


**CITY OF LOS ANGELES**  
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

**DATE:** November 3, 2025

**TO:** The Honorable City Council

**FROM:** Keith Mozee   
Executive Director and General Manager  
Bureau of Street Services (StreetsLA)

**SUBJECT:** **RESOURCES NEEDED TO ACHIEVE A FIVE YEAR TREE TRIMMING CYCLE (CF 25-0600-S111)**

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the City Council receive and file this report, as it is provided for informational purposes only.

**SUMMARY**

As part of the instructions associated with the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Adopted Budget, the City Council instructed the Bureau of Street Services (StreetsLA) to report on the resources needed to achieve a five-year tree trimming cycle (C.F. 25-0600-S111). This report outlines several different models to achieve a five-year cycle, along with the requisite staffing, equipment, and/or contracting resources. The cost estimates provided are based on current-year average salaries (wages and count), equipment prices, and estimated contract rates. Staffing cost calculations include only direct salary expenses and do not include indirect costs.

In summary, achieving a five-year tree trimming cycle using only City forces would require 186 additional positions, and 176 heavy-duty vehicles, equating to approximately \$67.67 million (\$15.15 million in salary costs; \$52.52 million in equipment costs). An additional requirement with undetermined costs is the required yard space to house the additional crews and vehicles. StreetsLA estimates that an additional 480,000 sq. ft. of yard space needs to be identified in order to accommodate the additional staff, vehicles, as well as potential electric vehicle charging infrastructure for future electric vehicles.

A second option using contractors to supplement City crews could potentially cost \$27.24 million annually. An in-house oversight staffing team, consisting of nine positions, to perform quality control and quality assurance would cost approximately \$1.16 million annually.

Lastly, the City could opt to move the entire grid trimming program to a five-year trimming cycle using contractors. Under this option, the existing in-house crews can perform out-of-cycle

pruning, emergency responses, dead tree/stump removals, and tree planting/maintenance. Similar to Option 2, we roughly estimate that an annual cost could equate to \$300 per tree, or approximately \$196.2 million annually.

## DISCUSSION

### Current Resources

The Urban Forestry Division (UFD) within StreetsLA is tasked with trimming approximately 661,000 street trees in the City of Los Angeles' public right-of-way. In December 2023, StreetsLA completed a citywide tree inventory through a contract with Davey Resource Group. This inventory provides a comprehensive dataset to strategically manage the urban forest, identifying planting opportunities, calculate tree-related benefits, and keep records current through ongoing updates. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-26, UFD has eight tree trimming crews consisting of 64 positions (8 positions per crew). Each crew can trim an average of 5,000 trees per year. At this capacity, the eight existing crews can trim 40,000 trees annually, which equates to a 16.5-year tree trimming cycle.

### Option 1: Five-year Trim Cycle Using Only City Crews

To achieve a five-year cycle using only City crews, StreetsLA recommends a crew configuration of 10 members, consisting of (1) Tree Surgeon Supervisor, (4) Tree Surgeons, (3) Tree Surgeon Assistants, (1) Heavy Duty Truck Operator, and (1) Equipment Operator, trimming an average of 5,500 trees annually. This larger, more efficient crew configuration accounts for personnel fluctuations due to sick time, vacation, and also helps mitigate the need for additional equipment and yard space in comparison to adding more eight-member crews. This configuration would require:

- 16 additional crews (160 positions) at an estimated \$12.89 million annually in salaries. See Table 1 below:

<b>Table 1 - Cost of 16 Additional Tree Trimming Crews</b>			
Position	Count	Salary	Total
Tree Surgeon Supervisor I (3117-1)	16	\$121,609	\$1,945,744
Tree Surgeon (3114)	64	\$75,055	\$4,803,520
Tree Surgeon Assistant (3151)	48	\$60,073	\$2,883,504
Heavy Duty Truck Operator (3584)	16	\$83,083	\$1,329,328
Equipment Operator (3525)	16	\$120,673	\$1,930,768
<b>Total</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>\$460,493</b>	<b>\$12,892,864</b>

- 16 additional positions to expand the eight existing crews by two positions each at approximately \$1.08 million annually. See Table 2 below:

<b>Table 2 - Expansion of Existing Crews</b>			
Position	Count	Salary	Total
Tree Surgeon (3114)	8	\$75,055	\$600,440
Tree Surgeon Assistant (3151)	8	\$60,073	\$480,584
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>\$135,128</b>	<b>\$1,081,024</b>

- 10 additional positions to provide oversight and administrative support at \$1.18 million annually. For every five additional crews, oversight and support staff consisting of one Street Tree Superintendent I, one Management Analyst, and one Administrative Clerk is required. Furthermore, one Street Tree Superintendent II is necessary for oversight for every ten additional crews. See Table 3 below:

<b>Table 3 - Cost of Oversight and Support Staff</b>			
Position	Count	Salary	Total
Street Tree Superintendent II (3160-2)	1	\$193,034	\$193,034
Street Tree Superintendent I (3160-1)	3	\$155,898	\$467,694
Management Analyst (9184)	3	\$114,972	\$344,916
Administrative Clerk (1358)	3	\$57,163	\$171,489
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>\$521,067</b>	<b>\$1,177,133</b>

- 11 heavy-duty vehicles per crew (176 vehicles total) at a one-time cost of \$52.52 million, plus annual expense funding of \$3 million for tools, fuel, and maintenance. See Table 4 on the following page.

In total, achieving a five-year tree trimming cycle with City forces would require 186 additional positions and 176 heavy-duty vehicles, equating to approximately \$67.67 million (\$15.15 million in salary costs; \$52.52 million in equipment costs). See Table 5 on the following page.

An additional factor with undetermined costs is the required yard space to house the additional crews and vehicles. StreetsLA estimates that an additional 480,000 sq. ft. of yard space needs to be identified in order to accommodate the additional staff, vehicles, as well as potential electric vehicle charging infrastructure for future electric vehicles.

<b>Table 4 - Equipment &amp; Vehicle Costs</b>		
Type	Count	Cost
High Ranger	64	\$28,800,000
Pick Up Truck	32	\$2,080,000
Stump Cutter	16	\$1,040,000
Truck Tractor	16	\$6,400,000
Tractor Trailer	16	\$3,520,000
End Dump	16	\$3,200,000
Tractor Loader	16	\$4,480,000
Annual Equipment Expenses	-	\$3,000,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>\$52,520,000</b>

<b>Table 5 - Total Salary and Equipment Costs</b>	
Positions/Equipment	Cost
15 Additional Tree Trimming Crews	\$12,892,864
Expansion of Existing Crews	\$1,081,024
Oversight and Support Staff	\$1,177,133
Total Equipment Costs	\$52,520,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$67,671,021</b>

#### Option 2: Five-year Trim Cycle Using Contractors and In-House Oversight

Under this scenario, StreetsLA would supplement the current in-house tree trimming crews by contracting with one or more qualified vendors to perform a portion of trimming operations. Work would be awarded through competitive bidding and structured with service-level agreements, performance metrics, and arboricultural compliance requirements.

Contractors would be responsible for trimming approximately 92,200 trees annually, while the in-house crews would continue to trim 40,000 trees annually to meet the five-year trim cycle goal. Service areas could be divided geographically or by workload distribution. An additional dedicated in-house oversight team consisting of nine positions, would manage contracts, coordinate schedules, conduct quality assurance inspections, and ensure compliance with City standards. This option also aligns with the [City Controller's 2019 Tree Trimming and](#)

Maintenance Audit recommendation to supplement in-house crews with contractors to improve preventive tree care.

The contract costs cannot be confirmed until the City conducts a competitive bidding process, however, we roughly estimate that an annual cost breaks down to \$300 per tree, equating to approximately \$27.66 million annually. The in-house oversight staffing team would cost approximately \$1.16 million annually. See Table 6 below.

<b>Table 6 - Contract Oversight / Quality Control</b>			
Position	Count	Salary	Total
Street Tree Superintendent I (3160-1)	1	\$155,898	\$155,898
Tree Surgeon Supervisor II (3117-2)	1	\$145,572	\$145,572
Tree Surgeon Supervisor I (3117-1)	4	\$121,609	\$486,436
Senior Management Analyst I (9171-2)	1	\$141,967	\$141,967
Management Analyst (9184)	2	\$114,972	\$229,944
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>\$680,018</b>	<b>\$1,159,817</b>

### Option 3: Five-year Trim Cycle Using Only Contractors

Under this option, the City can opt to use contractors to fulfill a five-year grid trimming cycle of all 661,000 street trees. The existing in-house crews can then be shifted to working on out-of-cycle pruning, emergency responses, dead tree/stump removals, and tree planting/maintenance. Using the same rough estimate of \$300 per tree, this approach could cost approximately \$198.3 million annually.

Similar to Option 2, this model aligns with the City Controller's 2019 Tree Trimming and Maintenance Audit recommendation to supplement in-house crews with contractors to improve preventive tree care.

### Tree Inventory Update

To help plan for the management and care of the City's urban forest, StreetsLA contracted with Davey Resource Group to inventory the street trees in the City of Los Angeles. This inventory was completed in 2023, and cataloged a vast majority of the street trees in the public right-of-way including tree stumps and vacant planting sites. The inventory includes the tree location, species, size, and distance from other infrastructure. However, the inventory was not able to inventory trees on hillside streets, and all landscaped medians citywide. Further, the width and condition of tree wells was not inventoried.

As the urban forest is a dynamic component of the City's overall public infrastructure, an update is recommended in order to capture the missing data stated above, as well as refresh scheduling data, and improve efficiency that ensures the information in the inventory matches with the conditions on the ground. In order to achieve this update StreetsLA estimates that it will cost approximately \$4 million.

## CONCLUSION

In order for the City to be consistent with urban forestry best management practices of a five-year tree trimming cycle, significant resources would have to be invested. In total, achieving a five-year tree trimming cycle with City forces would require 186 additional positions and 176 heavy-duty vehicles, equating to approximately \$67.67 million (\$15.15 million in salary costs; \$52.52 million in equipment costs). If this option is considered, an undetermined cost for approximately 480,000 square feet of additional yard space must be identified to house the additional crew members and equipment.

Alternatively, the City may opt to supplement the current in-house tree trimming crews with one or more contractors in order to achieve the five-year trimming goal. As stated in the report, the contract costs cannot be confirmed until the City conducts a competitive bidding process, however, we roughly estimate that an annual cost breaks down to \$300 per tree, equating to approximately \$27.66 million annually. The required in-house oversight and quality control team would cost approximately \$1.16 million annually. The City may also opt to contract out grid trimming entirely. In this scenario, a five-year trimming cycle could cost approximately \$198.3 million annually.

Should resources become available, StreetsLA recommends Option 2, supplementing the current in-house crews, and using one or more contractors to fulfill a five-year grid trimming cycle. This recommendation also aligns with the City Controller's 2019 Tree Trimming and Maintenance Audit recommendation to supplement in-house crews with contractors to improve preventive tree care.

Since this report is informational, StreetsLA recommends that the City Council receive and file this report. If you require additional information, please contact Ana Tabuena-Ruddy, Assistant Director and Chief Sustainability Officer at [Ana.Tabuena-Ruddy@lacity.org](mailto:Ana.Tabuena-Ruddy@lacity.org) or (213) 847-3333.