The California State Auditor released the following report today:

California Department of Transportation
Its Maintenance Division's Allocations and Spending for Field Maintenance
Do Not Match Key Indicators of Need

BACKGROUND

With more than 50,000 lane miles, over 13,100 bridges, and nearly 205,000 drainage culverts, the State's highway system is maintained by the California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans) maintenance division. The maintenance program focuses on preventative work to correct small problems before they grow and require more costly repairs. The program encompasses highway maintenance, such as work performed by contractors to repair pavement, bridges, and drainage culverts, and field maintenance which is generally performed by Caltrans staff and includes repairing minor pavement damage, clearing vegetation, and picking up litter.

KEY FINDINGS

During our audit of the maintenance program and our review at three district offices—Los Angeles, Oakland, and Fresno—we noted the following:

- The maintenance division does not use key indicators that could identify a need for maintenance or performance information to strategically plan field maintenance activities.
    - ✓ It calculates maintenance performance scores (service scores) for many field maintenance activities to assess how well it maintains the state highway system, but does not weight districts' service scores to account for differences in traffic, terrain, or climate and only sets statewide goals for three of those activities.
    - ✓ The districts generally create short-term plans for tasks intended to be completed within a week or two rather than adequately establishing priorities considering overall field maintenance needs and improving service scores.
- Although Caltrans paid $250,000 for a budget model in 2009 for its field maintenance program that would have considered key factors that influence highway maintenance—such as traffic volume and climate—in allocating funds, it never implemented the model and thus, allocates funds based on historical budgets rather than key indicators of need.
    - ✓ Caltrans does not consider districts' service scores in allocating funds and thus, some districts may not have the resources to improve those scores.
    - ✓ Although some districts have a higher proportion of the State's traffic volume, they received a disproportionally lower level of funding than did some districts that have a lower traffic volume.
    - ✓ Districts spent significantly different amounts on highways with similar maintenance needs which could indicate that districts are not performing needed work, do not have sufficient resources, or are spending inefficiently.
- The districts do not effectively manage the service requests they receive from the public and cannot demonstrate that they are promptly performing the requested field maintenance work.
    - ✓ More than 81 percent of the service requests received by two districts appeared to remain unresolved after more than 90 days.
    - ✓ None of the districts have a central repository for tracking, reviewing, and approving service requests.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommended that the Legislature require the maintenance division to implement a budget model for field maintenance that takes into account key indicators of maintenance needs such as traffic volume and climate.

We also made numerous recommendations to Caltrans including the following:

- Perform field maintenance work consistently on highways with similar needs by assessing how districts use funds, use service scores in scheduling work, and strategically plan maintenance work.
- Require staff to verify and update the status of all outstanding service requests and require supervisors to monitor the completion of service requests each month.
- Ensure costs are appropriate by strengthening its controls over work orders by requiring supervisors to document the review and approval of work orders.

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