



# Information Item

**Date: July 15, 2014**

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Gigi Decavalles, Director of Finance/City Treasurer  
Jory Wolf, Chief Information Officer

Subject: Santa Monica Launches Open Data Initiative

## **Introduction**

The City is prepared to launch two software products in support of an open data initiative to further its commitment to government transparency. The first product, Socrata, provides the City the ability to make public, datasets pertaining to various operations, including but not limited to public safety, public assets, transportation, and more available to the public. The second product, OpenGov, provides an easy to use and visually engaging tool to look into the City's budgeted and actual revenues and expenditures.

## **Discussion**

The City of Santa Monica has historically been a leader in providing on-line data and information to the public. A large number of datasets, charts, graphs and maps have been available for download via the City's website for years. These include police calls for service, business licenses, budgets and expenditures, active permits and permit inspection schedules, wi-fi coverage, bike routes and amenities, public and private construction projects, real-time parking availability and many others. More recently, the City released the Big Blue Bus scheduled route information to the general public.

The City embarked on a formal open data initiative in late 2013 in response to President Obama's May 9, 2013 executive order to make applicable government data open and machine readable. Several open data providers were evaluated as part of a rigorous selection process. Socrata was selected as the City's primary open data provider because the platform provides the best blend of technical functionality and end-user experience. The public may access the City's open data portal at <http://data.smgov.net> beginning August 2014. A total of 25 datasets have been identified across six key category areas. The category areas are: Finance, Permits & Licenses, Public Assets, Public Safety, Public Services, and Transportation. The datasets designated for launch are:

- Active Business Licenses
- Active Permits
- Big Blue Bus Routes/Stop Times
- Bike Parking
- Bike Ridership Counts by Intersection
- Bike Ways and Paths
- Boards and Commissions Applicants and Members
- Campaign Finance Disclosure Statements
- Capital Project Budgets
- Closed Gov Outreach (GO) Service Requests
- Data Catalog (a dataset of datasets, views, visualizations)
- Electric Vehicle Charging Stations
- Employee Salaries
- Fees
- Fire Hydrants
- Historic Landmarks
- Neighborhood Organization Boundaries
- Operating Budgets
- Permit Inspection Schedules

- Police Calls for Service
- Public Facilities
- Santa Monica Airport Departures
- Santa Monica Public Library Card Holders in Los Angeles County
- Trees
- Wi-Fi Coverage

Policies and procedures have been drafted to govern usage of the City's Socrata open data platform and will be included in an Administrative Instruction. Posting data in violation of applicable law is forbidden. All datasets must go through a rigorous review process with department Directors, the Chief Information Officer and the City Attorney's Office prior to being published online for public consumption.

Once online, any member of the public may interact directly and/or indirectly with the City's Socrata open data platform. Direct contact includes basic functionality, such as sorting, filtering, and searching. More advanced functionality, such as grouping, totaling, data visualization, and plotting of data on maps is also available. Indirect access to the data is also available via a well-documented application programming interface (API) which allows third-party software developers to build applications using City data.

Numerous institutions at the local, state, and federal level use the Socrata open data platform to promote transparency and democracy, access to information, civic participation, citizen self-empowerment, new public and private products and services, innovation, and improved efficiency and effectiveness of government services. Notable open data efforts using Socrata include New York City, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Seattle, San Francisco, and the federal government (i.e. data.gov.)

The OpenGov platform was purchased as a complimentary open data tool to help better present and communicate the City's budget in an intuitive, easy-to-understand manner.

OpenGov will be used to display the City's revenues and expenditures using numerous charts and graphs, in essence making the City's budgeting data readily available to audiences without requiring a deep understanding of civic budgeting practices. The tool allows the public to group and view revenues and expenditures in a number of ways not currently available in the budget. For example, the user could request citywide retirement or healthcare costs, or compare trends in spending or revenues from one year to the next in a number of formats. Numerous cities, including Los Angeles, Palo Alto, Calabasas, Davis, Monterey, Culver City, and Riverside use the OpenGov platform to better communicate budget information. The anticipated launch date for OpenGov is August 2014.

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