

State of California
Business Transportation and Housing Agency
Department of Transportation

PROGRAM STATUS
Status of Local Assistance Manual Update
Information Item

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STATUS OF LOCAL ASSISTANCE **MANUAL UPDATE**

SUMMARY

This update provides information on the Local Assistance Procedures Manual purpose, background, recent accomplishments, and ongoing efforts.

PURPOSE:

The *Local Assistance Procedures Manual* is used to provide an acceptable practice for complying with both state and federal legislation and regulation. The manual has been prepared to aid California local agencies to scope, organize, design, construct and maintain their public transportation facilities when they seek Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funded federal-aid or State funding. The manual describes the established processes, procedures, documents, authorizations, approvals and certifications which are required in order to receive federal-aid and/or State funds for many types of local transportation projects.

BACKGROUND:

The first edition of *Local Assistance Procedures Manual* was issued on February 1, 1998 in both hard copy and an electronic version. The manual is a compilation and summary of information from many sources including federal and State law, regulations, guidelines and operating practices. Caltrans is responsible for the administration of federal-aid (FHWA funded) transportation projects in California, and cannot delegate this overall administrative responsibility. All procedures are reviewed and approved by applicable state and federal agencies and are issued as Local Programs Procedures (LPPs).

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- **Publications on Compact Disc** - The *Manual* is now also available on compact disc (CD) and consolidated along with many other useful publications for local agencies. The CD acts as a one-stop shop for information and promotes better access to information for local project delivery. It is especially useful as a starter kit for new staff but is helpful for experienced personnel as well. The CD provides local project sponsors with fast and powerful access to essential information. The CD provides users with timesaving tools to search publications for specific information, which avoids a slow labor-intensive scan of paper versions of documents.

The CD includes manuals, handbooks, and other publications that address procedures, practices, policies, and standards. The Local Assistance Procedures Manual, Local Assistance Program Guidelines, Local Assistance Guidebooks, Caltrans Standard Plans and Specifications and all previously released Local Program Procedures (LPPs) are some but not all of the of the publications included on the CD.

Most publications are also posted at the Caltrans website. However, the CD is ideal for users who do not have high-speed Internet access. The CD provides a user-friendly menu from which users can select the publication of interest. This is a timesaving advantage of the CD in avoiding the need to perform an online search to locate publications.

- **Guidebooks** - Guidebooks provide an executive summary of information that supplements but does not replace the detailed guidance contained in the Local Assistance manuals. As of May 2001, the following guidebooks have been published:
 - ❑ *Transportation Funding Opportunities: State and Federal Funds Available for Local Agency Projects*
 - ❑ *Emergency Relief*
 - ❑ *Consultant Selection*

These guidebooks are available online at the Caltrans Web page, from the Local Assistance CD, or via email in response to individual requests.

- **External Input** - External input is essential to continuous improvement and user-friendly manual efforts. In the fall of 2000, the Division of Local Assistance conducted a customer survey. Nearly 150 local agencies responded. We have also sought external input from the League of California Cities and County Engineers Association of California (CEAC), the State of Washington DOT, and the Rural Counties Task Force.
- **Manual Updates** - Local Programs Procedures (LPPs) are now issued as manual inserts. This avoids the need to review LPPs and the manual to have the correct information. Recent LPPs are listed below.
 - ❑ Implement New Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Requirements
 - ❑ Implement Pedestrian Safety Program
 - ❑ Update Safe Routes to Schools Program
 - ❑ Update Bicycle Transportation Account
 - ❑ Revise Pre-Award Audit Requirements
 - ❑ Revise Environmental Exemption and Exclusion Forms
- **Streamlining** – Procedures were streamlined in areas of accounting and pre-award audits. The revised accounting chapter includes indirect costs as an eligible expense for federal-aid reimbursement and sample invoices. The revised pre-award audit requirements and consultant procurement procedures reduces requirements in these areas.
- **Web Updating** - The web version of the *Local Assistance Procedures Manual* is always up to date with the new LPPs. Previously, the user would have to cross-reference the LPPs and the manual to identify current procedures.

ONGOING EFFORTS:

- The Department continuously updates the *Local Assistance Procedures Manual* to incorporate recent State legislation and federal regulation changes that allow agencies to capture State and federal funds. These updates remain the department's number one priority for our manual.
- New electronic forms are being produced in a project called "forms plus" that allow for relational information between forms so that users may only enter information once for a project.
- Process reviews are conducted to identify improvements and simplify procedures.
- A professional customer service survey will be completed later in 2001.
- Guidebooks on additional topics will be developed based on input from the customer survey results.
- The CD will be maintained and additional publications will be added.