



STAFF REPORT
Board Meeting of October 20, 2021

AGENDA ITEM: 4-D

PREPARED BY: Evelyn Espinosa, Associate Regional Planner

SUBJECT:

Freeway Service Patrol Service

Enclosure: No

Action: Information and Discussion Only

SUMMARY:

The Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) is a program that provides roaming tow and service trucks that patrol pre-determined sections of roadways to assist motorists in aid. The goal of FSP is to alleviate traffic congestion problems by removing disabled vehicles and cleaning minor collisions and debris from the roadway. Typically, an FSP is deployed in more urbanized and metropolitan areas of the State. These patrols generally operate Monday through Friday during peak commute hours to provide congestion relief, safety, and air quality benefits by:

- Reducing traffic jams through prompt removal of stalled cars.
- Reducing the chance of further accidents and bottlenecks caused by impatient drivers and on-lookers.
- Assisting local emergency services under California Highway Patrol (CHP) direction.
- Saving fuel and cutting air pollution emissions by reducing stop-and-go traffic.
- Keeping narrowed lanes clear during highway construction projects.

Freeway Service Patrol Background

The first FSP program was piloted in Los Angeles and was later expanded into other regions by State legislation enacted in 1991. FSP is a joint program provided by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the CHP and the local partner agencies/transportation agencies. The FSP program is a free service to motorists by tow truck operators that are under contract that patrol designated routes on congested urban freeways.

The goal of the statewide FSP program is to maximize the effectiveness of the freeway transportation system. FSP is a congestion management tool which strategically addresses commute traffic pattern problems. Deployment of the FSP tow trucks is driven by congestion patterns in major metropolitan areas.

The goal is accomplished by the expeditious removal of disabled/stranded vehicles from the freeway. Removing obstructions on the freeways as rapidly as possible has a positive impact on traffic volumes by eliminating problems which contribute to non-recurrent congestion.

The effectiveness of the statewide FSP program is assessed by calculating the annual benefit/cost (B/C) ration of each segment. First, the annual savings in incident delay, fuel consumption and air pollutant emissions due to FSP service are calculated based on the number of assists, segment geometrics and traffic volumes. The savings are then translated into benefits using monetary values for delay and fuel consumption.

“Each year, the FSP program assists approximately 650,000 motorists on California's highway system. Rapid removal of freeway obstructions also reduces fuel consumption and minimizes automobile emissions by reducing the time vehicles spend idling in stopped traffic. Currently, over 350 tow trucks operated by CHP-trained, certified, and supervised drivers, patrol in excess of 1,750 miles of the most congested freeways in California.” ([CHP Freeway Service Patrol Web Page](#))

Services provided by the FSP include:

- Changing flat tires.
- Jump starting vehicles.
- Refilling radiators and taping leaky hoses.
- Putting a gallon of fuel in gas tanks.
- Towing inoperable vehicles to a safe location off the freeway.
- Clearing vehicle damaged in collisions under CHP direction.
- Removing debris from traffic lanes under CHP direction.
- Monitoring the left shoulder part-time travel lane for visual clearing once it is in operation.

Most of the funding for the 14 statewide FSP programs is made available by the State through the State Highway Account (SHS). Approximately \$25.5 million has consistently been budgeted for FSP on an annual basis to provide funding assistance and requires a 25% local match. Annual FSP program costs include the annual capital, operating and administrative costs for providing FSP service. The State's financial contribution to individual FSP programs is allocated on a formula basis consisting of the following:

- 25% on the number of urban freeway lane miles in the participating area.
- 50% on the basis of the ratio of the population of the participating area.
- 25% on the basis of traffic congestion as ascertained by Caltrans.

For new FSP programs, the State funding formula allocation is determined by Caltrans who allocates the funding at a maximum level over three years as follows so as not to disrupt State funding for existing FSP programs (local funds make-up the difference):

- 33.3% of its full allocation amount in the first full fiscal year following application approval.

- No less than 66.7% of its full allocation amount in the second fiscal year following application approval.
- No less than 100% of its full allocation amount in the third fiscal year following application approval.

Under SB 1, the Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017, an additional \$25 million in annual funding was made available for FSP program statewide. This additional funding addresses inflationary cost increases for the program while also allowing for further expansion of the program, which should provide more congestion relief, especially in the more heavily populated and congested regions. The SB 1 funding guidelines for the FSP identifies the annual \$25 million distributed as follows:

- Allocation for inflation and service-hour adjustments. \$12.2 million is allocated as an inflationary and service hour adjustment related to the pre-SB 1 Caltrans funding of \$25.4 million, which has been static since 2006/7.
- Allocation for the CHP. \$3.75 million is allocated to reimburse the CHP to both recognize static Caltrans reimbursements since the 2006/7 budget, and new workload associated with new or expanded FSP service.
- Allocation for New or Expanded Service. \$9.05 million is available for allocation to support new or expanded service.

FSP currently serves these areas:

- Valley Division - Sacramento, Yolo, Placer, El Dorado, and San Joaquin counties.
- Golden Gate Division - Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, Santa Clara, San Francisco, San Mateo, Solano, and Sonoma counties.
- Central Division - Fresno County.
- Southern Division - Los Angeles County.
- Border Division - San Diego and Orange counties.
- Coastal Division - Monterey, Santa Cruz, Santa Barbara, Ventura counties, and the cities of San Luis Obispo and Moorpark.
- Inland Division - Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

Next Steps:

Staff will continue coordination efforts with Caltrans and CHP to determine applicability and eligibility to apply to this program.

FISCAL IMPACT:

No fiscal impact to the approved 2021-22 Overall Work Program and Budget.