

AGENDA: March 18, 2004

TO: SCCRTC – Transportation Policy Workshop

FROM: Linda Wilshusen, Executive Director

RE: Presentation of the Highway 1 HOV Widening Draft Project Public Involvement Plan and Status Report on Related Highway 1 Projects

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission:

1. Accept the *Public Involvement Plan* for the Highway 1 HOV Widening Project (Attachment 1);
 2. Plan to attend at least one of the Public Information Meetings to be held on Monday, April 26th, and Thursday, April 29th;
 3. Approve the Resolution Authorizing Expenditure of up to \$10,000 for Public Outreach Meetings for the Highway 1 HOV Widening Project;
 4. Receive a Status Report on other activities related to the Highway 1 Project.
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DISCUSSION

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

The consultant Project Manager, Chris Metzger of Nolte Associates, Inc., and Public Involvement Manager, Ben Strumwasser of Public Affairs Management, will be present at this meeting to provide an overview of the *Public Involvement Plan* for the Highway 1 HOV Widening Project (Attachment 1). Public participation is both a desired and required element of the environmental documentation process. In developing this Plan, the consultants contacted a list of community leaders (Attachment 2) to identify issues to be addressed in the community outreach plan and establish an open ongoing communication between the project team and the community. The *Public Involvement Plan* includes a Public Outreach Schedule identifying public meetings and future neighborhood workshops, publication dates for a project newsletter, and media release dates coincident with milestone activities through the PA/ED process.

The consultant team and staff are currently planning public information meetings on Monday, April 26th, and on Thursday, April 29th, to fully define the scope of environmental analysis for the project. Notification of the public meetings will be through display ads in the area newspapers, and direct mailing to residents, home owner

associations, business, recreational, and environmental groups. Individual Commissioners should plan on attending one of the Public Involvement Meetings.

At the March RTC meeting, the Board approved an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2003-2004 budget, to among other things, extend project management oversight of the PA/ED process through the end of the fiscal year. As part of that amendment, the budget provided \$10,000 in programmed Highway 1 HOV Widening Project funds for the public outreach effort. These funds will be used for room rental, display ads, assembly and mailing meeting notices. **The proposed resolution (Attachment 3) authorizes the expenditure of the \$10,000 for the public information effort, consistent with the FY 03-04 Budget.**

In conjunction with the Public Information meetings, the consultants and staff will be holding a Resource Agency Information meeting on Monday, April 26th, at the Seacliff Inn, beginning at 3:00 p.m. Similar to the public meetings, the Resource Agency meeting is for the purpose of gathering information, to fully develop the scope of study necessary for the environmental process. To complement this process, consultants, staff and Caltrans have collaborated in the preparation of a draft Notice of Preparation (Attachment 4) to be sent to responsible government agencies having resource and jurisdictional interests within the limits of the project.

As previously reported, release of the AMBAG's regional model, now anticipated in early April, remains a critical element in maintaining the project schedule. Some slippage in the previously scheduled completion date for approval of the environmental document of May 2007 is anticipated, but it is premature to discuss a delay until the model is in hand.

Staff, consultants and Caltrans representative have met to address issues related to securing right-of-entry permits from private property owners for site survey work for historic architectural review and surface archeological investigation. Letters requesting the authorization to enter onto private property will be mailed to approximately 16 property owners in mid March.

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 March 25, 2004.

Highway 1 Construction Authority

The Board of Directors for the Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA) held their second meeting on Friday, March 5th. At this meeting, HCA Board provided comment and direction to the County Public Works staff, serving as interim staff to the HCA, on a preliminary draft of a Request for Proposals (RFP) to secure consultant services to staff the HCA. Duties outlined in the scope of services included program and project management responsibility to staff the HCA and manage the project development process. The HCA Board will meet again on Friday, March 12th to consider approval of the revised RFP and distribute the document no later than March 26th. The schedule

accompanying the RFP outlined a consultant evaluation process from late April through late May with the goal of executing a consultant contract on or before June 25th.

The HCA Board also reviewed a transition plan and recommended budget for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2003-2004 (Attachment 5). The transition will occur after the HCA staff is hired in early FY 04-05. Until then, the SCCRTC will continue to oversee the PA/ED process. The HCA budget provides funding to the County for startup activities in establishing the HCA and a plan for transitioning responsibilities for the PA/ED phase from the SCCRTC to the HCA. The HCA's proposed FY 03-04 budget and work program are consistent with the RTC's budget and work program as amended at your last meeting. The HCA Board set a public hearing for April 2nd for consideration and approval of the budget.

Expenditure Plan Development

The Expenditure Plan Subcommittee met on Monday, March 1st to continue discussion on the Expenditure Plan including the project list, timeline for plan development, and brainstorm on a public awareness program. A major discussion point of the meeting turned on the results of, and recommendations from, a private sector poll conducted by the Santa Cruz County Business Council (SCCBC) on the draft Expenditure Plan. Jim Conklin, SCCBC Executive Director, provided an oral report, reflective of the results generated by the poll conducted by the RTC in November, that countywide support for the sales tax measure is still below the 67% required for passage, and below the 70% approval rating found in a poll conducted by the SCCRTC 2 years ago.

The SCCBC poll did not find any new significant differences in support levels for the range of projects currently identified in the Expenditure Plan Project List. The SCCBC consultants did, however, conclude that it was necessary to broaden the support base for the Expenditure Plan to improve prospects of its passage in November 2004. Based on the experience of other counties in passing a transportation sales tax, the SCCBC consultants recommended including other parties and interests in the planning and development of the ballot measure. The Expenditure Plan Subcommittee has scheduled a special meeting for Monday, March 22nd at 9:00 am at the SCCRTC to discuss progress on this front.

Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project

As announced at the RTC meeting, the California Transportation Commission at their recent meeting released funding for the right-of-way phase of projects statewide. Accordingly, Caltrans is expected to resume this Spring on acquisition of the remaining easements to construct the soundwalls for the 1/17 project. A revised date for the start of construction on the 1/17 project is now Summer 2005. Final design activities for the project are virtually complete. Efforts are underway to schedule a Project Development Team (PDT) meeting later this month and staff will provide any updates at the meeting.

SUMMARY

The project consultants for the Highway 1 HOV Widening Project will present the *Public Involvement Plan* (Attachment 1) for generating and collecting public input into the preliminary design/environmental documentation process. **Public Information Meetings to fully define the scope of the environmental analysis for the Highway 1 project are scheduled for April 26nd and April 29th.** The proposed resolution (Attachment 3) authorizes the expenditure of up to \$10,000 for activities preparatory to the public outreach meetings and is consistent with the amended FY 2003-2004 budget. In accordance with the project outreach efforts the draft Notice of Preparation (Attachment 4) will be circulated by Caltrans to all responsible agencies. Release of the regional travel demand is now anticipated in early April, from the original date of October 2003, and may cause some slippage in the completion date of the project. The HCA has accepted a transition plan and proposed budget for FY 2003-2004 (Attachment 5), and set a public hearing for April 2nd for consideration and approval of the budget. The Expenditure Plan Subcommittee has proposed a special meeting for March 22nd to discuss methods to broaden community support for the Expenditure Plan.

Attachments:

1. *Public Involvement Plan* for the PA/ED Phase of the Highway 1 HOV Widening Project, dated March 8, 2004.
2. List of Community Leaders interviewed in development of the *Public Involvement Plan*.
3. Resolution authorizing expenditure for public outreach
4. Draft Notice of Preparation of an EIR for the Highway 1 Project
5. Transition Plan and the 2003-2004 Proposed Budget for the Highway 1 Construction Authority, dated March 5, 2004

Prepared by: Kim Shultz

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