

**AGENDA:** January 22, 2004

**TO:** SCCRTC – Transportation Policy Workshop  
**FROM:** Linda Wilshusen, Executive Director  
**RE:** Status Report on Highway 1 Projects

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

This item is for information only.

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**DISCUSSION**

Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project

Final engineering design activities are nearing completion on this project. Funding for completion of right-of-way and construction remains problematic. The Project Development Team (PDT), including Caltrans, RTC staff, the City, and County of Santa Cruz serving as the technical advisory committee for the final design phase of the project, continues to investigate alternative scenarios to move the project forward as soon as possible. The PDT next meets in February.

Highway 1 HOV Widening Project – Project Approval/Environmental Documentation (PA/ED)

The PA/ED activities are progressing on schedule with work nearly 80 percent complete on corridor level archeological studies, the longest lead item in the work program environmental analysis. Based on the corridor level analysis, some site specific archeological excavations will be necessary at select locations to be identified by the consultant. Staff has received guidance from the County's Real Estate Division and has requested the consultant support to supplement staff resources in executing a Right of Entry with property owners on specific properties.

Meanwhile, work is progressing on a Community Outreach Plan to guide the public participation process through the environmental review phase of the project. Public information meetings are tentatively scheduled for March/April at select locations along the corridor. An outline of the Outreach Plan will be presented at the February Transportation Policy Workshop meeting.

As announced at the January RTC meeting, staff was contacted late Wednesday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, that the Highway 1 HOV Widening Project was one of 60 projects identified

nationwide as a candidate project for the Federal Environmental Streamlining Initiative. Accordingly, staff prepared the attached Nominator Contact Form (Attachment 1) providing information to be used by the evaluation committee in selecting 6 to 9 projects throughout the nation to be designated as Environmental Streamlining Case Study Projects in 2004. If designated as a case study project, a task force comprised of federal and state agencies will be created to review the process through which project reviews and approvals are secured. The goal of the Environmental Streamlining Initiative is to expedite the project approval process without compromising the required technical analysis and public participation process. Staff will provide an update at the TPW meeting.

The Project Development Team (PDT), serving as the technical advisory committee for the PA/ED phase, continues to meet on a monthly basis, with the next meeting scheduled for January 29, 2004. The SCCRTC will continue to provide project management oversight of the PA/ED activities until the Joint Powers Authority/Highway 1 Construction Authority is ready to take them on.

#### Formation of Joint Powers Authority

Prospective member agencies are in process of considering the revised Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement for the Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA) through the month of January. On January 13<sup>th</sup>, the County Board of Supervisors approved the agreement and agreed to serve as the host agency and the Interim Administrator to the HCA. The role of host agency will be to implement organizational activities in getting the HCA fully operational to assume the responsibilities of managing the Highway 1 project. In approving this action, the Board of Supervisors requested a report back in March on the work program and budget for the County's new role in the project, and clarification that the HCA will be the project management oversight agency for the PA/ED once it is up and running.

The HCA Board of Directors is scheduled to have their inaugural meeting on Friday, February 6<sup>th</sup>, at 8:30 a.m. in the City of Capitola. It is expected that initial organizational tasks will take some months, and that transition of the PA/ED contract and oversight responsibilities will be completed later in the fiscal year, after adequate staff or consultant assistance has been secured by the County, and appropriate agreements with the funding pass-through agencies have been signed.

#### Expenditure Plan Development

The Expenditure Plan Subcommittee met on January 5<sup>th</sup> to review a first cut draft of the Expenditure Plan and Ordinance creating the transportation sales tax, and a draft list of projects to be funded through the tax measure. The Subcommittee provided comment to staff for revisions regarding the administration of the tax measure, including creation of an independent audit committee, and methods to manage the cash flow to proposed projects and programs over the term of the measure. Staff will revise the draft documents for the next meeting of the Subcommittee scheduled for Monday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The Santa Cruz County Business Council reported they had retained a consultant team to support campaign efforts for the tax measure. The consultant team will be conducting a community poll on the tax measure the results of which should be available in mid-February.

## **SUMMARY**

Staff has provided information (Attachment 1) for the evaluation of the Highway 1 HOV Widening Project as an Environmental Streamlining Case Study. The Board of Supervisors is considering the request of the JPA Working Group for the County to serve as host agency to the Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA), while prospective member agencies are considering the revised Joint Powers Agreement. The inaugural meeting of the HCA is scheduled for Friday, February 6<sup>th</sup>. The Expenditure Plan Subcommittee provided comments to staff on a first draft of the Expenditure Plan, Ordinance and list of projects for the proposed transportation sales tax measure.

### Attachments:

1. Environmental Streamlining Initiative, *Nominator Contact Form* with attachments for the Highway 1 HOV Widening Project.

Prepared by: Kim Shultz

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