



Metro

Board Report

Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation
Authority
One Gateway Plaza
3rd Floor Board Room
Los Angeles, CA

File #: 2019-0239, **File Type:** Program

Agenda Number: 2.

**SAFE BOARD MEETING
JUNE 27, 2019**

SUBJECT: CALL BOX SYSTEM

ACTION: AUTHORIZE THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE CALL BOX SYSTEM

RECOMMENDATION

AUTHORIZE the restructuring of the Los Angeles County Kenneth Hahn Call Box System which will enable the removal or reallocation of up to 574 call boxes. As a result, the system will be reduced to no more than 100 call box sites, depending upon the number of reallocations. Staff will continue to review the performance of the system and present future restructuring recommendations as part of the annual budget approval process.

ISSUE

Los Angeles Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (LA SAFE) is responsible for the operations and maintenance of the Kenneth Hahn Call Box System. As part of the overall management of the call box system, a review was conducted that resulted in a recommendation to restructure the call box system.

DISCUSSION

The call box system was established to provide motorist aid service to the public. In 2007, the Board authorized an initial restructuring that transitioned the call box system from a primary motorist aid resource to a secondary safety net system. This resulted in a reduction of the call box system from 4,500 to 2,500 call boxes. In 2015, the Board authorized a second restructuring that resulted in the current level of 602 call box sites.

As stated in prior restructuring approvals, periodic reviews of the call box system and subsequent recommendations would be presented to the Board. The latest review was performed in late 2018 and examined a number of factors including:

- Maintenance - Review of maintenance issues associated with call box locations;
- Safety - Review of the safety of the site based upon the number of times a call box has been knocked-down;
- Call Box Usage - Review of usage and number of calls requiring transfer to the California Highway Patrol;

- Availability of Services - Review of Metro Freeway Service Patrol coverage, and nearby exits (off ramps);

Additional external factors that were considered include the continued proliferation of cell phones, the expanded inclusion of in-vehicle services, the availability and use of 511 Motorist Aid and the general trend of other SAFEs to reduce the size of their call box system. A quick survey identified several other SAFEs that have or will be moving forward to reduce their call box system. These include the Metropolitan Transportation Commission/Bay Area SAFE, Orange County SAFE, Riverside County SAFE, San Bernardino County SAFE and San Diego County SAFE. All these SAFEs have had their plans approved and are in the process of or have completed their restructuring.

One future impacting factor that was considered is the notice from AT&T wireless stating their policy to stop supporting 3G operations in 2021. Currently, all the call boxes operate on 3G wireless technology. With the wireless carriers focused on transitioning to 5G, their support of 3G technologies is not expected to continue. As a result, LA SAFE would be required to upgrade the call boxes to work on either 4G or 5G technologies. With the latest reduction in the call box systems by the various SAFEs there may be limited, if any, vendors capable or willing to provide a limited number of 4G or 5G call boxes at a reasonable cost. This impact will be closely monitored and addressed in future reports.

As a result of the review, up to 574 call box sites have been identified and recommended for removal or reallocation. The call box sites not recommended for removal are in rural areas with reduced/limited wireless service and a lack of other readily available services. These call boxes are located along Angeles Forest Highway, Lake Hughes Road, Angeles Crest Highway, Decker Road, I-5 near Pyramid Lake and Pacific Coast Highway. Call boxes may be reallocated to these and other similar roads to ensure a safety net. Staff will monitor and report any changes in future budget reports.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

Removal and reallocation of the call boxes is not anticipated to present any negative safety impacts. These recommendations have been reviewed by our partner agencies, Caltrans (Attachment A) and CHP (Attachment B), for safety implications and both agencies concur with our findings and recommendation.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Funding of \$85,000 for the implementation of the restructuring plan has been included in the FY20 budget request under Cost Center 3351, Project 300209 for LA SAFE.

Since this is a multi-year project, the cost center manager and Executive Officer, LA SAFE will be accountable for budgeting the cost in future years, including any options exercised.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board could elect to 1) not approve the restructuring; or 2) remove the entire call box system.

Staff is not recommending either alternative. This restructuring is consistent with prior approved restructuring recommendations and will ensure a more efficient, effective and safe system for the motoring public. Removal of the entire system is not recommended at this time as the call boxes that remain will provide a continuing safety net in remote locations.

NEXT STEPS

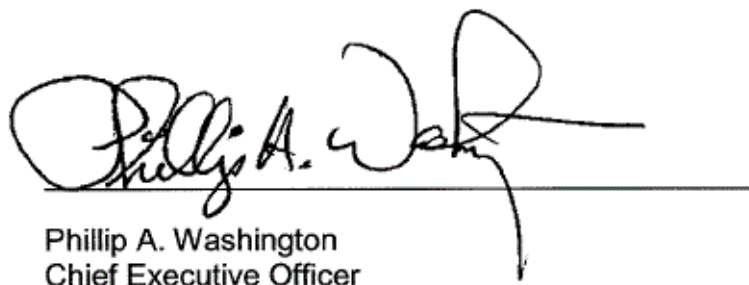
Upon approval, staff will begin steps to restructure the call box system. Additionally, staff will continue monitoring the system and move forward with additional call box removals or reallocations as warranted and update the Board during the annual budget process.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Caltrans Call-Box removal approval letter
Attachment B - CHP Call-Box removal approval letter

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