CITY OF LONG BEACH

Memorandum

Date: July 29, 2026

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager

From: Joshua Hickman, Director of Public Works

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **Traffic Fatality Victim Memorial Sign Program – Feasibility Analysis**

On August 19, 2025, City Council directed the City Manager to work with Public Works to implement a Traffic Fatality Victim Memorial Sign Program modeled on the structure authorized under Assembly Bill (AB) 965. AB 965 authorizes Caltrans to install memorial signs at locations where fatal traffic collisions have occurred, subject to eligibility criteria, an application process, and associated fees. The intent of the local program is to honor victims of traffic fatalities while promoting public awareness of roadway safety.

In response, staff reviewed the Caltrans program and initiated preliminary planning work. While the State's program provides a useful framework, developing a City-administered program requires the development of operational requirements, internal support systems, and evaluation of impacts on current Department priorities. Unlike Caltrans, which has dedicated signing units and established processes, the City must create these systems and staffing structures to ensure the program is equitable, transparent and sustainable. This memorandum provides an operational overview, identifies the staffing and budget resources that would be required to implement the program, and outlines considerations for codification within the Long Beach Municipal Code.

Background

Signs, including memorial signs installed in the public right-of-way (ROW), are subject to various rules and regulations which Public Works (PW) has the authority to review, approve, install, and maintain. Sign placement must comply with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), sight-line safety requirements, and clearance from existing regulatory and warning signage. There is currently no City municipal code that regulates victim memorial signage.

Implementing a memorial sign program requires sensitivity due to the nature of the incidents and the potential emotional impact on families, communities, and staff. Each request relates to a traumatic event, and involves coordination with grieving families, confirmation of sensitive information, and placement of signs in locations that may continue to hold emotional significance. Staff managing the program would need to approach each application with empathy and discretion, ensuring communications are timely, and respectful.

Staff Analysis

To establish an equitable and effective memorial sign program similar to the one Caltrans has implemented, the following would need to be developed:

1. Application procedures and eligibility criteria
2. Transparent process to verify collision data and victim information
3. Placement protocols to ensure ROW safety
4. Internal review and approval workflows
5. Fee establishment
6. Tracking system for sign locations, maintenance, and removals
7. Establish timeframes for removal
8. Develop municipal code

The City continues to experience heightened community concerns regarding speeding, injuries, and roadway safety. In response, staff are prioritizing several high impact initiatives as outlined within other recent memorandums. These include but are not limited to:

1. Developing and rolling out the automated speed enforcement (ASE) program
2. Addressing the backlog of neighborhood traffic calming requests
3. Updating the Safe Streets Long Beach (vision zero action plan)
4. Completing traffic safety related capital improvement projects

These initiatives each require substantial staff time, technical expertise, and capital investment. Adding a new program for memorial signage would require either new resources or diverting staff from other City priorities.

Program Implementation Considerations

Based on the above analysis, staff could implement a new memorial sign program to honor those lost in traffic fatalities. However, implementation would require the establishment of a new program that does not currently exist. Based on preliminary evaluation, staff estimate that approximately $100,000 would be needed to support the initial development of the program. Additional ongoing staffing would be required to administer, permit and manage the program. As such, these recommendations would require consideration through the City’s annual budget process and are contingent upon the identification and appropriation of sufficient funding and staffing resources.

Given the City's current fiscal outlook and forecasted structural budget deficit, staff would need additional dedicated resources to implement this enhanced permitting and enforcement framework. Establishing these new responsibilities absent additional staffing

would require redirecting existing personnel from core PW operations and other City priorities, resulting in reduced service levels elsewhere. If additional resources were identified, staff recommend that PW serve as the lead to develop, implement and manage the program. This includes working with subject matter experts to conduct a cost-of-service study to quantify the time and cost impacts to implement such a program.

This includes:

1. Administrative costs to process the permits, review, verify, and approve.
2. Fabricate the custom sign
3. Install the sign
4. Perform maintenance
5. Remove sign at the end of the permit period

Based on preliminary estimates staff anticipate the fee to be approximately $3,000 per sign. Given the City's current fiscal climate, staff recommends full cost recovery to avoid impacts to other core traffic safety programs.

Next Steps

While the intent of the program is positive and aligned with the City's commitment to honoring victims and improving roadway safety, given the staffing and budget necessary to establish and administer a memorial sign program, staff do not recommend pursuing municipal code amendments or implementing a new program until sufficient resources have been identified and appropriated. Under the City's current fiscal outlook, establishing this new capacity without additional funding would require redirecting existing staff and resources from other Council priorities. Should the City Council wish to move forward with adding this program, staff recommend that those discussions occur as part of the FY 27 budget process to ensure that any policy direction is accompanied by the staffing and funding necessary for successful implementation.

If you have questions regarding this matter, please contact Joshua Hickman, Director of Public Works (562) 570-5714.

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