

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

Date: July 31, 2026

To: Honorable City Council
c/o City Clerk, Room 395
Attention: Heather Hutt, Chair, Transportation Committee

From: Laura Rubio-Cornejo, General Manager 
Department of Transportation

Subject: **RESPONSE TO COUNCIL FILE 26-0251: I-110/GAFFEY STREET INCIDENT RESPONSE AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS**

SUMMARY

On February 18, 2026, a fallen power pole caused a full closure of Interstate 110 near Gaffey Street in San Pedro. As directed in Council File (CF) 26-0251, this report provides an overview of the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) response and communication protocols during the I-110/Gaffey Street incident. In compliance with CF 26-0251, including a detailed timeline of the incident, an assessment of current electronic notification procedures, and an inventory of mobile traffic control devices used to support the department's response.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the City Council NOTE and FILE this report.

BACKGROUND

On February 18, 2026, a fallen power pole caused a full closure of Interstate 110 near Gaffey Street in San Pedro.

In March 2026 the Los Angeles City Council (Council) requested the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), Department of Transportation, and Department of Water and Power, in coordination with the Emergency Management Department, Los Angeles Police Department, and any other relevant agencies, to report with:

- A. A timeline of the response to the Interstate 110/Gaffey Street incident, including agency roles and communication protocols utilized.
- B. The availability, use, and protocols for electronic notifications to residents of similar road disruptions.
- C. The current inventory, location, and deployment status of portable changeable message signs and other mobile traffic control devices Citywide.

- D. Existing coordination protocols with Caltrans for incidents occurring on State freeway facilities within City boundaries, including delineation of responsibilities.
- E. Recommendations, if any, to improve resource availability, interagency coordination, and communication for residents for future incidents.

This report provides an overview of LADOT's response to the incident.

DISCUSSION

Operational and communication coordination between City and State agencies during such incidents is critical in mitigating impacts and keeping stakeholders informed. The deployment of portable traffic management equipment and interagency coordination protocols during such incidents is critical to ensure public safety, minimize congestion, and provide timely notice to motorists and nearby residents. This incident identified opportunities for enhanced coordination during inter-jurisdictional events in order to keep stakeholders, including local officials, responding agencies, and the public, better informed.

Interagency Coordination

At approximately 9:30 A.M. on February 18, 2026, a fallen power pole caused a full closure of Interstate 110 near Gaffey Street in San Pedro. The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) arrived on-site within minutes to secure the perimeter. Once on scene, LAPD and LAFD contacted the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), who were dispatched to manage the live power lines and pole removal, in addition six LADOT traffic control officers (TCOs) were dispatched to support the operation at the intersections of Gaffey St. and O'Farrell St., and Gaffey St. and Summerland Ave. At the same time, a freeway closure of the I-110 at Gaffey Street was initiated by Caltrans and the California Highway Patrol (CHP). At that time, Caltrans distributed a notification to Vincent Thomas Bridge stakeholders, which included some LADOT staff. Caltrans did not request LADOT support.

Caltrans has sole jurisdiction for the operation of all State freeways and highways, including all on- and off-ramps. LADOT coordinates with Caltrans for both planned closures and unplanned incidents. Planned closures are generally associated with Caltrans capital projects. In these instances, LADOT executes a project-level Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Caltrans that spells out LADOT's specific roles and funds reimbursements for all related LADOT expenditures. The current MOUs for the detours on the Interstate 405 Freeway in West Los Angeles and the Vincent Thomas Bridge represent such planned closures. Unplanned incidents are typically coordinated through the Caltrans District 7 Los Angeles Regional Traffic Management Center (LARTMC). Coordination for these unplanned events typically relies on communication between the LARTMC and LADOT's Advanced Transportation System and Coordination Center (ATSAC). After notification, ATSAC uses traffic signal timing adjustments to help flush out the detour freeway off-ramp traffic, as provided for in the Caltrans-LADOT Traffic Signal Maintenance Agreement covering nearly all State-owned traffic signals in the City.

During this particular incident on the I-110 freeway near Gaffey Street, ATSAC did not receive a notification from the Caltrans LARTMC. Instead, LADOT's team assisting Caltrans with the Vincent Thomas Bridge construction received a mass e-mail notification and preemptively contacted ATSAC to assist with signal timing adjustments and deploy TCOs. LADOT and Caltrans management have discussed this incident and will be reestablishing communication protocols to ensure a more coordinated response to future unplanned incidents.

Changeable Message Signs

The LADOT Special Traffic Operations (STO) Changeable Message Sign (CMS) deployment policy (Attachment A) outlines procedures for deploying CMS units to ensure public safety and effective traffic management within the City of Los Angeles. Authorized entities, such as the Emergency Management Department or other departments can initiate the request and prioritize it based on emergency and planned events. Requests need detailed information, including duration, point of contact, message content, and precise placement location. STO will conduct a mandatory four-point assessment covering the suitability of CMS, the safety and feasibility of the placement, the unit's functionality, and its availability. Since STO is not a 24-hour operation, a minimum 6-hour turnaround time is required for deployment upon receiving the request. LADOT STO retains the authority to deny any request if the proposed placement is deemed a hazard or if equipment is unavailable due to prior commitments. During this specific event there was no request for LADOT support from LAPD, EMD, or any other city agency.

LADOT maintains a total inventory of 18 mobile changeable message signs. Of these, two are currently non-operational, and one is dedicated for long-term deployment at the Crypto.com Arena and Convention Center. The remaining 15 units are available for field deployment during emergency incidents or planned events, as directed by the Special Traffic Operations Section.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

There is no fiscal impact on the General Fund as a result of this informational report.

LRC:YA:pw

Attachment A

Attachment A

LADOT Special Traffic Operations: Changeable Message Sign (CMS) Deployment Policy

1. Purpose

This policy establishes mandatory procedures for the request and deployment of Changeable Message Signs (CMS) by the Special Traffic Operations (STO) group. These protocols ensure public safety, effective traffic management, and emergency awareness within the City of Los Angeles.

2. Authorized Requesting Entities

To prioritize essential services, CMS requests must originate from:

- Emergency Management Department (EMD)
- LADOT Bureau of Emergency Management and Operations
- Internal City of Los Angeles Agencies (e.g., LAPD, LAFD, BSS, etc.)

3. Request Routing & Classification

To ensure proper oversight, requests must be routed based on the following:

- *Emergency Requests*: Unforeseen incidents requiring immediate traffic control (e.g., natural disasters, utility failures, or immediate public safety directives).
 - Routing: Direct to the Bureau of Emergency Management and Operations.
- *Non-Emergency Requests*: Planned events or non-critical management (e.g., special events, or scheduled road closures for maintenance).
 - Routing: Direct to the Special Traffic Operations Section Head.

4. Submission Requirements

Requests must be submitted by email or a formal inter-departmental letter to the routed departments/sections specified in section 3. All requests must include the following details to be processed:

- *Duration*: Exact start and end dates/times for deployment.
- *Point of Contact*: Name and direct phone number of the requestor for clarifications.
- *Message Content*: Specific text to be displayed (subject to STO review for clarity and equipment limitations).
- *Location*:
 - Street Stretches: State the address and the direction the sign should face.
 - Intersections: Specify the exact leg and lane designation for placement.

5. STO Evaluation Criteria

Upon receipt, STO will conduct a mandatory four-point assessment to evaluate if deployment of CMS is warranted:

- *Suitability*: Is a CMS the appropriate tool for this specific purpose?
- *Safety/Feasibility*: Is there a safe placement location considering terrain, line-of-sight, road speed, road geometry, and City jurisdiction?

- *Functionality*: Is there a unit currently operational and in good repair?
- *Availability*: Is the equipment unassigned for the requested window?

6. Deployment Timeline

Special Traffic Operations is not a 24-hour operation. Consequently:

- There is a minimum 6-hour turnaround time for deployment from the moment of request acknowledgment and verification of equipment availability.
- Requesting agencies must plan accordingly for non-emergency events to ensure timely placement.

7. Operational Authority

LADOT Special Traffic Operations retains final authority per LAMC 80.07, Powers and Duties of the Department, to deny any request if the placement is deemed a hazard to motorists or if equipment is unavailable due to prior commitments.