

## Memorandum

*Flex your power!  
Be energy efficient!*

To: CHIEF DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
DEPUTY DIRECTORS  
DISTRICT DIRECTORS  
DIVISION CHIEFS  
PROGRAM MANAGER

Date: August 20, 2004

From: J. MIKE LEONARDO  
Acting Chief Engineer



Subject: Metric to U.S. Customary Units (English) Transition

In 1993, the Department adopted the International System of Units (SI; a.k.a. the Metric System) as our preferred system of weights and measures to comply with federal law. The law was subsequently changed to allow metric to be optional. A multifunctional team was recently formed to re-evaluate the metrication policy and make a recommendation regarding the continued use of metric units.

The team identified five alternatives ranging from a continuation of the current all-metric policy to middle ground alternatives using dual units, and finally to reverting completely back to the English system of units and standards. The latter alternative was recommended because it aligns the Department with the practices and procedures used by the Department's primary customers and partners: the contracting industry, the Local Agencies in California, other state DOTs and the citizens we serve. In addition, there are long-term financial advantages to the Department.

Although there will be upfront resource expenditures during the transition period for the Department to revert back to using English units and standards, these costs will be superseded by annual savings following the transition period. The cost savings will be primarily attributed to reduced construction contract bid prices.

A project manager and transition team is now in place. This Metric to English Transition Team has begun developing a transition plan for the Department. Upon completion of the transition plan, the Department will rescind the appropriate related policies. One of the first orders of business will be to revise Director's Policy 15, Metrication, to reflect this direction. The transition plan will outline the necessary requirements for converting the departmental manuals, guidance, and standards documents. Once all departmental manuals, guidance, and standards documents have been converted to English units, a transition period of two years should be anticipated to convert or deliver projects currently in the project delivery process. It is too early in the process to determine a schedule for establishing and implementing a transition plan.

CHIEF DEPUTY DIRECTOR, et al.

August 20, 2004

Page 2

In the meantime, we will remain a fully Metric Department and will continue to work in Metric units.

There will be some temptation to begin new projects in English units, particularly those projects with long lead times. This risk is not recommended until the Department has updated its manuals, CADD software, standard plans, standard specifications, and the many other related items.

The Department will issue updates as the transition team progresses. The following web page has been established to assist with questions: [www.dot.ca.gov/hq/oppd/metric/metricpg.htm](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/oppd/metric/metricpg.htm). John Rocanova is the Project Manager for this effort and can be reached at (916) 653-9506 (8-453-9506).