

Summary of Policy

The Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) is a countywide program to mitigate traffic congestion by clearing disabled vehicles from freeways. The area of the Los Angeles County freeway system that is patrolled by FSP drivers is divided into over 40 freeway segments. An FSP beat is defined as a tow truck operation confined to a specific freeway segment. The tow truck operator's job is to quickly repair or remove disabled vehicles to relieve freeway congestion. An average beat is approximately ten miles and is covered by three to five tow trucks.

The FSP "beat" classification matches that of the California Highway Patrol (CHP) beat, which is also the term used to describe the segment of freeway that a CHP officer patrols within their geographic area. The beat length is based on the time that it takes to travel around the beat, traffic volume and patterns, ease of turn around, number of freeway lanes, lane and shoulder width, and geometry of the freeway. Each beat is evaluated to determine its appropriate size and the number of trucks that it will take to effectively assist motorists. The goal is to create cost-effective beats that also help reduce congestion due to automobile accidents and breakdowns.

The Beat Cap policy allows experienced Metro Freeway Service Patrol contractors to operate no more than two beats, or designated patrol areas, at any given time. Any new FSP contractor (i.e., with no previous FSP experience) may operate no more than one beat for a six-month period. Afterward, that contractor will be allowed to have two beats.

Historical Perspective

Since its inception, the FSP program has changed its beat cap policy four times. In

July 1991, the Board established the beat cap at four after partner agencies agreed to test this limit in a demonstration program. It reduced the beat cap two years later, from four to two, when the number of contractors participating in the program grew. In April 1996, the Board increased the beat cap to three because there were not enough contractors approved for an award during the FSP procurement process.

And the last change came in September 2001, when the Board again reduced the beat cap to two beats. Staff offered four reasons to justify the latest change. First, the lower beat cap would increase the number of FSP contractors in the program. Second, FSP staff had increased its marketing and outreach efforts to ensure that more tow truck contractors would bid on future FSP contracts. Third, the change in procurement method initiated in 1997, from negotiated request for proposal to a low bid, increased the competitive environment. And finally, a two-beat limit makes it easier for us to cover lapses in service, which may occur when an FSP contractor is eliminated or terminated from the program.

Last Board Action

September 26, 2001 – Freeway Service Patrol Beat Cap

The Board approved on consent calendar:

- A. a change in the beat cap policy to a two beat maximum for experienced FSP contractors that any single contractor can be awarded, reducing the current 3-beat to a 2-beat cap limit.
- B. a policy that will temporarily restrict a new contractor, without previous freeway service patrol experience in Los Angeles County. To one beat award for a period of six months

before being able to bid for a second beat.

See Related

California Code Streets and Highway
§2560-2565

Memorandum of Understanding between
Caltrans, California Highway Patrol and
the Los Angeles County Metropolitan
Transportation Authority.