#26-06: Positive Work Zone Protection (PWP) and Mitigation Measures

Purpose

Office Bulletin #26-06 announces updates to statewide guidance for evaluating, selecting, and documenting Positive Work Zone Protection (PWP) or associated mitigation measures on federal-aid projects regardless of project location and for any project on the State Highway System (SHS). This guidance supports compliance with state and federal safety requirements and promotes consistent application of PWP to reduce preventable injuries and fatalities for workers and the traveling public.

Policy Update

The following policy update applies to all Plans, Specifications & Estimate (PS&E) submittals on or after December 31, 2026:

1. **Positive Work Zone Protection** must be considered on all federal-aid projects regardless of project location, and for any project on the SHS, including design, construction, maintenance, and encroachment permit work. Decisions regarding the use of PWP must be based on an engineering evaluation that accounts for work zone conditions, worker exposure, and roadway characteristics. Caltrans has updated its related policies and guidance; detailed requirements are provided in Design Information Bulletin (DIB) 91-02.

2. **Engineering Study**: All work zone activities must undergo a standardized engineering study to determine whether PWP is required, whether mitigation measures may be used instead, or whether standard temporary traffic control is sufficient. This engineering study evaluates work duration, worker exposure, posted speeds, traffic levels of service, and physical work zone constraints. Building on this foundational evaluation, all PWP decisions including the strategies and devices to be used may be determined either through a project-specific engineering study or through agency guidelines developed from such studies. These guidelines indicate when positive protection devices or other strategies should be applied based on project and highway characteristics. Benefit-cost analyses, decision matrices, decision tree analysis, or other appropriate engineering decision-making tools may be incorporated into the engineering study. The types of measures and strategies to be used are not mutually exclusive and should be considered in combination as appropriate based on characteristics and factors such as work duration, lateral worker exposure, posted speeds, traffic levels of service, and physical work zone constraints as specified in 23 CFR 630.1106 (b).

3. **Documentation Requirements**: The engineering study must be performed by an engineer, or by an individual working under the responsible charge of an engineer, using procedures and criteria established by the engineer. The person conducting the study shall document the analysis, including the PWP determination, during project development for each

applicable work zone. Any modifications made during construction must also be documented. Local Public Agencies may develop their own forms to document these determinations and modifications, or they may utilize Caltrans forms (CEM-1302 and CEM-1303) with appropriate modifications. Completing these forms (CEM-1302 for the initial engineering evaluation and CEM-1303 for any changes to the PWP and mitigation measures determinations) is considered equivalent to conducting the required engineering study to determine the necessary PWP and mitigation measures. Exceptions to providing PWP require appropriate approvals at the discretion of the DLAE, in cooperation with the District Traffic Operations and/or Safety Offices.

4. **Conditions requiring PWP**: Positive protection is required when high-speed traffic with no escape routes is anticipated. Additionally, the use of PWP may be considered for project conditions that create elevated risk, such as work involving falsework or bridge rail systems, replacement or removal of existing safety features, unprotected fixed objects near open lanes, or excavations and height differentials within the proximity of traffic.

5. **Types of PWP Devices**: Available PWP devices include temporary concrete barriers, temporary steel barriers, movable barrier systems, mobile barrier systems, and stationary impact attenuator vehicles. Device selection must consider posted speeds, traffic volume, work duration, road geometry, and available escape paths for workers.

6. **Use of Mitigation Measures**: When installation of PWP is not feasible or would increase worker exposure, mitigation measures may be used. These include reduced work zone speed limits, expanded work windows, full closures, increased enforcement, staging and diversion strategies, automated flagger assistance devices, portable changeable message signs, intrusion alarms, and other operational techniques that reduce risk.

Publication Changes

The following LAPM Exhibits / Chapters will be updated for the January 2027 publication.

LAPM Chapter / Section / Exhibit	Changes that Supersede Current Publication
Chapter 12.6.7 Work Zone Implementation and Improvement Procedures	The policy updates stated above will be added to Section 12.6.7.
Exhibit 12-D PS&E Checklist	The following checkbox statement is added to Section X. Project Plans and Specifications:

LAPM Chapter / Section / Exhibit	Changes that Supersede Current Publication
	Positive Work Zone Protection Determination. If an exception to providing PWP is permitted, include the DLAE's approval along with the justification for the exception.
Exhibit 15-B Resident Engineer's Construction Contract Administration Checklist	The following requirements are added to Section 14. Traffic Safety in Highway and Street Work Zones - Positive Work Zone Protection Determination in the PS&E? Yes or No (see LAPM 12.6) - Positive Work Zone Protection Modification during Construction phase (if any). Yes or No

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Kitae Nam | *Preliminary Engineering Oversight*
Mark Samuelson | *Acting Office Chief*