CIVIC EXPLAINER
September 2026

Building a Five-Year Infrastructure Program for Los Angeles

Review of the Mayor's 2026 Capital Infrastructure Program, the Bureau of Engineering's July 9 recommendations, and the decisions ahead

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Executive summary

For nearly two years, Mayor Bass's Executive Directive 9 has brought City departments together through the Capital Planning Steering Committee, or CPSC, to reconsider how Los Angeles plans, funds, delivers, and maintains its infrastructure. That work produced Mayor Bass's *2026 Capital Infrastructure Program*, released May 4, 2026, and an extensive appendix documenting 73 asset classes across nine departments.

The May report is a substantial body of work. It provides the clearest account Los Angeles has produced of its fragmented infrastructure systems, asset responsibilities and conditions, maintenance needs, funding constraints, and delivery capacity. It recommends a formal five-year program, common citywide principles, standardized project intake and scoring, stronger governance, greater attention to maintenance and staffing, and a transfer of responsibility from the City Administrative Officer to the Bureau of Engineering, or BOE.

The report establishes the proposed architecture for future citywide five-year programs. As intended, the Mayor's proposed 2026 program applies parts of that architecture to an initial list of 29 projects focused on preparations for the 2028 Games. The appendix provides the broader account of City assets and needs that can inform future citywide updates.

The May report's particular strength is its institutional assessment and project-development roadmap: it explains how proposed projects can enter, move through, and be delivered by the City. It provides a strong foundation for a durable five-year program. As Council considers the report and BOE's subsequent recommendations, three questions deserve particular attention: what measurable citywide outcomes should guide investment; how documented needs will generate projects; and how technical agencies, elected leaders, and the public will participate in setting priorities and weighing tradeoffs.

This analysis builds on Investing in Place's review of 45 municipal capital infrastructure programs and the nine principles submitted to City leaders with the support of more than 80 civic, community, labor, business, and philanthropic partners in December 2023.

1. What is happening now

Mayor Bass issued Executive Directive 9 on October 16, 2024. The directive convened City departments and bureaus through the Capital Planning Steering Committee (CPSC) to reform how Los Angeles plans, builds, operates, and maintains infrastructure. That process produced the Mayor's CIP report and appendix in May 2026.

The report recommends that BOE lead the development and administration of the new program, replacing the CAO-led Capital and Technology Improvement Expenditure Program, or CTIEP, and placing responsibility with a department that has project-development and delivery expertise. If voters approve a Director of Public Works as is proposed in November's Charter Reform Initiative (Charter Amendment LA), the report calls for those responsibilities to transfer from BOE to the new director.

The report also calls for standardized project intake, scoring and prioritization, and governance changes. BOE's July 9 report translates those recommendations into a proposed operating structure. The Mayor's report and BOE's recommendations are now moving through Council review, beginning in the Public Works Committee and continuing through the broader Council process.

Voters will consider Charter reforms in November that would make a five-year Capital Infrastructure Program, a Director of Public Works, and related Public Works reforms permanent City responsibilities. If approved, the Charter changes would establish the enduring mandate while allowing the City Council, through implementing ordinances, to define the program's processes, responsibilities, and operating details. The work now before Council is beginning that conversation to shape how this will be implemented. The permanent mandate responds to a longstanding institutional gap: since at least 2013, Council motions and mayoral initiatives have called for a citywide infrastructure program, but none resulted in an enduring requirement or process. In a mayoral election year, Charter reform also offers a way to carry this work forward across administrations.

The work now before Council begins to define how these changes would be implemented. This remainder of 2026 provides an opportunity to bring Council offices and others more fully into the work before the operating structure is finalized.

Three connected tasks are now moving at once:

1. Building the internal operating system.
2. Determining how priorities will be established within it.
3. Creating a durable legal mandate through Charter Amendment LA.

These efforts must reinforce one another.

2. What the Mayor’s 2026 Capital Infrastructure Program report recommends

The report presents ten recommendations for establishing and administering a five-year infrastructure program. Together, they address the program’s legal mandate, governance, project intake and evaluation, maintenance and staffing, Games-related investments, and funding.

1. Mandate creation of a Capital Infrastructure Program

Formally codify the requirement to create and maintain a five-year program through the Administrative Code, City Charter, or both.

2. Strengthen the Capital Planning Steering Committee

Give the CPSC authority to set citywide priorities, oversee revisions to project scoring, resolve interdepartmental disputes, and recommend future projects. Create a staff-level Capital Planning Oversight Group composed of the Mayor's Office, CAO, CLA, and departmental representatives.

3. Establish citywide guiding principles

Adopt seven common principles for infrastructure investment: health and safety, connectivity, accessibility, equity, preservation, sustainability and resiliency, and economic investment.

4. Confer authority on the Bureau of Engineering

Revise the Administrative Code to transfer responsibility for creating and maintaining the program from the CAO to BOE, while retaining the CAO's fiscal and financial-advisory functions.

5. Support Charter reform and a Director of Public Works

Support Charter changes establishing a Director of Public Works and consolidating responsibility for citywide infrastructure planning. Because voter approval is not certain, the report also advances the BOE-led structure available under current law.

6. Implement project intake reform

Require every proposed infrastructure project, whether originating with a department or political office, to pass through a standard intake process demonstrating a clear purpose and need, active participation by the asset owner, and a reliable path to funding.

7. Implement project scoring and prioritization

Create transparent, quantifiable standards for evaluating projects against the seven guiding principles and considering readiness, funding, asset condition, legal mandates, and coordination opportunities.

8. Account for maintenance and staffing

Regularly report the state of repair of City assets, expand asset-management systems, and build the funding and staffing capacity needed to address maintenance backlogs.

9. Prioritize 2028 Games-related projects

Advance 29 projects focused on accessibility, state of repair, public rights-of-way, and other needs associated with hosting the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

10. Expand fiscal allocations and revenue

Increase the City's capacity to deliver projects and perform maintenance through additional allocations, taxes, fees, and other revenue opportunities.

3. What the May report accomplishes

It explains a fragmented system

The report explains how Los Angeles plans, funds, builds, and maintains infrastructure across numerous departments, funding sources, governing bodies, and delivery systems. It documents the consequences of annual rather than long-term budgeting, including fragmented authority, inconsistent project development, weak coordination, and limited attention to maintenance and staffing.

The appendix creates a significant diagnostic baseline

The appendix brings together more than 500 pages of reporting on 73 asset classes across nine departments. It documents City assets and responsibilities, available condition data, capital and maintenance funding, staffing and delivery capacity, existing programs, risks, and unmet needs. It is one of the most comprehensive accounts Los Angeles has produced of its infrastructure responsibilities and provides an important baseline for future investment decisions.

It proposes a coherent operating structure

The report proposes a formal five-year program, common language and project categories, standardized intake and scoring, clearer governance, multi-year financial planning, and stronger attention to maintenance and staffing. These capabilities could replace a fragmented annual exercise with a more disciplined and visible system for infrastructure budgeting and delivery.

It gives maintenance and delivery capacity overdue attention

The report emphasizes state of repair, maintenance backlogs, asset-management data, staffing, and delivery capacity. A credible five-year program must account for both the City's ability to deliver improvements and its capacity to care for the infrastructure it already owns.

4. Building on the May report

The May report provides an institutional assessment and a detailed implementation roadmap. The next step is connecting that work to a citywide infrastructure investment strategy.

Question 1: What outcomes should guide investment?

What measurable conditions is Los Angeles trying to create over the next five to ten years, and how will those outcomes guide infrastructure budgeting and project development?

The report's guiding principles provide an important starting point. Los Angeles also has broad commitments to economic opportunity, equity, sustainability, resilience, accessibility, and safety. Each five-year update should translate those principles into measurable outcomes and service levels, compare needs across assets and communities, and consider how limited resources should be distributed.

The report's eight program categories may improve reporting and coordination, but they do not by themselves establish these outcomes or determine how investments should work together within a corridor, neighborhood, or community. A citywide investment strategy should make clear not only how projects will be categorized and evaluated, but what Los Angeles is trying to accomplish through them.

Question 2: How will needs generate projects?

How will asset condition, service levels, adopted plans, fiscal capacity, Council priorities, and community knowledge be used to identify needs and develop projects?

The appendix documents extensive unmet need, creating an important foundation for a citywide infrastructure improvement program. The proposed process, however, is clearest after a department or political office has identified a project. BOE investigates the proposal, departments score it against the guiding principles, and internal committees decide whether and when it should advance. Asset condition is considered, but primarily after a project has entered the pipeline.

The report provides principles, categories, and metrics that can help compare and sequence projects once they have been identified. What remains less clear is how documented needs and citywide outcomes will generate the project pipeline before intake begins.

The current approach makes sense for the 2026 program, which begins with an existing list of Games-related projects and a fixed delivery deadline. That provides a useful first application of the new systems. The program will necessarily improve over successive cycles, but the implementing process should establish from the outset how and when citywide outcomes, Council direction, and public participation will inform project development.

Question 3: Who decides, and where does public participation occur?

How will responsibilities be divided among the Mayor, Council, CPSC, BOE, departments, and a potential future Director of Public Works? When can residents and community institutions help shape priorities and weigh tradeoffs?

BOE, the CPSC, and participating departments should be central to the citywide infrastructure improvement program. Their technical knowledge, asset responsibilities, and delivery experience are indispensable. The coordinated internal structure proposed in the May report is one of its most important contributions.

A citywide program should also create a shared and publicly understandable process for setting priorities and weighing tradeoffs. The Mayor and Council provide policy direction, residents and community institutions contribute knowledge of local conditions and priorities, and BOE, the CPSC, and departments provide the expertise needed to develop a feasible program.

This is also a question of procedural equity. Equity is not only a criterion applied when projects are scored. It also concerns who can participate, when participation occurs, what information is available, and how that input affects decisions. Meaningful participation should occur while priorities and funding recommendations can still be shaped, rather than only after a nearly complete proposal is released.

The May report establishes much of the internal machinery needed to develop and deliver a five-year infrastructure program. The next phase must connect that machinery to a recurring process for establishing citywide outcomes, generating projects from documented needs, weighing fiscal and geographic tradeoffs, and assigning clear responsibility for decisions. The remaining governance question is how priorities will be established, who will help shape them, and through what public process.

5. How other cities connect technical and public input

No single city provides a model Los Angeles should simply adopt. Other cities do demonstrate different ways to connect technical analysis, public knowledge, and elected decision-making.

Minneapolis uses a standing resident Capital Long-Range Improvement Committee. Departments develop project requests, while appointed residents review and score them, hold public listening sessions, and produce an independent six-year recommendation. The Mayor prepares a recommended program, and Council reviews, amends, and adopts it through the annual budget.

San Diego uses a different structure. Its internal Capital Improvements Program Review and Advisory Committee reviews departmental scoring and makes recommendations to the

Mayor. A separate process allows residents and community planning groups to identify infrastructure needs before projects are scoped and scored.

Chicago, Salt Lake City, and Rockville provide channels through which residents can submit infrastructure needs or specific project ideas.

Together, these approaches show that public participation can occur at several points: identifying needs, reviewing projects against transparent criteria, and considering recommendations before adoption. The important questions for Los Angeles are when the public can participate, what decisions can still be influenced, how district and citywide needs are balanced, and whether the process is transparent, inclusive, and easy to understand. Public review only after a program is substantially complete may provide transparency, but it offers little opportunity to shape the priorities on which the program was built.

6. What Council should focus on this fall

As the City Council considers the May report, BOE's subsequent recommendations, and the transition from CTIEP, three questions deserve particular attention:

- **What outcomes should guide investment?** What measurable conditions is Los Angeles trying to create over the next five to ten years, and how will those outcomes guide infrastructure budgeting and project development?
- **How will needs generate projects?** How will asset condition, service levels, adopted plans, fiscal capacity, Council priorities, and community knowledge be used to identify needs and develop projects?
- **Who decides, and where does public participation occur?** How will responsibilities be divided among the Mayor, Council, CPSC, BOE, departments, and a potential future Director of Public Works? When can residents and community institutions help shape priorities and weigh tradeoffs?

7. Making the obligation permanent

Executive Directive 9 has advanced work Los Angeles has discussed for more than a decade. The implementation questions identified in this memo do not diminish the case for Charter reform. Because an executive directive can be changed by a future administration, it cannot create the same enduring obligation as the City Charter.

Investing in Place supports the November measure establishing a five-year Capital Infrastructure Program and strengthening Public Works governance. If approved, the Charter changes would establish the ongoing responsibility and assign clear authority, while allowing the City Council to develop the program's processes and details through implementing ordinances and future updates.

The Games-focused program, BOE's recommendations, Council review, and the November measure are connected stages of the same reform effort. Together, they offer an opportunity to build broader understanding of the new system and establish a durable approach to infrastructure investment. Los Angeles should not have to rebuild the case for coordinated infrastructure investment with every administration.

Documents reviewed

- Mayor Karen Bass, Executive Directive 9, Capital Planning, October 16, 2024.
- City of Los Angeles, Forging a New Path: 2026 Capital Infrastructure Program, released May 4, 2026.
- City of Los Angeles, 2026 Capital Infrastructure Program Appendix, including 73 Asset Class Reports.
- Bureau of Engineering, Council File 25-0752, Capital Improvement Plan / Project Intake Process / Project Selection and Prioritization, July 9, 2026.
- Council File 26-1170, motion regarding the proposed infrastructure program and project intake process, introduced August 21, 2026.
- Los Angeles Charter Reform Commission recommendations and related City Council action concerning the November 2026 Charter amendment, five-year Capital Infrastructure Program, and Director of Public Works.
- City of Minneapolis, Capital Long-Range Improvement Committee materials and 2026 CLIC report.
- City of San Diego, Council Policy 800-14, Prioritizing Capital Improvement Program Projects, amended December 16, 2022.
- City of San Diego, Council Policy 000-32, Neighborhood Input on Infrastructure Needs and Priorities, amended December 16, 2022.
- Investing in Place, *Nine Principles for a Los Angeles Capital Infrastructure Program*, submitted with more than 80 signatories, December 2023.
- Investing in Place and the Public Space Leadership Council, *A City That Works: Public Space as a Civic Promise*, July 2025.