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Watershed Protection
Jeff Palmer, Director

January 28, 2025

County of Ventura Board of Supervisors

Subject: Receive and File a Presentation on Public Works Agency Project Notification System Improvements; Provide Direction Regarding the Improvements- All Supervisorial Districts

Recommendations:

1. Receive and file a presentation on Public Works Agency project notification system improvements;
2. Provide direction regarding the improvements.

Fiscal/Mandates Impact:

None

Discussion:

During the September 24, 2024, Board of Supervisors Meeting, Supervisor Gorell presented a letter requesting that the Public Works Agency (PWA) develop a project notification system to inform the Board and the public of upcoming public works projects. The Board unanimously agreed to direct the Department to proceed and report back in early 2025. This Board Letter and attached presentation provide a comprehensive review of notification approaches for a variety of project-types. They also identify proactive steps the Agency has already taken to notify the Board and the community of public works projects in advance of field activities.

While there is no direct fiscal impact to the recommendations outlined within this Board letter, the management of project information may require incidental staff time to coordinate amongst Departments and manage project information posting regularly.

For purposes of defining public works projects, the PWA has classified projects into one of the following three categories:

1. **Operations & Maintenance Projects:** projects that repair, maintain or otherwise service public works infrastructure. The frequency of Operations & Maintenance



Projects may be one-time, periodic, or routine; however, the duration of time to complete a maintenance or repair project is typically within days or weeks.

2. **Capital Projects:** typically, one-time major projects that may require planning, design, engineering, land acquisition, permitting, and construction. These projects are typically identified within a 5-year Capital Improvement Program and may take multiple years to complete.
3. **Urgent & Unanticipated Projects:** unforeseen projects that require immediate attention to restore or maintain essential services such as water supply, transportation, stormwater management, or sanitary sewer service.

Classifying projects into the three categories above allows PWA to customize the information delivery methods and provides the receiver an opportunity to become aware in advance of work or as close to start of the work as possible; thereby enabling the receiver to prepare or follow-up as needed. The project information delivery approaches that have already been implemented or are being recommended are as follows:

1. **Operations & Maintenance Projects:** PWA operations & maintenance staff plan and complete a significant number of work assignments on public works' infrastructure throughout the year. Routine job assignments can occasionally be delayed or interrupted by weather, emergencies, and sometimes crew absences. These interruptions may impact the timing of work; therefore, there is a need for flexibility and schedule adjustment from time-to-time.

Since October 10, 2024, PWA has been issuing a weekly, 2-Week Outlook of operations and maintenance activities that detail the planned work to be performed by PWA field crews, as well as work performed by contractors responsible for street sweeping and landscaping within County Service Areas (CSA's). At its outset, the 2-Week Outlook was emailed directly to Supervisors and the County Executive Office. Recently, it has transitioned to an online posting for all to view, including the public. The weblink is: <https://www.vcpublishworks.org/roadclosures/>

The 2-Week Outlook is updated every Monday and provides a schedule of planned operation & maintenance activities for the upcoming two weeks, allowing residents, businesses and visitors to plan around field work or to inquire about a specific project and provide feedback. The report is readily accessible on the PWA website, ensuring transparency and easy of access for all.

2. **Capital Projects:** For these larger projects that continue in various phases over months and sometimes years, PWA has developed a "Department Projects updates" webpage that is easily accessible at: <https://www.vcpublishworks.org/project-updates/>



. Projects continue to be added to this page, and here, readers can find a map and description of an active project and the status of its implementation. Implementation will typically include planning, design, permitting, or construction. Also, readers can find the PWA project manager's name and contact information if the reader has additional questions or desires to participate in public involvement meetings that help to share a particular project. This resource ensures that constituents remain informed and involved on projects impacting their neighborhoods.

3. **Urgent & Unanticipated Projects:** There are a wide variety of urgent and unanticipated projects that require a rapid response by field teams or contractors. Some incidents have limited impact to the public. These may include downed trees and boulders blocking roads, sewer line obstructions, and water main breaks. These incidents are usually isolated and managed exclusively by PWA teams. Occasionally, however, incidents can be tied to a larger scale emergency or disaster, such as an earthquake, intense storm event, or wildfire. For these instances, the Office of Emergency Services (OES), Sheriff, and/or Fire Department coordinate to determine the severity level of the incident and to develop a command system that would include a communications component, as necessary. For these wide-ranging, multi-agency emergencies, PWA's actions and communications run through incident command. (The Ventura County Office of Emergency Services (OES) offers VC Alert, an extension of the Everbridge platform, as an emergency notification system for public use. VC Alert requires people to register for notifications and focuses on critical, real-time communication during emergencies such as wildfires, earthquakes, severe weather, evacuations, and hazardous material incidents. The system offers geographic targeting capabilities, allowing notifications to be sent to specific neighborhoods or geographic areas, ensuring that only those affected receive relevant information. This targeted approach provides effective communication for those directly impacted.)

For PWA-managed emergency events that are not tied to widespread disasters or emergencies, notification to PWA managers and Directors, the County Executive Office, Supervisors and the affected community depends on the emergency's actual, potential, or perceived impact. Methods for communicating emergencies include:

- **County Road Closures:** For both planned and non-planned County Road closures, PWA maintains a live map at the following webpage: <https://www.vcpublishworks.org/roadclosures/>. This map is updated in real time and illustrates emergency road closures, planned road closures, and planned construction work throughout the County. The map is not limited to work only performed by PWA crews, but also integrates detours and closures associated with private utility companies and developer work. The focus of this map is on County roads, but the same web page also provides a link to the Caltrans



QuickMap, which provides similar information on State roadway and freeway network.

- **Water & Sewer Service Disruptions:** PWA leverages the Everbridge notification system to communicate with customers about disruptions to water and sewer service within our water and sewer systems. It may also advise customers of alerts to conserve water usage due to drought or firefighting efforts. This system allows customers with water accounts to choose one or several communication methods, including voice calls, emails, and text messages, ensuring effective outreach.

Wide-ranging areas of significant water or sewer service disruptions require staff to immediately inform the PWA Water & Sanitation Director and PWA Director, along with a timely Everbridge alert to customers. Directors would assess the details of the event and determine the timing and method of communication to the CEO, Public Information Office, and the affected Supervisor's office(s).

- **Watershed Protection Events:** Types of urgent and unanticipated events managed by PWA Watershed Protection staff include erosion of public property, and obstructions to the County's flood control and conveyance system, which may include channels, swales, pump stations, culverts, etc. Severe, wide-spread, or extended duration emergencies being managed by Watershed Protection require staff to immediately inform the PWA Watershed Protection Director and PWA Director. Directors would assess the details of the emergency and determine the timing and method of communication to the CEO, Public Information Office, and the affected Supervisor's office.

It is important to note that PWA-Watershed Protection operates a Flood Warning System that uses real-time data received from 106 rain gages and 44 stream gages that monitor rainfall and stormwater flow conditions. Additionally, information from another 65 rain gages and 23 stream gages is provided by other agencies including the United States Geological Survey, Los Angeles Department of Public Works, and the California Department of Water Resources. The real-time data is fed into sophisticated hydrologic models (computer software) to predict stream flows and levels at strategic locations throughout the County. This real-time information enables a wide range of agencies, as well as residents and businesses, to prepare and respond accordingly. This information is provided on the PWA - Watershed Protection web page at: <https://www.vcwatershed.net/fws/>.

Other Notes on Significant Public Works Emergencies and Alerts: In preparing for this presentation, Director Strakaluse reached out to Fire Chief Gardner to understand



how the Fire Department communicates significant events to the CEO's office and the Board of Supervisors. This information was very helpful because it allows PWA to follow a format already familiar to the Board and CEO. Therefore, PWA recommends a similar approach to communicating PWA emergencies to the CEO's office and Supervisors. This generally involves a group text message to the affected Supervisor and the CEO and Deputy CEO informing them of the nature of the incident, the impacts, the duration, and any partner or outside agency involvement. The timing of any text message notification would be cognizant of the hour of the day and significance of the incident.

PWA remains committed to effective communication and transparency as we deliver services and projects. These initiatives represent a significant step forward to ensuring timely and accurate information that is accessible to many for both routine and unanticipated activities.

Strategic Plan:

This item contributes to the Board of Supervisors (Board's) 2024-2027 strategic priority to provide:

- V. Diverse and innovative workforce dedicated to service excellence through:
 - 2. leveraging innovation and continuous improvement to provide efficient and effective services.

This item has been reviewed by the County Executive Office, the Auditor-Controller's Office, and County Counsel.

If you have any questions concerning this item, please contact the undersigned at (805) 654-2073.

Sincerely,



Gregg Strakaluse, P.E.
Director

