

**AGENDA:** February 5, 2004

**TO:** Regional Transportation Commission  
**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 due to the State budget situation. 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 will next meet in a March timeframe following some indication on the direction of state transportation funding issues.

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

Project Approval/Environmental Documentation (PA/ED) activities in both the engineering and environmental area are on schedule and consistent with the project budget. Attachment 1 is the second Quarterly Progress Report to be presented by Chris Metzger, Project Manager for Nolte Associates, at the Commission 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 PDT is reviewing a draft 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 at select locations along the corridor. An outline of the Outreach Plan will be presented at the February Transportation Policy Workshop meeting.

One area currently under scrutiny for potential impact to the project schedule is the availability of the updated regional travel model. The operating system for the regional travel demand model, created and maintained by the Association of Monterey Bay Governments (AMBAG), has been upgraded and awaits import of the new population and employment projections for the region. The proposed projections were pulled from AMBAG's January agenda due to unresolved issues. The revised Highway 1 project schedule had projected availability of the model by January. **Further delay in the availability of a validated model beyond early March (the current projection) will have an impact on the overall project schedule.** The PDT will be considering alternative approaches to conducting the traffic operations analysis in the event adoption of the population and employment projections are further delayed.

#### 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, including the PA/ED.

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 Project Approval/Environmental Documentation phase once the HCA is up and running. Staff plans to send a letter to the County affirming that the RTC expects that the HCA will assume oversight of the PA/ED once the staffing is in place, funding agreements have been finalized, and oversight agreements have been transferred to the HCA. The RTC will need to take an official action to implement the transfer.

The HCA Board of Directors is scheduled to have its 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 year.

The SCCRTC will continue to provide project management oversight of the PA/ED activities until the Joint Powers Agency/Highway 1 Construction Authority is ready to take them on. County staff assigned to the JPA participates in the PDT and are kept informed of significant developments on PA/ED activities by RTC staff.

#### Federal Earmark in TEA-21 Reauthorization

The RTC has requested that our members of Congress include a \$15 million authorization in the TEA-21 reauthorization bill for the Highway 1 HOV Widening Project. During her recent Washington, D.C. trip, the Executive Director and the RTC's Washington Assistant, Carolyn Chaney, met with representatives from Senator

Feinstein's office, Congressman Farr's office, and Congresswoman Eshoo's office to discuss the project and advocate for the federal earmark.

### Expenditure Plan Development

The Expenditure Plan Subcommittee met in January 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. It is expected the Subcommittee will forward a draft Expenditure Plan to the RTC in April.

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

### **SUMMARY**

The project consultants for the Highway 1 HOV Widening project will present the second Quarterly Progress Report (Attachment 1). The project is proceeding on schedule and budget, though staff is closely monitoring progress on AMBAG's adoption of regional population/employment projections necessary to complete the update of the regional travel demand model. The Board of Supervisors have agreed to have the County serve as host agency to the Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA). RTC staff continues to work with County staff on the transition and will return to the RTC for their official transfer of the PA/ED, once staffing, funding, and oversight agreements are in place. Staff and the RTC's Washington, D.C. Assistant advocated in January for a federal earmark for the project. The Expenditure Plan Subcommittee continues work on drafting an Expenditure Plan for the proposed transportation sales tax measure.

#### Attachments:

1. Second Quarterly Progress Report, January 2004, for the Highway 1 HOV Widening Project, January 21, 2004

Prepared by: Kim Shultz

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