

AGENDA: February 19, 2004

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

RECOMMENDATIONS:

This item is for information only.

DISCUSSION

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

Staff is developing a budget amendment through the Budget and Administrative Committee to allocate programmed Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) and Regional Surface Transportation Program Exchange (RSTPX) funds for public outreach efforts, and continued project oversight of the PA/ED process (discussed below). Public participation is both a desired and required element of the environmental documentation process. While staff had planned to present a Public Information Plan to the RTC at this meeting it has been delayed to the March TPW meeting to enable the consultants to further refine the Plan's details.

The purpose of the public information meetings is to fully define the scope of the environmental analysis for the Highway 1 project. Staff now proposes to hold public information meetings in April at two locations along the corridor. Expenditures for public information meetings include room rental, display ads in local newspapers, assembly and mailing meeting notices to residents and businesses along the corridor and special interest groups throughout the county.

As reported in the Quarterly Progress Report, staff continues to monitor the development and availability of AMBAG's regional travel model for traffic analysis work on the Highway 1 project. **Further delay in the availability of a validated model beyond early March (the current projection) will have an impact on the overall project schedule.**

Staff, consultants, and Caltrans staff will be meeting over the next two weeks to refine a proposed work plan for site specific archeological excavations necessary and desired to expedite the environmental review process. The goal of the project team is to minimize impacts to current property owners and confirm that any remedial actions determined necessary are provided within the project budget.

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 February 24, 2004.

Highway 1 Construction Authority

The initial meeting of the Board of Directors for the Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA) was held on Friday, February 6th. The focus of the meeting was on administrative matters and included adoption of By-Laws, appointment of the Director of County Public Works as the HCA Interim Administrator, acceptance of the Proposed Conflict of Interest Code, designation of the County to serve as the host agency and authorization to the County Counsel to develop a reimbursement agreement whereby all costs incurred by the County would be reimbursed by the HCA.

The HCA also authorized the Auditor-Controller to establish a structural banking relationship for the HCA to meet its anticipated cash flow needs as the CMAQ funds programmed for the Highway 1 Project are available on a reimbursement basis.

SCCRTC staff has begun work with County staff to develop an orderly transition plan and schedule for the transfer of PA/ED activities to the HCA. The RTC will need to take an official action to implement the transfer. County staff will also prepare a budget for the HCA Board to consider in March for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2003-2004 based on contracting for staff services to provide program and project management services.

In the interim, RTC staff is preparing a budget amendment for discussion with the Budget and Administrative Committee which assumes the SCCRTC will continue to provide project management oversight of PA/ED activities and fund consultant contract expenses through the end of Fiscal Year 2003-2004. The RTC will keep the HCA informed of PA/ED activities through transmittal of the RTC Highway 1 Status Reports to the HCA Board and attendance of HCA staff at Board meetings. The HCA Board will also receive the Public Involvement Plan and Board members will be encouraged to attend one of the public meetings.

The HCA Board has decided to hold monthly meetings on the first Friday of every month beginning at 8:30 a.m. in the County Administration Building. The next meeting of the HCA Board is scheduled for Friday, March 5th.

Expenditure Plan Development

The Expenditure Plan Subcommittee met on February 2nd to review a revised draft of the Expenditure Plan and Ordinance creating the transportation sales tax based on comments received in January. The Subcommittee also looked at cross-tabs of the community poll conducted in November to determine if changes were appropriate to the draft list of projects to be funded through the tax measure. No changes in the project list were made at that meeting. The Subcommittee was advised that the Santa Cruz County Business

Council proposed to conduct a community poll within the next several weeks which may provide additional input to the list of proposed projects generating the broadest support within the community. The Subcommittee approved recommending to the RTC that the Expenditure Plan project list be limited to project types already in the Regional Transportation Plan, thus limiting environmental review (see separate agenda item). It is expected the Subcommittee will forward a draft Expenditure Plan, including the proposed project list, to the RTC in April.

Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project

Final engineering design activities are nearly complete 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 continue to investigate alternative scenarios to move the project forward as soon as possible. The PDT will next meet in a March/April timeframe following some indication on the direction of state transportation funding issues.

SUMMARY

Work continues on schedule for the Highway 1 HOV Widening Project, however, any further delay in the availability of the regional travel model beyond early March will impact the overall project schedule. The consultants are preparing a Public Involvement Plan for presentation to the RTC in March, and public informational meetings are proposed in April. The Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA) Board of Directors held their initial meeting on Friday, February 6th wherein they designated the County to serve as the host agency and acted on several administrative matters. RTC staff are working with County staff on the transition plan to transfer PA/ED activities to the HCA once staffing, funding, and oversight agreements are in place. The RTC will need to take an official action to implement the transfer. In the interim, RTC staff is preparing a budget amendment for discussion with the Budget and Administrative Committee which assumes the SCCRTC will continue to provide project management oversight of PA/ED activities and fund consultant contract expenses through the end of Fiscal Year 2003-2004.

Prepared by: Kim Shultz

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