

MOTION

Assembly Bill 1572 (Friedman, 2023) prohibits the use of potable water to irrigate non-functional turf on most local government properties beginning January 1, 2027. Non-functional turf includes turf within streets right-of-way, specifically medians. Pursuant to Section 10608.14(b), the law expressly allows potable irrigation to the extent necessary to maintain the health of trees and other perennial non-turf plantings located in the medians or right-of-way.

Noncompliance may subject the City to civil liability and penalties, creating a potential fiscal exposure of up to penalties over \$40,000 for repeated, long-term non-compliance. Rather than incur penalties or simply discontinue irrigation, the City has an opportunity to proactively invest those resources in improvements that achieve compliance while generating multiple long-term benefits.

The Bureau of Street Services (StreetsLA) maintains approximately 10 million square feet of improved landscaped medians citywide. The amount or percentage containing non-functional turf is approximately 3.6 million square feet and at this time, StreetsLA lacks the staffing and resources necessary to complete a citywide median landscape and irrigation conditions assessment.

Simply shutting off irrigation to non-functional turf is not a viable long-term strategy. Many City medians are legacy projects with trees and non-functional turf that are connected to shared irrigation valves or systems. Shutting off these systems could inadvertently deprive established trees of necessary water, resulting in tree decline or mortality, loss of canopy, and increased maintenance and replacement costs. AB 1572 specifically preserves irrigation necessary for tree health.

Converting non-functional turf to California native or other climate-appropriate, drought-tolerant landscaping provides a more productive path to compliance by reducing potable water use and long-term maintenance needs while protecting existing trees, increasing biodiversity, improving median appearance and cleanliness, expanding sustainable greening, and replacing or retrofitting aging irrigation with more efficient water-conserving systems.

LADWP currently offers water-conservation incentives, including up to \$7 per square foot for public-agency turf replacement (though this falls short of actual conversion costs, which average approximately \$25 per square foot), incentives based on verified water savings through its Technical Assistance Program, and 0-percent-interest loans providing upfront funding through its Citywide Water Use Efficiency Loan Program. However, existing programs generally rely on reimbursement after project implementation or loan financing. This poses a challenge to StreetsLA, with limited resources to front conversion costs and ability to finance a median conversion program through loans. A coordinated effort between StreetsLA and DWP to implement a City Median Conversion Program could make these incentives practically accessible and support conversion at the scale required for StreetsLA's citywide median system.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Bureau of Street Services (StreetsLA), with the assistance of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), be INSTRUCTED to report in 30 days on:

1. Existing conditions assessment and staffing needs necessary for StreetsLA to assess its approximately 10 million square feet of improved landscaped medians, identify non-functional turf, document irrigation conditions and shared tree/landscape irrigation systems, and prioritize locations for conversion;



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2. Conversion and maintenance resources necessary for StreetsLA to establish and implement a phased Citywide median conversion program, including staffing and funding for design, construction, irrigation upgrades, plant establishment, and ongoing maintenance; and
3. An initial list of potential medians for conversion, with at least one per Council District, that details all necessary capital expenses, to pilot a City Median Conversion Program; and
4. A tailored City Median Conversion Program, developed in coordination with LADWP, to facilitate AB 1572 compliance and implementation by StreetsLA, including turf-conversion incentives, dedicated funding or financing mechanisms, and the process for receiving advanced lump sum payments and rebates for median conversion; and
5. What will happen to existing non-compliant medians should they not be converted to drought-tolerant medians, including the potential increased annual maintenance costs due to weed removal, dust mitigation, and other issues as identified by the bureau.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Administrative Officer, in coordination with the Board of Public Works, Bureau of Street Services (StreetsLA), and Department of Water and Power, be INSTRUCTED to report on potential front funding sources and grants, including but not limited to the Public Works Trust Fund, Measure M, state and federal grants, and other eligible sources.

I FURTHER MOVE that the Department of Water and Power be INSTRUCTED to confer with the Metropolitan Water District and report back on the feasibility and process for increasing the rebate provided for turf conversion.

PRESENTED BY:



IMELDA PADILLA

Councilmember, 6th District

SECONDED BY:



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