

AGENDA: March 4, 2004

TO: Regional Transportation Commission
FROM: Linda Wilshusen, Executive Director
RE: Status Report on Related Highway 1 Projects

RECOMMENDATIONS:

This item is for information only.

DISCUSSION

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 meet upon indication of the direction state transportation funding issues are resolved.

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 through the end of the fiscal year (discussed below). 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.

Public participation is both a desired and required element of the environmental documentation process. Staff and consultants will present the Public Information Plan at the March TPW meeting. The purpose of the public information meetings is to fully define the scope of the environmental analysis for the Highway 1 project. Staff proposes to hold public information meetings in April at two locations along the corridor.

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. With approval of the regional population, housing and employment

projections, development of the traffic model is progressing. The delay experienced to date will be assessed as to any impact it may have on the overall project schedule.

The Project Development Team (PDT) serving as the technical advisory committee for the PA/ED phase, meet on a monthly basis and last met on February 24, 2004. Following the PDT meeting, staff, consultants, and Caltrans staff met to refine a proposed work plan for site specific archeological excavations necessary and desired to expedite the environmental review process. Staff will update this item at the RTC meeting.

Highway 1 Construction Authority

The Board of Directors for the Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA) will hold their second meeting on Friday, March 5th in the Board of Supervisor's Chamber. At their initial meeting the Board focused on administrative matters, including the appointment of the Director of County Public Works as the HCA Interim Administrator, and designation of the county to serve as the host agency for the HCA. At the upcoming meeting, the Board will consider a draft budget for the remainder of the current fiscal year, and draft scope of work for a Request for Proposals (RFP) to secure consultant services to staff the HCA.

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. The earliest consultant staff could be under contract with the HCA to accept program and project responsibilities is anticipated to be July 2004.

Accordingly, RTC staff prepared a budget amendment approved by the Budget and Administrative Committee, included in this agenda as a separate item, 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 interim HCA staff at the Board meetings and PDT meetings.

Expenditure Plan Development

The Expenditure Plan Subcommittee next meets on Monday, March 1st at the SCCRTC. At the last meeting, the subcommittee reviewed a revised draft of the Expenditure Plan and Ordinance creating the transportation sales tax. No changes in the project list were made at that meeting.

At the February TPW meeting, the RTC approved the Expenditure Plan Subcommittee's recommendation that no new projects, not already included in the *2001 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)*, be included in the Expenditure Plan. It is expected that the Subcommittee will forward the draft Expenditure Plan, including the proposed project list, to the RTC in April. In the event the RTC changes its position and decides to add

new projects to the Expenditure Plan that were not reviewed as part of the *2001 RTP Environmental Impact Report*, staff has determined that a Supplemental EIR must be prepared at an estimated cost of \$34,000 and approximately six months to complete.

The Santa Cruz County Business Council has initiated a community poll to measure community support for the sales tax initiative. The results of this poll will be presented to the Expenditure Plan Subcommittee on Monday, March 1, 2004.

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 at the March TPW meeting, and public informational meetings are proposed in April. The Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA) Board of Directors will meet on Friday, March 5th to consider a budget for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2003-2004, and draft scope of work to secure consultant services to staff the HCA, expected no sooner than July 2004. Accordingly, RTC staff has prepared a budget amendment approved by the Budget and Administrative Committee, included in this agenda as a separate item, which assumes the SCCRTC will continue to provide project oversight of PA/ED activities and fund consultant contract expenses through the end of Fiscal Year 2003-2004. The RTC will need to take an official action to implement the transfer of PA/ED responsibilities from the SCCRTC to the HCA. It is expected that the Expenditure Plan Subcommittee will forward the draft Expenditure Plan, including the proposed project list, to the RTC in April.

Prepared by: Kim Shultz

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