

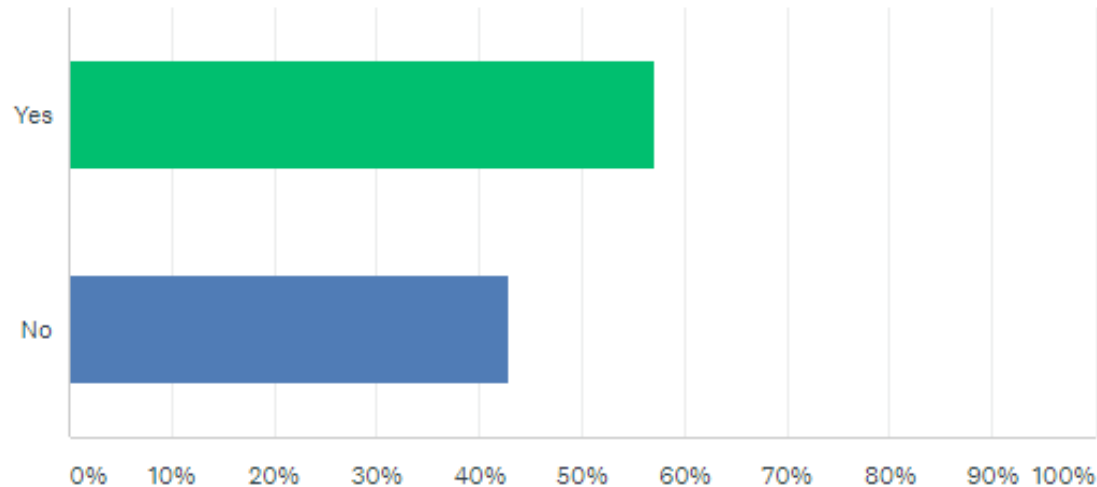
TCC Environmental Review Survey

September 25, 2019

Survey Result 1

Have you been directed and/or given clearance by District Staff, then redirected and/or denied clearance by HQ or FHWA?

Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Yes	57.14%	4
▼ No	42.86%	3
TOTAL		7

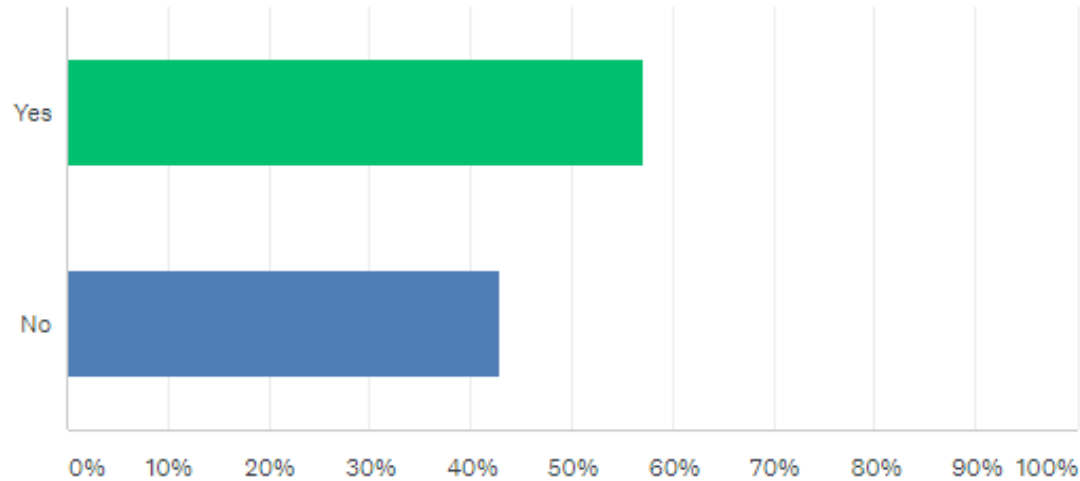
Further explain for survey result 1

- In the ER process for DAF approval direction by district staff changed with staff change and again redirected by HQ.
- Additional funding for a bridge project was promised to be available in Spring 2019 per Dist. 4 Caltrans Local Assistance staff, however, when routed up to Headquarters funding will now be first come first served starting in October 2019 with no guarantee.
- This happens frequently - ranging from SHPO concurrence, environmental clearance, etc. I think there are too many instances to cite just one.
- One HBP project cost the County over \$500,000 in reimbursements to FHWA. District staff gave the County written approvals to proceed which later backfired after FHWA reviewed the project at the end of the environmental stage.

Survey Result 2

Have you had your project approved, then found out later that more information was required.

Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Yes	57.14%	4
▼ No	42.86%	3
TOTAL		7

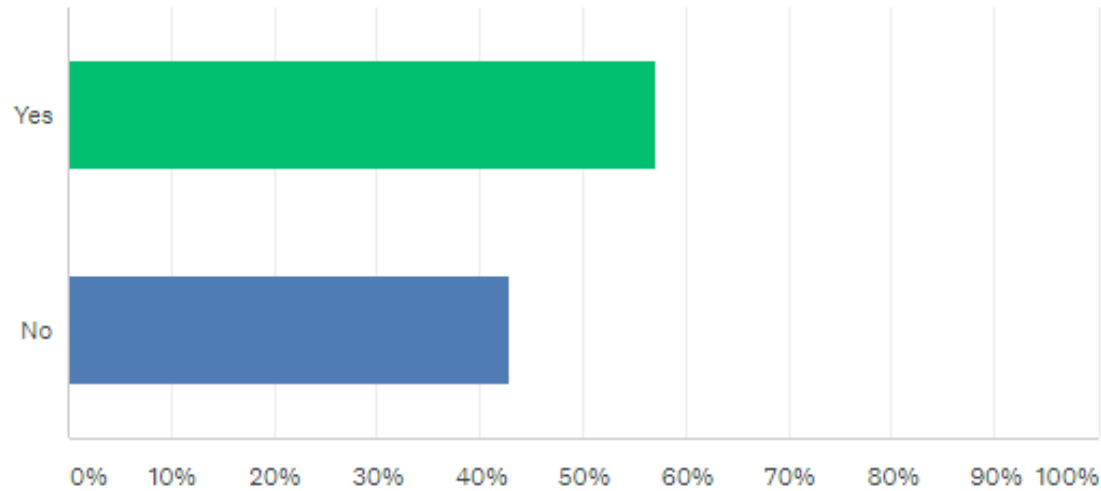
Further explain for survey result 2

- Received emails stating that NES was accepted as final document pending final signatures then another round of comments to be addressed was submitted approximately 1 month later.
- Encroachment permit for a project was approved for ramp closures during design phase. However, when Contractor tried to get double permit during Construction could not close ramps due to lack of information/coordination between internal Caltrans Staff/Depts.
- Recent improvement project that was environmentally cleared through NEPA and then subsequent studies were required well after the fact based on comments from one resident.
- Projects have been approved at the district level and then have to change after the FTIP was approved due to HQ second guessing Caltrans District 11 approvals. One involving DEMO funds. Another HSIP project was even scoped and approved with District 11 staff. Once the competitive grant was awarded Caltrans staff changed scope and now the project may not be able to be completed due to added costs.

Survey Result 3

Have you been directed on how to prepare a key report, then redirected later by a different reviewer and/or agency.

Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	57.14% 4
No	42.86% 3
TOTAL	7

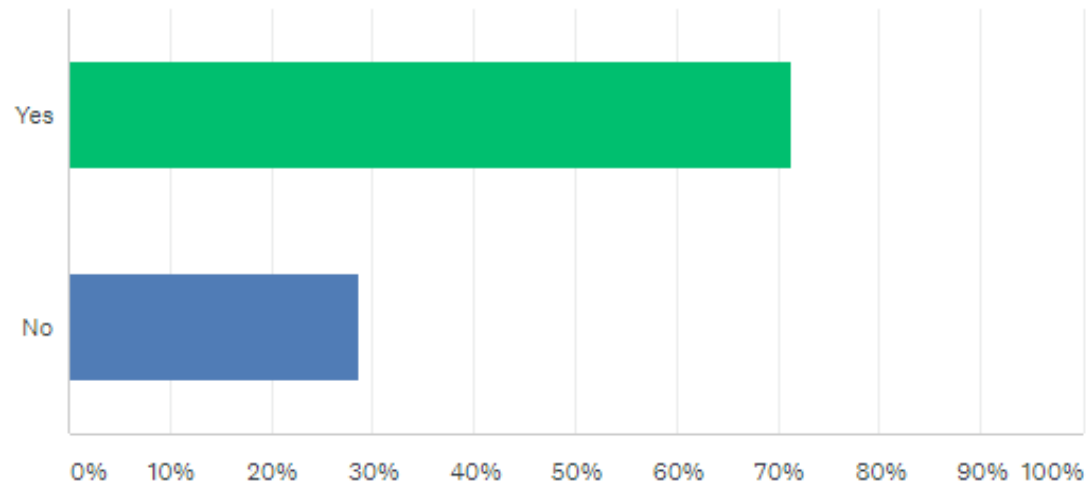
Further explain for survey result 3

- County was provided with sample document from district staff, once submitted, was told that HQ staff wanted more studies completed.
- Several technical studies are conducted for individual projects. Almost all of technical reports, are reviewed and require revisions. This usually takes 3 months to receive comments back from Caltrans. When submitted for approval again, additional comments are provided that require reports to be revised. There are usually 3 to 5 revisions always with new comments by different reviewers. Each reviewer has their own preference and there is no consistency between them. This makes it difficult for agencies, who are trying to minimize delay times by submitting reports with what they think Caltrans will require based on previous comments, and then find out that another reviewer has a different way of doing things.
- Finance letter directed to be filled out a certain way by Dist. 4 Local Assistance, however needed to revise finance letter when Headquarters reviewed.
- Where to begin? This happens frequently. Local assistance seems to be a frequent offender, as is environmental and right of way (among others).

Survey Result 4

Have you experienced a change in Staff, who directed that major changes be made to your report.

Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	71.43% 5
No	28.57% 2
TOTAL	7

Further explain for survey result 4

- District biologist provided comments on submitted documents, upon staff change, new biologist required many more changes to submitted documents.
- This again was in the ER process, district staff was not well trained in the ER project delivery process and with staff change numerous revisions were requested.
- After months waiting for approval of a technical report, constantly following up and constantly being told to call back in another two weeks, it was finally disclosed to us that the person who was suppose to be reviewing our report is no longer in that department. Additional months was added for re-review, comments and multiple revisions. If we hadn't been constantly following up, we would have never know.
- Typically with the state department of Fish and Wildlife
- This is the rule and not the exception.

General Comments

- Turn over at our local Caltrans District has placed an added burden on County staff. District 11 needs to be more involved in our area as there seems to be a disconnect with their DLAE due to physical distance (over 120 miles). I would like to see satellite offices that has DLAE staff located closer to the Cities/ Counties they serve in regions that are isolated.
- On most projects if there is change in staff the documents submitted to district are lost and have to be resubmitted. When a staff working on project goes on vacation there is no backup to process your project. When there is a lack of funding and the E76 is pending - it is not communicated to the county - no help from district to find a way to move project forward maybe with Advance Construction or partial approval.

General Comments cont.

- For simple project such as bike lanes, pedestrian improvements, sidewalk projects, and minor roadway project, the length of time in order to receive environmental clearance is 12 to 15 months. We understand that some project warrant certain studies to be conducted, however, the response time for Environmental staff to review and provide comments is terrible. In addition, the constant reiterations needed because of new comments either because the reviewer missed something the first time or from being reviewed by someone else. Then you re-submit the report, Caltrans staff member will tell you that they need another 30 days to review your revised document. When you try to follow up, you find out that they are out for the next two weeks working on Caltrans' own projects and cannot get to your project until they return. Then when you follow up again, you find out that they are on vacation. So in the end that 30 days extra needed to review your resubmittal has just been extended to 2 months. And this is just one report. Imagine having 3 to 5 reports all going under the same routine. There needs to be more accountability for Caltrans staff members and thresholds created for review response time and comments

General Comments cont.

- Again, there are too many examples over my many years to cite just one. I think the biggest issue is the failure of Caltrans staff to be empowered to make decisions and stick to those decisions. Frequent turnover and lack of experience and expertise creates a paralysis in the decision making process. Caltrans staff is also not empowered to try to find solutions to issues or concerns; instead avoiding decisions or making conflicting statements or direction. I believe this has a significant impact on local agency project delivery and is a contributor to the poor performance relating to Obligation Authority.
- In addition to the instances above, we have experienced delays because of template changes in documents implemented while the submittals were under review. The review times seem excessive. Communications on status updates are slow.