

# LADOT Filming Guidelines



**February 2010**

## Introduction

Motion pictures were nurtured in Hollywood over one hundred years ago and the history of motion picture filming is an important part of Los Angeles history. Today, Los Angeles is proud to be the entertainment capital of the world. Hollywood is the heart of the television and motion picture industry and is not only a vibrant community in the City of Los Angeles, but also is synonymous with the industry itself.

The City values this history and believes that an ongoing partnership with this enduring institution is important for the future of both the City and the filming industry. The City wishes to assist the filming industry in seeking film production permits to film scenes in its neighborhoods, business districts and historic buildings. In this spirit, the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) has prepared the LADOT Filming Guidelines to clarify and simplify the review and approval process for film production permits and to assist with temporary parking restrictions needed to facilitate filming.

To assist in this process, LADOT Filming Guidelines includes information on the four main roles that LADOT provides to support film production, in coordination with FilmLA and the Board of Public Works (BPW). These roles include:

- Advisory Lane Closure Recommendations
- Temporary Parking Prohibition Signing
- Modification of Traffic Control Devices
- Traffic Management Expertise

## Advisory Lane Closure Recommendations

Filming production permits for City Streets are approved by BPW and are issued to production companies by FilmLA. FilmLA is the designated point of contact for filming within Los Angeles and provides this service under a City contract administered by the Office of the City Administrative Officer (CAO). As part of this process, LADOT reviews lane closure requests and provides advisory lane closure recommendations to FilmLA and BPW.

LADOT reviewed the current process for the approval of lane closures associated with film production permits. It concluded that having LADOT review anew every request (approximately 3,000 per year) was sometimes unnecessary and can add delay to the process. Therefore, effective January 2010, a streamlined procedure was implemented to expedite the issuance of film production permits.

Many City arterial streets, particularly those in the Downtown area, are repeatedly used for film production activities. Through years of experience on these streets, LADOT has determined what lane closures are feasible from a traffic circulation perspective. LADOT has previously identified recommended lane closures for these streets. For all other arterial streets, vehicular traffic volumes in the City of Los Angeles generally require that all traffic lanes be open during weekday peak traffic periods (6 – 9 AM and 3:30 – 7 PM). Further, the Mayor's Executive Directive No. 2 prohibits construction on City streets during these periods. During non-peak periods, one lane of traffic in each direction generally can be accommodated without causing significant congestion and motorist delay. Finally, filming on local streets typically does not cause significant congestion.

With these considerations in mind, LADOT's advisory lane closure recommendations to FilmLA and BPW, based solely on traffic circulation needs, are as follows:

- For those arterial streets repeatedly used for film production, the lane closures LADOT has determined through experience to be feasible are pre-approved.
- For those arterial streets (including streets designated by the City as "Collector" streets) not used frequently for film production, no lane closures during peak periods (6 – 9 AM and 3:30 – 7 PM) and one lane closure in each direction during non-peak period are pre-approved.
- For local streets and alleys one lane closure is pre-approved.

Given the pre-approved lane closures identified above, the role of FilmLA is simplified to determine if the requested lane closure permit is consistent with what is pre-approved. If it is consistent, FilmLA can submit the permit directly to BPW for approval with an indication that the permit is consistent with LADOT's recommendations. If it is not consistent, there might be special considerations (logistics, schedules, actor availability, etc.) that should be considered by BPW. Accordingly, FilmLA can submit the permit directly to BPW with a clear written articulation of any over-riding considerations that should be considered in determining whether or not to grant the requested permit.

## **Modification of Traffic Control Devices**

LADOT also provides personnel to temporarily remove, modify and reinstall permanent traffic control devices impacted by film production activities. These activities involve the parking meters, signs, colored curb zones, pavement markings, posts and traffic signal hardware. They sometimes also involve changes to traffic signal operation.

To facilitate this effort, LADOT coordinates with FilmLA using sketches, photos, and plans via telephone or through the FilmLA OPS electronic system. LADOT reviews the requests, calculates costs, and updates the requests in the FilmLA OPS systems.

LADOT requires a minimum of five working days for the modification of traffic control devices. Certainly, every attempt is made to accommodate requests made with less than a five-working day notice, whenever feasible. However, last minute cancellations for work already scheduled must require the full collection of the fees. On-site cancellations will result in a minimum of a four hours assessment for the scheduled LADOT crew.

## **Temporary Parking Prohibition Signing**

Film production often requires restricted on-street parking in order to accommodate an outdoor film shot or an interior film shot inside an adjacent building. LADOT is required to install temporary parking prohibition signs at least 24 hours in advance of the day of filming, in order to be able to enforce the restriction.

Temporary parking sign posting must be done in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Due to the temporary mounting hardware mechanism and sign materials that are used, these signs are sometimes subject to vandalism. Unfortunately, the use of more permanent mounting hardware and sign materials is not feasible at this time due to the need to install and remove temporary sign posting throughout the City efficiently and cost-effectively. However, LADOT is committed to responding quickly, upon notification, to replace any missing signs. Furthermore, LADOT is committed to evaluate new methods that will make it more effective for film production needs.

FilmLA sends requests for temporary parking prohibition signing to LADOT a minimum of three working days prior to the filming date. Confirmation and follow up communication is conducted by phone.

## **Traffic Management Expertise**

LADOT wants to ensure that lane closures associated with film production is conducted in a manner that provides for the safety of the film production staff and the traffic that is impacted by it. Accordingly, the permittee is required to implement temporary traffic controls that are in accordance with the respective latest editions of the California MUTCD and Work Area Traffic Control Handbook (WATCH), as adopted by BPW. Both of these documents contain standard drawings for typical applications on City streets that can be used for guidance and direction. LADOT can provide its expertise in these situations when there is a question related to the documents.

As general guidance, all temporary traffic control on City roadways shall be implemented by a Construction Zone Traffic Control Contractor with a valid California C31 license. In addition, for all film production permits that are approved by BPW and that require the closure of any street designated by the City of Los Angeles as a Major or Secondary Highway, portable changeable message signs (CMS) shall be installed three (3) working days prior the street closure, except where they would block a traffic lane. These signs advise road users in advance so that they may plan ahead to avoid the area.