



TO: Hyun Kim, City Manager

FROM: Ramiro A. Chavez, P.E. PgMP, Director, Environment & Public Works
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COPY: Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee
Marvin Griffin, Committee Staff Liaison

PRESENTERS: Brennan Kidd, P.E. PTOE, City Traffic Engineer/Assist. Division Manager, Public Works
Chris L. Johnson, P.E., Engineering Manager, Planning & Development Services

SUBJECT: City of Tacoma Right-of-Way Design Manual Update Process

DATE: July 8, 2026

Initial Initial
RAC kb

PRESENTATION TYPE:
Informational Briefing

SUMMARY:
Public Works and Planning & Development Services Department staff will present an overview of the recently (October 2025) implemented updates to the City’s Right-of-Way Design Manual (Design Manual). The presentation will outline the update process, including regular review to ensure compliance with City policies, standards, and best practices while continuing to be useful to the public and staff.

BACKGROUND:
The City’s Design Manual applies to the construction of all street and right-of-way (ROW) improvements including stormwater and wastewater construction, street lighting, traffic signalization, landscaping, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, and channelization. It also provides the minimum technical standards required to construct improvements within the City of Tacoma ROW and expectations for private property access to/from the ROW. The Design Manual is intended to be used in conjunction with other local, state, and federal rules, regulations, and design guidance as applicable to a given project or design aspect. Per Tacoma Municipal Code 10.22.020 (Definitions), the Design Manual is “applicable to construction of all street and right-of-way improvements as adopted by the Director of Public Works and effective on or about January 7, 2016, and any amendments, updates, or revisions made thereto, and on file with the Public Works Department.”

ISSUE:
Before the new update process was applied, the Design Manual underwent a wholesale, multiyear process, to review all content and make any updates at the same time. This led to a large engagement and commitment from staff, which then resulted in the Design Manual only being updated about once every 10 years, which reduced its relevance and usefulness. The City needs to ensure the administrative update process is the right balance between robust review and timely delivery, which includes the need for a consistent work plan and timeline to allow for committees and other vested groups to understand what is being updated and have an opportunity to contribute at opportune times.

ALTERNATIVES:
Revisions to the Design Manual update process can be made at this time or a future date.

FISCAL IMPACT:
Updates to certain portions of the Design Manual is being performed under the administrative budgets of the departments involved; no additional funding is specifically allocated in support of this work.

RECOMMENDATION:
This is an informational briefing only.