
SALT LAKE CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

DATE: March 28, 2003

SUBJECT: **Street Lighting Issues**

AFFECTED COUNCIL DISTRICTS: Citywide

STAFF REPORT BY: Gary Mumford

ADMINISTRATIVE DEPT. AND CONTACT PERSON: Community & Economic Development
Tim Harpst, Transportation Director

KEY ELEMENTS:

There are approximately 13,000 street lights in Salt Lake City with 2,200 within special improvement districts and 1,750 under the private lighting program. The City typically provides a cobra head light fixture on a wooden pole at intersections and one midblock light. There are usually 6 to 8 lights per block face on arterial streets. Additional or decorative lighting in neighborhoods is provided through assessments to property owners or through the private lighting program with lights paid for and connected to homeowners' electric meters. The decorative lighting private lighting is often partially paid for through the City's matching grant program.

The City Transportation Division has met with all 23 community councils to obtain citizen input regarding street lighting with the intent to create an updated street lighting plan. The Administration notes that the cost difference between cobra head lights on wooden poles with overhead wiring compared to pedestrian-oriented lighting on decorative poles with underground wiring is growing smaller, thus making the decorative systems more affordable. Because the decorative pedestrian-oriented lights are closer to the ground and the fixtures direct light down, lighting is kept to the sidewalks and streets rather than into bedroom windows. This type of lighting has less impact on being able to see the evening skies. The decorative lighting requires more lights per block. There are several decorative fixtures and poles available so an option would be to allow each neighborhood to have distinct lighting.

The Transportation Division will brief the Council on some of the issues relating to street lighting including the follow:

- Special Improvement Districts
- Private lighting
- Maintenance
- CIP, CDBG and RDA funding

The Transportation Division would also like to discuss with the Council whether it should proceed with developing a master plan that would be adopted by ordinance or whether an administrative master plan is satisfactory.

MATTERS AT ISSUE:

Citizen Expectations – The Council may wish to clarify with the Administration the expectations that citizens may have based upon the presentations made at the community council meetings.

Homeowner Associations – In District Six there is a homeowner association that wants to contract with the City for lighting through the neighborhood matching grant program. This has some advantages to the City in that the coordination would be with one entity rather than with a number of individual property owners. The Community and Economic Development Department can provide additional information at the briefing and may request Council feedback on this concept.

Street Lighting Special Improvement Districts – It typically takes six months or longer to work through the cost calculations and public process of street lighting special improvement districts. Assessments are based on cost per running foot of property, which requires lengthy detailed reviews of property plats. Special improvement district extensions have accumulated funds for maintenance and replacement of lighting. However, the accumulated funds in a lighting extension are usually not sufficient to upgrade the lights when the entire system fails. The Transportation Division points out that there are several alternatives to the SID program including a citywide utility assessment or citywide assessments based on property values. Assessments could be set at several levels to reflect what residents have already spent on lighting or the type and amount of lighting in each neighborhood. Dedicated street lighting revenue would make it possible to bond for updating and replacing street lights. The Division doesn't have a specific recommendation for any of the funding options mentioned.

Private Lighting Program – Under the private lighting program, street lights are placed in the park strips of a neighborhood with each light connected to a homeowner's electric service. Property owners with lights sign revocable permits that are recorded with the property that stipulates that the homeowner is responsible for operating and maintaining the streetlight. One problem with the private lighting program is that the lighting is inconsistent (some dark sections) because of the inability to find willing neighbors to have the light connected to their home electric service. Some neighborhoods have used the City's Matching Grant Program to pay for a portion of the capital costs. This has occurred primarily in the areas east of 700 East, while efforts to use these funds in other areas of the City have not generally been successful. A recent inventory of private lights shows that over 30% of these lights are not operating. The Transportation Division suggests that the private lighting program be modified to require City maintenance with a single wiring circuit within the public right of way. The private lighting program could also evolve into a special improvement district or into a citywide lighting program.

Maintenance of Street Lights – Salt Lake City contracts its street light maintenance to Utah Power & Light. In turn, UP&L contracts much of its light maintenance to private providers. The City has experienced some delays in reactivating non-operational lights. The Transportation Division is exploring options for contracting directly with private providers or for using City crews.

CIP, CDBG and RDA Funding – The City is using community development block grant funds to add pedestrian-oriented lighting with underground wiring in eligible neighborhoods with higher than average crime statistics. The Transportation Division is exploring the possibility for using CDBG funds to help with financing a portion (25%) of deteriorated lighting in a Rose Park neighborhood currently provided by a special improvement district.

The City is reviewing an RDA application requesting funds for street lighting in West Capital Hill. Additional lighting will increase the operating and maintenance costs for the City's general fund. The Transportation Division suggests that a citywide SID or citywide assessment would provide for flexible assessments to offset the increased operating costs.

In several past years, the City budgeted some funds in CIP for replacement of lighting. Special improvement district lighting is not eligible to receive CIP funding to update deteriorated lighting. The Division desires to discuss with the Council the option for allowing the use of CIP funds for the capital costs of special improvement districts.

cc: Rocky Fluhart, David Nimkin, Alison Weyher, David Dobbins, Tim Harpst, JD Baxter