State of California
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

California State Transportation Agency

Memorandum

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To: DISTRICT DIRECTORS

Date: March 11, 2014

File:

From: KARLA SUTLIFF
Chief Engineer

STEVE TAKIGAWA
Deputy Director, Maintenance and Operations

Subject: **EVALUATION OF CURRENT PLANTING WORK**

With California facing statewide water shortfalls in the driest year in recorded state history, Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr. proclaimed a "state of emergency" and directed state officials to take all necessary actions to prepare for these drought conditions. Governor Brown directed state agencies to implement water use reduction plans for all state facilities. These plans include immediate water conservation actions, and require that a "moratorium will be placed on new, non-essential landscaping projects at state facilities and on state highways and roads."

As part of the Caltrans Drought Action Plan, all planned planting work, regardless of funding source, must be evaluated to ensure that only essential planting work is installed for the duration of the drought. This includes planting by our local partners, planting installed by encroachment permit, mitigation planting and as planting work currently in construction.

The following actions must be taken regarding proposed and ongoing planting work to comply with the Governor's emergency drought declaration, to prepare for the potential of future additional water restrictions, and to meet Caltrans Drought Action Plan commitments.

1. Evaluate proposed planting to determine if it is "essential landscaping." Planting work is essential and may remain on schedule for installation and plant establishment during the drought period if the Local Agency supports the project on its current schedule (regardless of funding source), the local water purveyor will provide written assurance that water will be provided for the life of the project and any of the following:

    - The local water purveyor will provide written assurance that water will be provided for the life of the project.
    - Planting work is currently in construction and in the plant establishment phase.
    - Planting work is currently in construction and cancelling or delaying planting creates documented negative impacts to the contractors and the local economy.
    - Planting intended to meet external mandates such as those for erosion control and habitat mitigation as defined in environmental documents, and the regulatory agency does not support delay.

- Planting is funded through the SHOPP 201.335 Stormwater Program, or is intended to ensure Caltrans meets water quality mandates.
- Planting work is funded through the Transportation Enhancement (TE) Program for which federal funds would be lost if work is delayed.
- Local Agency would lose state or federal funding if the planting is delayed.
- Planting includes primarily drought tolerant plants and is watered using temporary irrigation systems (designed for non-operation at the completion of the plant establishment period) or recycled water. Drought-tolerant plants are native or non-native plants that require minimal use of water, and are appropriate to the region's climate and the project's use.
- Planting work is irrigated using an efficient irrigation system (i.e. drip or bubbler components and "smart" technology controllers).

2. Deliver proposed planting work to meet current RTL dates but postpone advertising until drought conditions improve, and deny encroachment permit planting if any of the following apply:

    - Proposed planting work is in an area identified by the California Department of Public Health as "severe water shortage area."
    - The local agency or the local water purveyor will not provide written assurance that water will be provided for the life of the contract.
    - In the opinion of the District Landscape Architect, proposed planting could be jeopardized by current or proposed local agency water restrictions or there is potential for existing well water sources to run dry.

3. Split off planting and irrigation work from existing ongoing contracts or projects and from encroachment permit work or applications, and reprogram as future projects until drought conditions improve if any of the following apply:

    - Proposed planting work is in an area identified by the California Department of Public Health as a "severe water shortage area."
    - The local agency or the local water purveyor will not provide written assurance that water will be provided for the life of the project.
    - In the opinion of the District Landscape Architect the proposed planting would be jeopardized by current or proposed local agency water restrictions.
    - Funding is available for a future project to install planting work.

These actions will comply with Director Dougherty's "Caltrans Water Conservation and Drought Action Plan" memo dated February 6, 2014. As conditions in California change over the spring and summer, districts must be vigilant to ensure local water supplies are available for the installation of essential planting on the State Highway System.

Please see the attached spreadsheet of current projects that include planting work. Districts are asked to evaluate each project against the criteria described in this memo and indicate a proposed action for each project.

Project actions shall be reported to Mr. Keith Robinson, Principal Landscape Architect and Caltrans' point of contact for the Caltrans Drought Action Plan, by March 26, 2014 for review and concurrence. Exceptions to the evaluation criteria described in this memo may be approved by Mr. Robinson on a case-by-case basis.

Should you have any questions please contact Keith Robinson at keith.robinson@dot.ca.gov or 916-654-6200.

Attachment:

c: HQ PD Division Chiefs
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Dennis Agar, Division Chief Traffic
Tony Tavares, Division Chief Maintenance