Performance Audit of the Streetlight Repair Program

Why OCA Did This Study

The City of San Diego's (City) Transportation Department is responsible for maintaining more than 60,000 streetlights throughout the City. Streetlights help improve nighttime visibility for motorists and pedestrians, and support public safety and residents' quality of life. The Streetlight Repair Program responds to routine repair requests, emergency incidents, such as knocked-down poles, and underground utility locate requests known as DigAlerts.

Recently, the Program has experienced significant service-delivery challenges, with a large backlog of streetlight repair requests, and lengthy and growing repair times. Accordingly, **we conducted a performance audit to determine whether the Streetlight Repair Program is designed and operated to deliver timely, efficient, equitable, and accountable streetlight repair services throughout the City.**

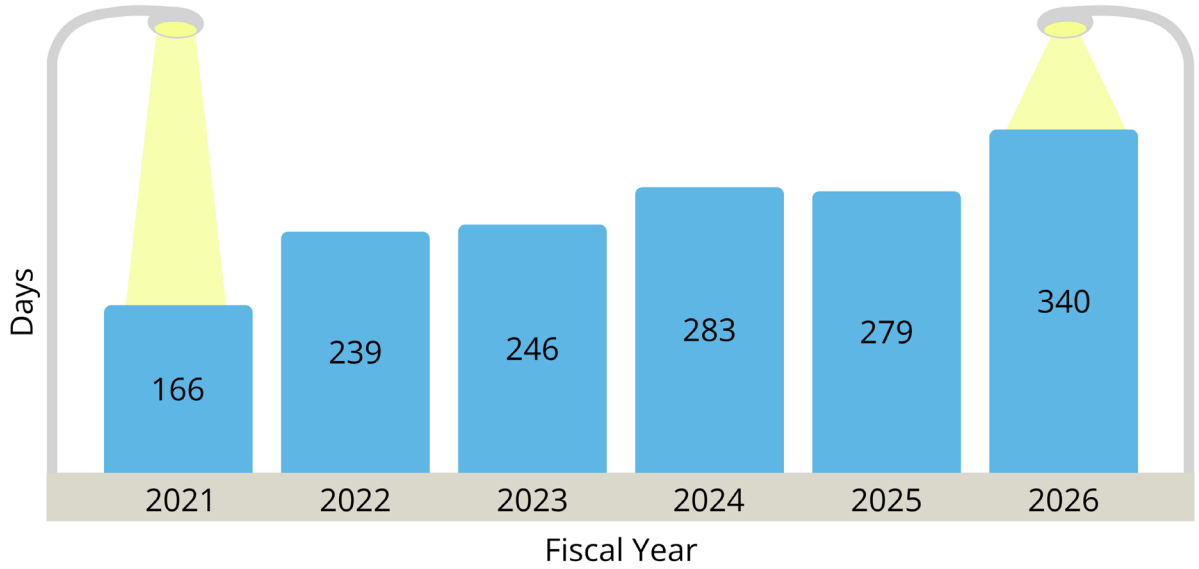
What OCA Found

Overall, we found that system limitations, limited use of data, and insufficient oversight of field staff have hindered effective management and monitoring streetlight repair operations, contributing to a growing repair backlog and longer repair times.

Finding 1: Information system limitations and inconsistent use of available performance data hindered the Streetlight Repair Program's ability to evaluate productivity, address the growing repair backlog, and deliver services effectively and equitably.

- Streetlight service levels declined despite increased staffing, labor hours, and overtime. From FY2021 through FY2026, average repair time increased to 340 days, while the backlog grew to more than 7,500 requests by early FY2027. Incoming streetlight repair and DigAlert workloads remained relatively stable. While systems limitations prevented management from evaluating historical performance, they did not establish other processes or improvements to capture key operational information needed to evaluate performance and inform operational decisions.
- An FY2025 change in its operating model was made without reliable information. In March 2025, the Program devoted regular working hours primarily to DigAlerts and most overtime hours to streetlight repairs. However, based on workload and productivity data, there likely is capacity to complete some streetlight repairs during regular hours. Doing so could help manage the streetlight repair backlog and improve repair response times.

Exhibit 11: Average Time to Complete a Streetlight Repair More Than Doubled from FY2021 to FY2026



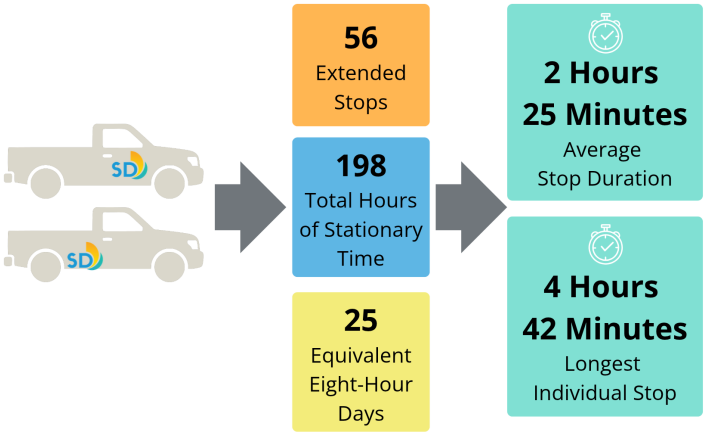
Source: OCA generated based on SAP streetlight work order data during the FY2021–FY2026 period.

Finding 2: Insufficient oversight of streetlight electricians increases the risk of misuse of limited Program resources.

- The Program did not routinely use available information to monitor field activities and identify patterns warranting review. The Program did not have standardized procedures to use available vehicle tracking data for employee oversight.
- We identified City vehicles with a total of 333 hours of extended stops where no worksites could be verified. We provided our analysis to management and Transportation initiated a fact-finding review.
- Because the Program does not track vehicle assignments or review digital tracking data, it cannot easily verify emergency callback activity.
- We could not independently verify 20 of 127 callback overtime claims (16 percent) that we reviewed.
- In addition, 55 percent of callback-related work orders involving multiple electricians did not identify all employees who claimed overtime for responding.
- However, these weaknesses do not necessarily establish that the overtime claims were improper.

Exhibit 25: Telematics Data Identified a Recurring Pattern of Extended Stops by Two City Vehicles

Repeated Extended Stops During Regular Work Hours



Source: OCA generated based on GeoTab telematics reports.

What OCA Recommends

We made **12 recommendations** to improve the Streetlight Repair Program's efficiency, performance management, and accountability. Key recommendations include:

- Improve the completeness and consistency of operational information and establish reliable measures for evaluating workload, productivity, repair activity, and resource needs. Periodically use this information to assess and adjust staffing, overtime, contractors, equipment, and workflows.
- Use reliable performance information for periodic reviews of staffing, overtime, contractor use, equipment, and workflows; adjust resources and operations as needed to improve service delivery.
- Improve the tracking and reconciliation of contractor-performed repairs to accurately assess contractor productivity, costs, and results in reducing the repair backlog.
- Strengthen oversight by routinely using telematics information to document vehicle assignments, identify activity warranting supervisory review, and improve controls for monitoring callback overtime.
- Complete fact-finding reviews of the vehicle activity and callback overtime issues we identified and take appropriate corrective or disciplinary action if warranted.

Management **agreed with all 12 recommendations**. However, Program management raised concerns regarding the accuracy, completeness, and context of certain information and analyses presented in the report. OCA addresses these concerns starting on page 70 of the report.

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