

Frequently Asked Questions for Using Caltrans Construction Standards (CCS)

1. The County doesn't understand why Caltrans cares if we use an older version of CCS on a project that is locally funded and off the State Highway System (SHS). Can you explain further this requirement? I understand if it is for a state or federally funded project, but what liability would the state have if the project is locally funded and off the SHS?

Answer: For projects located off the SHS and off the National Highway System (NHS), any of the three options from the current Caltrans Construction Standards (includes Standard Plans, Standard Specifications, Standard Special Provisions, Standard Bid Items, Notice to Bidders, and Bid Book), the current Standard Specifications for Public Works Construction (A.K.A Greenbook), and locally approved construction standards can be used. If Caltrans Construction Standards is used, the current version must be used. The reason for implementing the current version is that our annual updates is often times tied to the legally mandated and safety related updates, new laws, new policies. Asking our local partners to adhere to the latest standard is in their best interest. Caltrans has the liability to oversee that the correct provisions are used if Caltrans Standards are used.

2. Is it permissible to incorporate a blend of Local Agency and Caltrans Standards in a federally funded project, where certain sections follow Local Agency standards and others adhere to Caltrans standards?

Answer:

To avoid any confusion, the response is broken down into three parts:

- I. If a project is on the State Highway System (SHS), use current Caltrans specifications only.
- II. If a project is on the National Highway System (NHS), use either the current Caltrans standard specifications or the current Standard Specifications for Public Works Construction (A.K.A Green Book). No other standard is allowed.
- III. If a project is off the SHS and off the NHS, then any of the following three standards can be used in accordance with the LAPM.
 - 1) Current Caltrans Specifications
 - 2) The current edition of the Standard Specifications for Public Works Construction (A.K.A Green Book).
 - 3) The current edition of local agency approved standard specification. Please note that the LPA has to comply Exhibit 12-G, "required federal-aid language" on all federal-aid projects.

If LPA chooses to use blend of multiple standards for projects off-SHS and off-NHS, then LPA shall specify in their special provision which standard shall prevail when there are conflicting instructions.

Also, LPA may need to include the following wording in the project special provision (shown as an example):

The project shall adhere to the County Standard Specifications for sections 1 to 8 and 2023 CCS for section 9 through 99.

3. Can you clarify that local agencies do not need to implement Division 1 of the Caltrans Standard Specifications?

Answer: If Caltrans Standards is used, then Division 1 is required. If some portions of the Division 1 are not applicable, they can be specified in the special provisions or edited using Nonstandard Special Provisions (nSSPs)

4. Is it possible to get a list of specification revisions from 2018 and 2022? Can you send a link?

Answer:

Look for the Digests of Revisions for 2023 version at the link below-

[2023 Standard Plans, Standard Specifications, and Contract Item Codes | Caltrans](#)

Older versions have been archived. Please reach out to your DLAE to get copies of archived digest of revisions using a secured file transfer site. Provide DLAE with a file transfer site to upload the requested files.

5. Are there going to be updates throughout the year or only yearly for the Caltrans plans and specifications?

Answer: Yes, there are mid cycle in addition to annual updates. However, DLA is not requiring LPAs to implement mid-cycle updates for local projects off SHS/off NHS.

You can sign up for email notifications of changes by [clicking here](#).

6. Regarding the Apprentice/Trainee Program, is it acceptable if the Apprenticeship Standards approved by CA – Department of Industrial Relations (DIR)?

Answer: The requirements for prevailing wage apply for all government entities performing prevailing wage work and in Labor Code 1777.5 and CCR, Title 8, Section 230. Anytime an agency uses Skilled & Trained Workforce, this requirement is applicable.

To be clear this isn't an issue of using Caltrans specs/contract - all of theirs should have this code already as part of their normal contracting with or without Caltrans involved if the contract is funded wholly or in part from public funds and work performed includes construction, alteration, repair, demolition, installation or maintenance work.

DIR- Division of Apprenticeship Standards sets the standard and approves apprentice programs etc. DIR – Division of Labor Standards Enforcement is the division responsible for enforcing the requirements on projects.

7. Please discuss how an agency would use the Local Agency section 39 that resides on the UC Davis pavement studies website. Would its use be allowed?

Answer: Yes, with a California registered civil engineer's approval.

8. For a federally funded project, can 2022 standard plans for guardrails be added into County constructions plans (as county standard) or does 2023 standard plans have to be implemented regardless?

Answer: County standard is considered as a locally approved standard, as long as a California licensed civil engineer signs and approves the standard, following an established process of approval method at a local level. Local standards are sole responsibility of the local governments and Caltrans do not take part in any determination of its drafting.

9. For a locally funded project, where the agency is not required to use Exhibit 12-D: PS&E checklist that has a box to check for the latest version of standards being used, how do you convince the agencies to use the latest CCS since LAPM is silent about the requirement for locally funded projects? What is the cost implication for not using latest CSS in this case?

Answer: Caltrans undergoes annual updates to its Construction Standards to incorporate the latest advancements in technology, materials, safety, policy and best practices. These updates are designed to enhance project quality, durability, and sustainability, ultimately benefiting all stakeholders involved in the transportation infrastructure lifecycle.

While we understand that locally funded projects may not undergo the same auditing processes as federal and State-funded projects, we want to emphasize the importance of utilizing the latest CCS across all projects, regardless of funding source. Consistency in standards not only ensures compliance with industry regulations but also fosters uniformity and interoperability within our transportation network. Therefore, the intent of this implementation memo is to encourage all using the latest version of CCS regardless of funding source.

In case, the locally funded project chooses to utilize an older version of CCS which has been retired by Caltrans from utilization, then the registered engineer who signs off on the specification will be responsible. Caltrans will not have any liability in this case.

10. So, you are saying if the registered engineer is signing off on the specification, then we can use older CCS version for a federal funded project? All specs are signed by a registered engineer.
Answer: No, for a federal funded local project, you must use latest version of CCS as your project has the risk of going through audits as well as could be reviewed by the state oversight engineers as the fund passes through Caltrans. However, you have 3 alternatives for specification as stated in answer to Q#2.

11. Particularly for federal funded project, typically from MTO, RTPA the deadline to submit PS&E for issuing con E-76 is in October 30. If the new standard does not come out before October, then it will be very hard to reconcile the timeline between issuing E-76 and updating the package.

Answer: Local projects off-SHS will have 3 months grace period from the October implementation date chosen by Caltrans Project Delivery. For 2024 CCS, the implementation date will be January 2025 and you will not be required to update your specifications to the next version if your E-76 is in October.

12. For local agency projects. Let's say I'm working on a County Project and work on this project in-house. The design is completed April 2024 and the project goes out bid June 2024. Construction does not start until November 2024.

For construction, even though the construction occurs after the October 2024, the project is following the Caltrans Standard of 2024 and this is going to be ok (correct?)

Answer: The current version is 2023 Caltrans Construction Standard (CCS), so this project will follow 2023 CCS since the project will be advertised in June 2024. We do not look at construction start date. The implementation date follows the project milestone that is just before the advertisement date which we call as construction fund allocation/approval/authorization/obligation date.

For projects receiving approval, allocation, obligation, and authorization for the construction phase on or after October 31, 2023, the applicable version is 2023 CCS.

Yes, the future version will have new implementation date which will be after October 2024. If your project is advertised prior to October 2024, then you would follow the current version which is 2023 CCS.

13. What if county standards references Caltrans standards? Do we have to reference the latest CCS version?

Answer: Again, if a project is off the SHS and off NHS, an LPA has options to select from one of the standards: current Caltrans Construction Standards, current standards for Public Works Construction, and local agency approved standards. If CCS is chosen by the LPA, then the current version must be used. If LPA uses the local agency approved standards and want to reference older version of CCS, they can do so as long as it is approved by a California registered civil engineer. Caltrans is not liable for local standards.

14. What if there is a project out to be construction this May/ June and references the 2018 Caltrans Specifications? Is the P.E. who signed the PS&E liable for all the updates?

Answer: If Caltrans standards is used for a project, then the current version must be used. If the local agency approved standards is used and want to reference Caltrans 2018 standards, it is OK as long as a California registered professional civil engineer approves and signs the standards. Obviously that the updates in the current Caltrans standards is not followed if Caltrans current standards is not used. The LPA and the engineer who signs the locally approved standards is liable to achieve the sound quality and integrity of the project.

15. Does Caltrans updates the Standards every year in October?

Answer: Yes, Caltrans will update the Standards every year in October.

16. Let's say I am designing a project right now so I need to use 2023 Standards (the current one), but the project won't be built two years from now. Then in two years there maybe some updates on Caltrans Standards that will impact the design. Can I lock in my version as 2023 CCS when I am in design and comply with Caltrans requirement of using current Standards?

Answer: No, you can't lock in the CCS version at early phase of design as updating the PS&E package is part of continuous project development work. From the beginning of the design, to 30%, 60%, 90%, 100% of the design, you have to continuously update your plan, specification and estimate to achieve the 100% PS&E approval when your package is ready to advertise. Before you advertise, you will need construction funding approval to carry out the construction phase. This date is the implementation date to identify the latest CCS version in practice at that time.

If it is a locally funded off-SHS, off-NHS project, with 0 federal or state funds, then the State will not get involved in the review or audit.

17. To comply with the implementation memo of annual updates to SSP, can you only pick the updated/revised SSPs from the index? My understanding is that we have to replace the entire specification book with any annual updates as the upper right section of the SSP shows the revision year such as 2022, 2023 etc.

Answer: When Caltrans moved to annual update, we had to use the current year for all SSPs whether changed or unchanged from previous version so that it aligns with the year version of the book (such as 2022 CCS, 2023 CCS). But that does not mean every SSP has been revised. Look at the index to identify which SSP has been revised/changed from previous version and only replace those SSPs in your template to comply with the update.

It is recommended that you use the latest Standards and SSPs. The SSP Index provides a list of revised specs to be used with the current Standard Specs & Plans.

18. Please provide the sign-up link for Construction-standards-updates-announce.

Answer: <https://lists2.dot.ca.gov/mailman/listinfo/construction-standards-updates-announce>