



# Memorandum

**TO:** RULES AND OPEN  
GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

**FROM:** James R. Helmer  
Robert L. Davis

**SUBJECT:** STREETLIGHT SHUTOFF

**DATE:** 11-12-08

Approved

Date

11/13/08

**COUNCIL DISTRICT:** Citywide

## RECOMMENDATION

Accept this report on the status of the Streetlight Shutoff Program.

## BACKGROUND

On November 5, 2008, the Rules and Open Government Committee directed the City Manager to report back to the committee on the status of the Streetlight Shutoff program that was adopted in the Fiscal Year 2008-2009 budget.

## ANALYSIS

### Process to Identify Streetlights for Shutoff

The Fiscal Year 2008-2009 Adopted Budget includes a program to reduce ongoing annual energy expenditures by \$77,000 by shutting of approximately 900 streetlights in industrial areas and along arterial roads. In order to minimize impacts of this program to public safety and economic development, the Department of Transportation (DOT) was to coordinate the selection of the streetlight shutoff locations with the Police Department (PD) and the Office of Economic Development (OED). Beginning in July, staff from DOT, PD, OED, and the Redevelopment Agency (Agency) met and corresponded over a several week period to establish the 900 streetlight shutoff locations.

DOT initiated the process by preliminarily identifying about 1,100 locations along major arterial streets that avoided areas where pedestrian activity is promoted, such as at bus stops, signalized intersections, and crosswalks. The locations were primarily on streets that front industrial properties and commercial businesses, and are adjacent to the back sides of residential properties. PD reviewed the locations and requested that any streets regarded as a high risk for criminal activity or impact public safety be removed from consideration for shutoff. Realizing that most arterial streets have higher lighting levels, traffic volumes and social activity that

discourage criminal activity at night, many of the newly identified locations were along arterial streets that front residential properties. OED and the Agency also reviewed the initial locations prepared by DOT and raised concerns about the City's ability to attract, retain, and promote business activity if streetlights were to be shut off in the City's most prominent industrial or commercial areas. As a result, most streets within industrial areas and along major retail centers were removed from consideration.

Staff then collectively identified a list of major arterial street segments where lights could be shut off without reducing economic activity, impacting public safety or increasing criminal activity, which were reviewed by PD, OED and the Agency. Unfortunately, in order to shutoff 900 streetlights, many of the streets identified were along residential frontages. None of the streets were classified as residential streets.

During the months of August and September, DOT implemented the shutoff process. In selecting and shutting off specific streetlights, DOT staff drove and walked each candidate street to verify that lights being shut off were not adjacent to bus stops, crosswalks and pathways, or at signalized intersections. Balancing out the number of streetlights shutoff across the City was difficult due to the different conditions that exist in certain areas, which resulted in some districts not being as heavily impacted as others. For example, a smaller number of lights were shutoff in District 3 compared to other districts because Downtown was avoided due to the PD and Agency concerns cited above. In District 4, avoiding the City's major industrial and economic development areas impacted the number of shutoffs, and in District 1, a smaller amount of arterial streets combined with several major commercial and retail centers limited the areas where lights could be shutoff. The table below describes the number of lights shutoff in each district:

<b>Council District</b>	<b>Number of Lights Shut Off</b>
1	13
2	107
3	53
4	26
5	80
6	94
7	76
8	179
9	147
10	133
<b>Total</b>	<b>908</b>

### **Feedback from the Community**

On a typical year, DOT receives 10,000 calls for streetlight outages. Since the streetlights were shutoff in August and September, DOT has received about 140 calls from the public informing the City that a shutoff light was out. In each instance, DOT staff explained the City's financial situation, the streetlight shutoff program, and how specific lights were selected. Of the 140 callers, the vast majority – nearly 80% – understood the reason for shutting of lights and accepted the City's decision and light selections. About 15% of the callers expressed their dissatisfaction with the program and the light selections made by the City, but did not wish to pursue any further action. The remaining 5% of the callers were very upset and requested that the City reconsider its decision to shutoff lights. DOT reviewed many locations based on the information provided by the callers about traffic, pedestrian, or other public safety concerns or unique circumstances and consulted with PD. Subsequently, about 15 of the lights previously shutoff were turned back on. For example, DOT staff turned back on lights along Camden Avenue where the combination of a downhill grade and curve in the street could pose a traffic safety concern.

### **Long-term Solutions to Reduce Energy Costs**

Many other cities are facing similar budget problems and several are resorting to shutting of lights as a cost cutting measure. For example, Santa Rosa shutoff mid-block lights along collector and arterial streets to save \$150,000 annually. Belmont, Massachusetts has turned off about a third of their lights and London has decided to turn off 64% of the streetlights in the City.

In an effort to find a long-term solution for reducing the City's cost for operating and maintaining public streetlights, DOT convened a technical lighting committee that met over a six month period beginning in late 2007. The committee included the Lick Observatory, lighting manufacturers and distributors, PG&E, and staff from the Redevelopment Agency, Environmental Services Department, and DPW. Those discussions laid the foundation for a proposed new public streetlight policy that will be heard by the Transportation & Environmental Committee in December. The proposed policy seeks to drive the development of and permit the City to use, new, more efficient, "smart" (remotely programmable and dimmable) lights. DOT is currently testing several such streetlights under the City's new Demonstration Partnership Policy. DOT also issued a Request for Proposals in October to purchase 100 programmable, energy efficient street lights through a Community Development Block Grant. The lights will be installed in a low-income residential neighborhood.

The Administration will continue to coordinate with the PD and OED on this program and keep each Council office apprised of significant actions being taken.

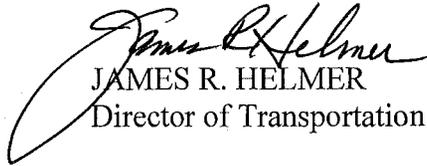
11-12-08

**Subject:** Streetlight Shutoff

Page 4 of 4

**COORDINATION**

This memorandum was coordinated with the City Attorney's Office.

  
JAMES R. HELMER  
Director of Transportation

  
ROBERT L. DAVIS  
Chief of Police

For questions please contact Kevin O'Connor, Deputy Director of Transportation, at 277-3028.