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August 8, 2011

Councilmember Paul Koretz, Chair  
Personnel Committee,  
City of Los Angeles, City Council  
200 N. Spring St., Rm. 440  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Part-Time Traffic Officers, Council File 11-0600-S88; 11-0600-S110

Honorable Councilmember Koretz:

SEIU Local 721 urges the City Council to convert the current part-time employees-in-training to full-time Traffic Officers and not implement the part-time traffic officer program at this time.

As you know, Traffic Officers generate over \$165 million in collected citation revenue, with around \$130 million of that amount transferred to the general fund on a yearly basis.

SEIU Local 721 has repeatedly expressed that a part-time Traffic Officer program in LADOT would result in limited savings to the City, while hiring full-time traffic officers would result in increased City revenue. Implementation of SEIU suggestions would further increase revenue.

Converting the 47 part-time traffic officers to full-time Traffic Officers will be the more beneficial to the City of Los Angeles. This letter addresses the three following reasons:

1. Full-time Officers are more likely to achieve the \$9 million revenue projection in parking citations than part-time employees.
  2. Full-time Traffic Officers have the experience to implement revenue generating ideas to increase funding to the General Fund. It is more financially productive to focus on revenue generation then establishing a part-time program.
  3. The City will not achieve significant cost savings in hiring part-time employees- but it will jeopardize public safety and hurt morale among full-time Traffic Officers who have devoted their careers to the City and have the commitment to improve the of the Department of Transportation.
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1. **Full-time Officers are more likely to achieve the \$9 million revenue projection in parking citations than part-time employees.**
    - A. Changes in proposed part-time work schedule- The original CAO proposal (3/18/11,subsequently adopted in the FY11-12 budget) that estimated the \$9 million in revenue to the General Fund was based on part-time deployment during peak enforcement hours, which are typically Monday through Friday from 10:30am to 2:30pm and 6:00pm to 10:00pm and some weekends. The current proposal is for part-time employees to work weekend parking enforcement shifts that have *a lower average of ticket citations per shift.*
    - B. Part-time employees will be limited in duties- Current Traffic Officers have been told that part-time employees will only perform ticket-writing duties which excludes high revenue tickets such as booting, impounds, and abandons. In addition, full-time Traffic Officers are trained to handle situations that require access to confidential information, such as assisting LAPD with stolen cars.

- C. Hidden costs of part-time employee program- As acknowledged in the original CAO proposal, "it is likely that there will be shortages in part-time Traffic Officers due to employee turnover and absences." However, the CAO did not reduce the \$9 million maximum revenue estimate in the report to reflect this gap in personnel.

*Turnover in the part-time program will result in a loss of projected revenue during the vacancies (due to employees quitting, being fired, etc.) and additional costs in training and hiring new employees. Traffic Officers are exposed to a high-stress work environment and will experience mental and physical duress as at-will employees trying to produce a high number of tickets for supervisors while learning how to handle confrontations with the public. The tense work environment is also prone to injuries on duty that will result in paid absences. In addition, because it is a fixed wage, part-time position without career advancement opportunities, part-timers will leave for better employment opportunities elsewhere. On the other hand, full-time Traffic Officers have demonstrated a long-term commitment to working for the City because they view it as their career.*

Another concern with part-time employees is the increased probability that they will write poor (unenforceable) tickets to meet the supervisor's citation goals. The at-will status of a part time employee creates an additional pressure to meet ticket-writing goals or face the possibility of termination, which is the basis of concern that ticket errors will increase and the capture rates will be compromised.

Furthermore, the City may have to explore the possibility of increases in employment costs if part-time employees become eligible for pro-rated healthcare benefits as provided for in our Memorandum of Understanding. In addition, the City should investigate increases in workers' compensation rates.

- D. Revisit calculations- The potential cost savings for the part-time employees should be revisited. LADOT states that, according to the CAO, the cost of a full-time Traffic Officer is \$42,289 for 1,000 hours. However, the annual starting salary for full-time Traffic Officers is \$21,884 if it is adjusted to 1,000 hours. The estimate almost doubles the annual starting salary of a full-time Traffic Officer. *We would like to see the basis for these calculations.*

In calculating the cost between full time and part-time Traffic Officers, factors that impact the ability for LADOT to meet the goal of reaching \$9 million in additional revenue should be considered. For example, the part-time program is created for weekend shifts while full-time Traffic Officers have the flexibility to work both during the weekends and supplement staffing during peak work week hours. Furthermore, full-time Traffic Officers will still be in demand for weekend traffic control (e.g., special events, signal malfunctions, emergencies, etc.) that part-timers will not be trained in. The continual need for full-time Traffic Officers on the weekend will reduce the ability for the department to have full staffing during the week. LADOT management also stated at the Transportation Committee on July 27, 2011, that part-time employees will require more oversight, creating additional supervisory costs.

In addition, the CAO used a 67% collection rate in determining the \$9 million revenue estimate, while the City Controller stated that the collection rate is 56% in the recent audit of the parking citation program (5/19/11). In the audit, the City Controller also stated that a portion of

collections must be remitted to other agencies, so the amount transferred to the General Fund was lower than the total citation collection for the year. This could also bring the estimated \$9million projected revenue down.

**2. Full-time Traffic Officers have the experience to implement revenue generating ideas to increase funding to the General Fund. It is more financially productive to focus on revenue generation then establishing a part-time program.**

- A. Booting vehicles vs. Towing vehicles - During 2009, LADOT discontinued the practice of booting vehicles in favor of an impound-only scofflaw enforcement method. However, the City receives more revenue from booting a vehicle then towing.

**Potential Revenue:**

\$100 goes to the City when you tow a vehicle

\$150 goes to the City when you boot a vehicle

- B. Abandons Sweep - Re-implement the Abandons Sweep. The Abandons Sweep operates by utilizing small groups of Traffic Officers to sweep designated areas known for high volumes of abandoned vehicles. These sweeps also generate scofflaw violations. The area covered by the Valley Division and Central Division will be ideal for the re-implementation of abandon sweeps since these are the areas that have high numbers of abandoned vehicles.

Sweeps include 6 or 7 officers and are targeted for specific dates, times, and locations.

**Potential Revenue:**

An average Abandon Sweep equated to around 20-30 vehicles.

Depending on if the vehicle is booted or towed, the City could potentially generate between \$2,000 to \$4,500 per sweep.

- C. Handicap - A "Handicap Detail" is used to regularly inspect for proper usage of handicap placards, much like expired registration tags. The detail worked with teams of two Officers that would target areas with high activity of handicap placard violations. In addition, instructions to look for expired disabled placards similar to the instruction to look for expired registration tags should be given to all Traffic Officers.

**Potential Revenue:**

\$353 citation for handicap violation

\$353 citation for abuse of placards and the Traffic Officer can confiscate the placards so they are no longer being used illegally.

- D. Expand the use of license plate recognition (LPR) - Currently, LPR technology is being used for the High Priority Scofflaw Team (HPS). Full-time Traffic Officers state that the LPR technology is not being used to its full capacity and can be used to increase efficiency in time limited enforcement (chalking), reading license plates for expired tags, and assisting with removing abandoned cars off the street. The underutilization of the LPR technology is resulting in the loss of potential revenue. Due to proceeds owed to LADOT from the contractor (ACS), the contractor has agreed to provide, implement, and maintain a License Plate Recognition (LPR) technology program. The City should maximize the use of this program.

- E. Improving revenue management and collections- The City Controller recently released a series of three audits investigating the City's parking enforcement process, that "it is clear that the City still has many improvements to make to its parking citation and collection process, and must immediately address these challenges to both generate revenue and make Los Angeles a better place to live, work and perform business." The City Controller stated in an audit that the collection rate of the parking citation program is 56%. The three audits showed that the City potentially lost over \$17 million in potential revenue due to revenue management. In addition, the City could make significant gains in revenue by improving contracts with Affiliated Computer Services, State, and Local Solutions (ACS) and Secro Management Services or bringing the services in-house.

**3. The City will not achieve significant cost savings in hiring part-time employees- but will instead jeopardize public safety and hurt morale among full-time Traffic Officers who have devoted their careers to the City and have the commitment to improve the of the Department of Transportation.**

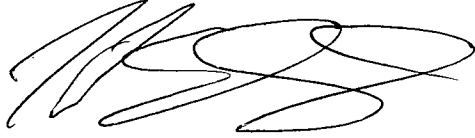
- A. Full-time traffic officers are committed to careers- Once a full-time Traffic Officer makes it to a permanent position (many recruits drop out during the probationary training period), the majority of officers make this job their life-long career. Their professionalism is maintained in difficult situations. There has been and there will continue to be incidents where residents exhibit aggressive behavior such as verbal abuse and a range of physical acts that include throwing objects, spitting, and using their vehicles or other weapons to strike officers. This is particularly true now and increasing due to the stressful financial instability of our country – and vehicles are essential to people's daily lives. Full-time Traffic Officers understand that they are not simply individuals but represent the City, and often must deescalate highly volatile situations. Experience matters in resolving tense confrontations.

Full-time Traffic Officers are also first-responders and provide assistance to Police and Fire. Traffic Officers are the eyes on the street – and many Traffic Officers have experienced being the first person to respond to a person in need of help.

- B. Full-time traffic officers have the experience to produce revenue- It takes an average of six months to one year to become a well-rounded Traffic Officer. Experience leads to decreasing number of ticket errors, increased efficiency in writing enforceable tickets, understanding of patterns in their assigned beat areas, and strengthens the Officer's ability to resolve conflicts. It will take longer for a part-time employee to learn these skills since they will work fewer hours on the job and will receive less hours of training.
- C. Full-time traffic officers are invested in improving the department of transportation- Full-time Traffic Officers are committed to their careers, and in turn are committed to improving their department and their city. The public image of the department has suffered recently, and audits by the City Controller's Office have found that improvements need to be made in the department in multiple ways. Full-time Officers who have the experience and dedication to the Department are better suited to work in partnership with the department to create solutions and implement them.

In conclusion, full-time Traffic Officers urge the City Council to make the current part-time employees in training to full-time Traffic Officers and not implement the part-time Traffic Officer Program. Full-time Traffic Officers will provide the City will a high standard of performance of a career-oriented employee needed to generate revenue for the City and keep Los Angeles moving.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Elias', with a stylized, looping flourish at the end.

Jason Elias  
Regional Coordinator  
LA/OC Cities