



City of Albuquerque
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Interoffice Memorandum

June 29, 2005

Ref. No. 05-00-117F2

To: John Castillo, Director, Department of Municipal Development
Dave Harmon, Traffic Engineering Division Manager

From: Carmen L. Kavelman, Acting Director, Office of Internal Audit and
Investigations

Subject: SECOND FOLLOW-UP OF MANAGEMENT AUDIT REPORT NO. 00-117, PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, TRAFFIC ENGINEERING DIVISION

At the request of the City's Accountability in Government Oversight Committee, the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations completed a second follow-up review of Management Audit Report No. 00-117, Public Works Department, Traffic Engineering Division. In fiscal year (FY) 2005, the divisions of the Public Works Department have become part of the Department of Municipal Development (DMD). The original audit report was issued on December 20, 2001. The first follow-up review was issued in July 2003, and determined the following:

- The recommendations in Finding No. 1 had not been implemented.
- The recommendations in Finding No. 2 had been partially implemented.
- The recommendations in Finding No. 3 had been partially implemented.

The purpose of our second follow-up was to review the current status of these three audit recommendations. We determined the following:

RECOMMENDATION NO.1:

The original audit recommended that the Traffic Engineering Division (Traffic Engineering) make an effort to set realistic and attainable goals, based on its staffing levels. We also recommended that the Public Works Department (Public Works) should maintain adequate staffing to ensure achievement of goals. The original audit reported that one of the goals that Traffic Engineering did not accomplish required the completion of a two-year cycle for investigation of traffic obstructions.

The first follow-up review determined that the original audit recommendation had not been implemented. The follow-up review noted that due to continuous staff shortages, Traffic Engineering was unable to meet this goal. Traffic Engineering management stated that perhaps Public Works should set the City obstruction investigations function on a three-year cycle, in

order to have an attainable goal with current staff levels. However, the follow-up noted that the liabilities associated with the possible risks warrant a shorter obstruction-investigation cycle.

The first follow-up recommended that Public Works review its priorities for Traffic Engineering and decide if it is willing to accept the risks associated with extending the obstruction investigations cycle. The first follow-up also recommended that Traffic Engineering should review all of its goals to ensure it is setting realistic and attainable levels based on the resources available.

Public Works' response to the first follow-up recommendation stated, "PWD concurs. The Traffic Engineering Division (TED) will review its goals with available resources in mind and will also determine what cycle period for conducting obstruction investigations best fits with available resources and other required work tasks. These tasks will be completed by September 30, 2003."

ACTIONS TAKEN

The original audit recommendation has been partially implemented. The FY2005 Approved City Budget – Performance Plan, states that in FY2004, Traffic Engineering covered only 26% of the City for the elimination of sign obstruction. The Performance Plan noted that the goal for FY2004 was to cover 30% of the City, for the elimination of sign obstruction. However, the Performance Plan also stated that the overall goal was to "Cover the entire city every two years."

Traffic Engineering explained why did not accomplish its FY2004 goal in this area in the Performance Plan stating that there was only "83% staffing level for the year" because "One investigator position (was) vacant for 6 months." At the 26% rate that Traffic Engineering accomplished in FY2004, it would take four years to perform the cycle that the Performance Plan indicates should be completed in two years.

Traffic Engineering management has not met with the Office of Management and Budget to discuss changing the goal. The Traffic Engineering manager stated that the two year goal was not realistic because of "manpower constraints" in Traffic Engineering. Consequently, it appears that the City's Performance Plan continues to include goals for Traffic Engineering that may not be attainable.

SECOND FOLLOW-UP RECOMMENDATION

DMD should consider researching what other regional municipalities do to investigate traffic obstructions and determine if its goal is appropriate.

EXECUTIVE RESPONSE FROM DMD

“Traffic Engineering has made inquiries of other cities and found they do not have a systematic procedure for surveying traffic obstructions. Therefore, they can not be helpful in determining what goals might be appropriate for Traffic Engineering.

“In addition to relying on investigators for the traffic obstruction survey, Traffic Engineering supplements this effort by educating staff to also report obstructions to Traffic Engineering. We also seek and obtain reports from residents regarding traffic obstructions.

“Based on this on-going flow of information and observed needs, Traffic Engineering will meet with the Office of Management and Budget to review and revise goals for the traffic obstruction survey prior to the development of the FY/07 budget.”

RECOMMENDATION NO. 2:

The original audit recommended that Traffic Engineering complete the development of a tracking system for citizens' complaints/requests. The audit reported that Traffic Engineering was not meeting its goal of responding to inquiries/complaints within a specified time period. The audit noted that efforts were hampered by the lack of a consistent method for tracking the complaints.

The first follow-up review determined that the original audit recommendation had been partially implemented. The follow-up review reported that Traffic Engineering had developed and implemented a tracking system. However, the follow-up noted that Traffic Engineering had not completed an analysis of the data gathered to determine such things as reasonable response time for complaints.

The first follow-up recommended that Traffic Engineering complete its analysis of the data provided by the newly implemented tracking system. The first follow-up also recommended that Traffic Engineering should establish a reasonable time period for responding to inquiries and complaints.

Public Works' response to the first follow-up recommendation stated, "PWD concurs. We will review the data that has been collected and determine what response time would be appropriate and achievable by September 30, 2003."

ACTION TAKEN

The second follow-up recommendation has been partially implemented. Traffic Engineering has analyzed the data that has been recorded in its tracking system for citizen

complaints/requests, and has determined reasonably attainable response times. These response times have been documented in its revised procedures. The analysis that was performed by Traffic Engineering determined that typical response time to citizen complaints/requests varied from two weeks to eight weeks, depending upon the nature of the request or compliant.

The Traffic Engineering manager provided a listing of citizen complaints/requests, that were indicated by the tracking system to be "outstanding" (i.e., unresolved), as of October 21, 2004. This listing indicated that as of that date, there were 64 citizen complaints/requests, which were "outstanding," and were more than eight weeks old. Four of these items were from April 2004, eight were from May 2004, and 22 were from June 2004.

SECOND FOLLOW-UP RECOMMENDATION

DMD should ensure that citizen complaints/requests are resolved by Traffic Engineering in a timely manner.

EXECUTIVE RESPONSE FROM DMD

"The Traffic Engineering Division feels obliged to point out that an historical analysis that showed typical response time on complaints/requests to vary from two to eight weeks is not equivalent to a performance goal to "resolve" those complaints/requests in two to eight weeks. The nature of a complaint or a request cannot always be "resolved" in two to eight weeks if, in fact, it can be "resolved" at all.

"DMD is considering requiring written acknowledgement via post card or e-mail within ten business days of the receipt of a complaint or request so that the citizen knows the complaint or request has been received. The City's response to a complaint or request will be communicated by phone, e-mail or letter to the requesting or complaining citizen within ten business days after the nature of the response has been determined, and the tracking system so noted.

"Not less than monthly the Manager of the Traffic Engineering Division will review the status of all complaints and reports in the tracking system and cause follow-up action to be taken on any complaint or report that has been in the tracking system for more than four weeks."

RECOMMENDATION NO. 3:

The original audit recommended that Traffic Engineering develop working procedures that will ensure consistency in handling citizen complaints and requests. We recommended that those procedures should be written, and should address timeliness of responses to citizens.

The first follow-up determined that the original audit recommendation had been partially implemented. The follow-up reported that Traffic Engineering had developed and implemented procedures for handling citizen requests/complaints. However, the follow-up noted that the procedures were not being consistently followed. The follow-up determined that requestor/complainants did not always receive a timely response, and not all cases had the complete information required by the procedures.

The first follow-up recommended that Traffic Engineering consistently follow its procedures for handling citizen requests/complaints. The first follow-up also recommended that Traffic Engineering should consider modifying the procedures in order to make them realistic, attainable and executable.

Public Works' response to the first follow-up recommendation stated, "PWD concurs. TED will review the data available for requests/complaints and modify the procedures to make them more realistic, attainable and executable. This will be completed by September 30, 2003."

ACTION TAKEN

The recommendation was partially implemented. Traffic Engineering has determined reasonably attainable response times for citizen complaints/requests. The auditor and the Traffic Engineering manager reviewed three of the citizen complaints/requests, that were indicated by the tracking system to be "outstanding" (i.e., unresolved), and were more than eight weeks old. One of these requests was for 25 mile-per-hour speed limit signs in a residential area. Another of the requests was for measures (such as speed bumps) to slow down traffic in front of an elementary school. The Traffic Engineering manager provided documentation that indicated corrective actions had been implemented in response to the citizen request/complaints, in these two cases. However, the tracking system had not been updated to reflect the actions that had been taken by Traffic Engineering. Consequently, it created an appearance that the two cases were still unresolved.

The third case was a citizen request that a two-way stop in a residential area be converted to a four-way stop. Traffic Engineering had investigated the situation and determined that this action was not appropriate. However, Traffic Engineering had not communicated this to the citizen.

Traffic Engineering needs to improve its updating of its tracking system of citizen complaints/requests and communicate the results of its investigations to the citizen(s) that made the complaint/request.

SECOND FOLLOW-UP RECOMMENDATION

DMD should ensure that the Traffic Engineering tracking system reflects any corrective actions that have been implemented.

DMD should ensure that Traffic Engineering communicates the results of its investigation to the citizens that make the complaint/request.

EXECUTIVE RESPONSE FROM DMD

“Traffic Engineering Division concurs that the tracking system should be updated on a regular basis, and the citizen making the request or complaint be advised of the Division’s response on a timely basis.

“See the response to Recommendation #2 for procedural changes under consideration to address these recommendations.”

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