Alternatives Advisory Task Force, was instructed to report with an assessment of the fines and fees models for vehicle citations, in connection to Council file No. 23-1189, and all types micro-mobility vehicles and devices in the City of Los Angeles and determine an equitable, means-based model to issue fines and fees.

The instruction stated that this report should also investigate the following:

- a) Other comparable municipalities that have implemented alternative models for fines and fees.
- b) Provide recommendations on a framework to create a revolving fund that earmarks a proportion of the fines and fees revenue for a vehicle repair voucher clinic program and Traffic school voucher program.
- c) Curate a criterion of motorists that could qualify.

On July 1, 2025, the LADOT issued a report relative to parking fines and fees in the City, which provided a detailed overview of various LADOT-issued citations, and the fees associated with those, as well as the City's Alternative Payment Programs. This report focuses on citations issued by the LAPD for Vehicle Code Violations.

Fines and fees associated with citations issued by LAPD officers for Vehicle Code Violations are set by the State, and the City receives nominal revenue from them. Further, this revenue is deposited into the Traffic Safety Fund (Schedule 4) and programmed as part of the City's annual budget process. While the Vehicle Code is generally related to motor vehicles, there are a number of violations related to bicycles, scooters and pedestrians. Eligible uses of this funding source include: traffic signs, signals, and other traffic control and safety devices; traffic law enforcement

and accident prevention; and the maintenance, improvement or construction of public streets, bridges and culverts within the City. The 2025-26 Budget anticipates \$1.3M in revenue and has allocated the entire amount for use by LADOT. Additionally, fines and fees associated with citations for Vehicle Code Violations are set by the State Legislature and Judicial Council, with no input from local jurisdictions. Given this, and the nominal amount of revenue received from the issuance of citations by LAPD officers, this Office does not recommend the creation of a revolving fund for a program to provide vehicle repairs or other assistance. Any such program would likely be subsidized by the General Fund and would further reduce funding to LADOT for the purchase of vital traffic safety equipment currently paid for by the Traffic Safety Fund.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council NOTE and FILE this report.

DISCUSSION

Citations issued by LAPD and Related Revenues

Traffic Citation fines and fees, including those issued for pedestrian, bicycle or micro-mobility device violations, are set by the State Legislature and the Judicial Council. The Base Fine for a traffic violation varies by the type of offense, with an infraction for a stop sign violation set at \$35, and a Misdemeanor Driving Under the Influence Conviction set at \$390. However, the State has added a number of fines and fees on top of the Base Fine for a violation which has resulted in citations costing individuals significantly more than the Base Fine amount. As an example, if an individual is fined for a stop sign violation, the Base Fine is \$35. The state then adds \$123 in “Additional Penalties & Surcharges,” and an additional \$75 in fees, for a total citation amount of \$233. It should be noted that the City receives a portion of the Base Fine amount but none of the revenue associated with the State added fines and fees, which are divided between the State and the counties.

The Fund does also receive revenue from the Base Fine for citations under the Vehicle Code for pedestrians, bicyclists and scooters, but these types of stops make up only a small fraction of the overall number of stops with citations. The CLA’s Analysis of Pretextual Stops dated January 30, 2026 found that there were 9,721 stops involving a bicyclist between April 1, 2022 and September 30, 2025, and 17,077 stops involving a pedestrian during this same period. These stops made up approximately 3.31 percent of all stops made in the period of time covered by this analysis, and not all of these stops resulted in citations. LAPD is not required to track stops of individuals on scooters or other micro-mobility devices, but in calendar year 2025 there were approximately 180 citations issued for scooter-specific violations of the Vehicle Code.

The City’s Traffic Safety Fund receives revenue from fines, bail and traffic school fees associated with the Base Fine of citations for moving violations issued in the City. Tickets are issued by LAPD, as well as the California Highway Patrol and other traffic enforcement agencies. The City’s share of revenue varies by citation type, but averages a collection rate of 92 percent. The CAO has noted that the ongoing decline in receipts accelerated with the expiration of speed limit zones, the discontinuance of license suspensions and the reduction of fines based on ability-to-pay. The

2025-26 Budget anticipates \$1.3M in receipts for the Fund, which is flat from the 2024-25 Budget. Further, given the reduction in traffic stops made by LAPD over recent years it is unlikely the Fund will see revenue growth in the near or foreseeable future. In Fiscal Year 2024-25, the City received revenues from 97,910 citations.

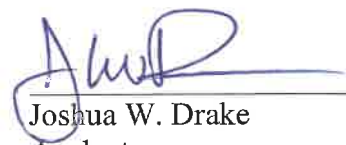
Alternative Models for Fines and Fees in other Jurisdictions

Section 21 (a) of the Vehicle Code provides "Except as otherwise expressly provided, the provisions of this code are applicable and uniform throughout the state and in all counties and municipalities therein, and a local authority shall not enact or enforce any ordinance or resolution on the matters covered by this code, including ordinances or resolutions that establish regulations or procedures for, or assess a fine, penalty, assessment, or fee for a violation of, matters covered by this code, unless expressly authorized by this code." Given this limitation, local jurisdictions in the State cannot create alternative fine or fee schedules for Vehicle Code Violations, and this Office could find no examples of alternative citation models for Vehicle Code Violations in other jurisdictions.

As noted in LADOT's report under C.F. No. 23-1189, a number of cities, including the City of Los Angeles, have alternative payment programs for parking citations and other City-issued fines. The State also has implemented programs to reduce Vehicle Code Violation citations' fines and fees for those who cannot pay them.

Potential for a Revolving Fund Program to Assist People with Vehicle Repairs or Traffic School Fees

As noted above, the City receives nominal revenue from citations for Vehicle Code Violations, and those funds are currently allocated for the purchase of traffic safety equipment. Since the State and the County receive the lion's share of revenue from these citations, a State or County program to assist low-income residents with repairs or traffic school fees would be more appropriate than a City program.



Joshua W. Drake
Analyst

SMT: jwd