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CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TRAFFIC SIGNAL PLANNING AUDIT FOLLOW-UP

CITY OF CHICAGO
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL



WILLIAM MARBACK
INTERIM INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR THE CITY OF CHICAGO

DARWYN JONES
DEPUTY INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AUDIT & PROGRAM REVIEW



WILLIAM MARBACK
INTERIM INSPECTOR GENERAL

CITY OF CHICAGO
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
740 NORTH SEDGWICK STREET, SUITE 200
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60654
TELEPHONE: (773) 478-7799
FAX: (773) 478-3949

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**TO THE MAYOR, CITY COUNCIL, CITY CLERK, CITY TREASURER,
AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO:**

The City of Chicago Office of Inspector General (OIG) has completed a follow-up to its June 2020 audit of the Chicago Department of Transportation's (CDOT) traffic signal planning practices. Based on the Department's responses, OIG concludes that CDOT has fully implemented one of three corrective actions related to the audit finding, substantially implemented another, and partially implemented the third.

The purpose of the 2020 audit was to determine whether CDOT's traffic signal planning met industry best practices as defined by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Our audit found that CDOT did not have a traffic signal management plan, objectives, or performance measures connecting its traffic signal management program to broader Department goals and City plans.

Based on the results of the audit, OIG recommended that CDOT develop a traffic signal management plan aligned with FHWA recommendations, including clear goals and objectives, performance measures, and a strategy to transition toward more proactive signal maintenance and retiming work. OIG also recommended that the Department conduct an analysis to determine its staffing needs related to traffic signals and work with the Office of Budget and Management to meet those needs. In its response to the audit, CDOT described corrective actions it would take.

In December 2021, OIG inquired about corrective actions taken by CDOT in response to the audit. Based on CDOT's follow-up response, OIG concludes that CDOT has substantially implemented one corrective action, fully implemented another, and partially implemented the third. Specifically, CDOT has drafted a traffic signal management plan—with assistance from each of its relevant divisions—but the plan lacks recommended elements, such as targets, and has not yet been published. Finally, CDOT has not yet performed a staffing analysis, but plans to do so in 2022.

Once fully implemented, OIG believes the corrective actions reported by CDOT may reasonably be expected to resolve the finding noted in the audit. We urge the Department to publish its traffic signal management plan and complete its staffing analysis for the traffic signal program. Below, we summarize our audit finding and recommendations, as well as the Department's response to our follow-up.

We thank the staff and leadership of CDOT for their cooperation during the audit and responsiveness to our follow-up inquiries.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William Marback', with a stylized, cursive script.

William Marback
Interim Inspector General
City of Chicago

FOLLOW UP-RESULTS

In December 2021, OIG followed up on its June 2020 Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) Traffic Signal Planning audit.¹ CDOT responded by describing the corrective actions it has taken and providing supporting documentation. Below, we summarize OIG's finding, the associated recommendations, and the status of CDOT's corrective actions. Our follow-up did not observe or test implementation of the new procedures; thus, we make no determination as to their effectiveness, which would require a new audit with full testing.

FINDING:

Without a traffic signal management plan, CDOT cannot ensure that traffic signals are optimized to promote traffic safety, reduce congestion, and minimize air pollution.

OIG Recommendation 1:

OIG recommended that CDOT develop and publish a traffic signal management plan that aligns with FHWA recommendations. The plan should include,

- a. clear goals and objectives, including analysis of how traffic signal management fits into broader CDOT goals and City plans;
- b. performance measures related to each objective;
- c. a set of actions to help meet the plan's goals and objectives; and
- d. definitions of staff responsibilities and descriptions of staffers' expected roles in achieving the goals and objectives.

Status of Corrective Action: **Substantially Implemented**

CDOT has developed a traffic signal management plan and is currently reviewing the plan with senior staff. The Department has not published the plan yet, but intends to do so in 2022. The plan includes goals and objectives, describes actions to meet those objectives, and defines division staffers' roles and responsibilities.

While the plan identifies goals, there remains an opportunity to more specifically define targets related to performance measures. For example, the targets in the plan do not mention current performance levels, the related numeric expectations, or the time period for measurements (such as defining whether the targets are per week, month, or year). The lack of

¹ City of Chicago Office of Inspector General "Chicago Department of Transportation Traffic Signal Planning Audit," June 17, 2020, <https://igchicago.org/2020/06/17/chicago-department-of-transportation-traffic-signal-planning-audit/>.

these elements could make it more difficult for CDOT to assess progress toward its goals.

OIG Recommendation 2:

OIG recommended that CDOT ensure that each of its divisions involved in managing traffic signals help develop the traffic signal management plan.

Status of Corrective Action: Fully Implemented

CDOT stated that the Traffic Safety, Electrical Operations, and Engineering divisions participated in developing the plan. Each division contributed to the initial draft and participated in four workshops in June and July 2021 to discuss and finalize the plan. CDOT also stated that relevant staff from each division were given the opportunity to provide additional input on the draft plan.

OIG Recommendation 3:

OIG recommended that CDOT, using FHWA staffing guidance, conduct an analysis to determine its staffing needs related to traffic signals, then work with the Office of Budget and Management to meet those needs.

Status of Corrective Action: Partially Implemented

CDOT stated that it has not yet performed a formal staffing analysis, but intends to do so on a yearly basis starting in 2022. The Department did, however, perform a limited staffing review in 2021. Based on the review, CDOT added four new positions in the 2022 budget and immediately filled a supervisor position in the Traffic Safety division that had been vacant for more than four years.

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PROJECT TEAM

Sam Naik, Senior Performance Analyst

Kathleen O'Donovan, Chief Performance Analyst

PUBLIC INQUIRIES

Communications: (773) 478-8417 | communications@igchicago.org

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