

## PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULED FOR 10:30 A.M.

AGENDA: April 1, 2004

**TO:** Regional Transportation Commission

**FROM:** Linda Wilshusen, Executive Director

**RE:** *2005 Regional Transportation Plan* -- Recommended Project List & Financial Element

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### RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission:

1. Review the attached staff recommended Draft Project Lists for the *2005 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)* (Attachments 1 and 2);
  2. Include revenues from the proposed sales tax measure in the Financial Element of the RTP and include the Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lanes project and other transportation projects from the Preliminary Draft Expenditure Plan (Attachment 4) in the Constrained “Within Projected Funds” list, subject to change at a later date by the SCCRTC;
  3. Review the draft RTP Financial Element (Attachment 5); and
  4. Hold a public hearing and approve the draft list for inclusion in the *Draft 2005 Regional Transportation Plan*.
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### BACKGROUND

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission is currently in the process of updating the *Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)*. One of the key responsibilities of the Regional Transportation Commission is to identify transportation needs in the region and select projects to receive funding when state and federal funds become available. The RTP is a state-mandated document that establishes a blueprint for transportation projects and funding in Santa Cruz County through 2030. Listing projects in the plan is an essential first step in securing funding from federal, state and local sources. Projects identified in the draft RTP Project List include improvements for roadways, highways, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, transit service, specialized transportation for seniors and people with disabilities, as well as projects such as park and ride lots and carpooling promotions.

The last update of the RTP was completed in 2001. The 2005 RTP is a minor update with few changes to the project lists. This RTP update is a joint effort with the Commission’s partner agencies, Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG), Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC), and San Benito Council of Governments (SBCOG), to save money and reduce duplication of effort. At its September 4, 2003 meeting, the Commission approved participation in a shared Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the three-county region.

The RTP consists of three main sections: the Policy Element, Action Element, and Financial Element. The Policy Element identifies goals, policies, and evaluation measures. At the February

2004 meeting the Commission re-approved the goals and policies from the Policy Element of the 2001 RTP with minor amendments. The Action Element of the RTP identifies projects, programs and actions necessary to implement the policy element of the RTP and fill gaps in the regional transportation network. These projects are sorted into “Within Project Funds” (constrained based on the Financial Element) and “Need New Funds” (unconstrained) lists, as required by state and federal law. The Financial Element identifies funds available to the region and additional funding needs over the next 25 years.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Draft Project List**

The Draft Project Lists for the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) identify projects that are “Within Projected Funds” (Constrained) ([Attachment 1](#)) and projects that “Need New Funds” (Unconstrained) ([Attachment 2](#)). State guidelines require project lists to be projected over a minimum 20-year time frame from the date the final RTP is adopted. The “Within Projected Funds (Constrained)” project list for this RTP includes all of the projects that could be funded with projected revenues through 2030 (25 year timeframe).

It is necessary to adopt projects on this list at this time so that AMBAG can prepare the EIR for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the RTP. AMBAG is also required to prepare an air quality conformity analysis for these transportation plans and must have the adopted project lists at this time. The timing of the air quality conformity analysis is crucial because if the conformity finding is not prepared on time, state and federal funds for transportation projects may be delayed.

The emphasis of the “Within Projected Funds” list is on projects that fill critical gaps in the transportation network, benefit a large number of people, address safety, are located along major transportation corridors, specifically address needs identified in the draft goals and policies of the Policy Element or have dedicated, programmed funding. This list is also constrained within the projected funds identified in the draft Financial Element.

Projects on the “Need New Funds” list are typically of lower priority, have potentially significant environmental constraints (as identified by our environmental consultant), or are not currently financially feasible.

### Developing the Draft RTP Project List

On October 16, 2003, the ITAC was asked to review and update information on the 2001 RTP’s Constrained “Within Projected Funds” list and the Need New Funds (Unconstrained) list. In addition to the update of these project lists, a call for new projects for the RTP update was issued. A press release was submitted to local newspapers advertising this call for new projects. An electronic form was also placed on the Commission’s website, where interested members of the public were able to submit project ideas on-line. Most agencies indicated that they had no new projects to add to the 2005 RTP.

SCCRTC Committees have reviewed the draft project list this month and their comments have been integrated into the project lists. Commission staff evaluated each of the new projects submitted

(Attachment 3) to determine consistency with the draft Policy Element of the RTP, local agency assigned priority levels, gaps in identified transportation corridors, and preliminary estimates for the financial element. Due to the fiscal constraint of the RTP, staff recommends most of the new projects be included in the “Needs New Funds” (Unconstrained) project list (Attachment 2).

Please see the SCCRTC project lists which are essentially the same as the 2001 RTP with some construction and project updates. New to the lists is the “Highway Construction Authority” as lead agency for the Highway 1 HOV Lane Widening Project.

#### Format of the Draft Project List

The identification (ID) numbers for projects which are already programmed to receive funding in the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) match those numbers shown in the RTIP, and thus do not have a “P” for planned projects in the ID number. Since these projects are already programmed to receive funds they cannot be removed from the “Within Projected Funds” list without also amending the RTIP. Over 75% of expected future funds are dedicated to certain types of projects. The majority of these projects are transit or state highway projects. As such, the majority of Caltrans (CT) and Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (MTD) projects cannot be removed from the “Within Projected Funds” list.

All Draft Project List project costs are shown in thousands of dollars (\$000s) and are based on year 2004 cost estimates (i.e. are not escalated for inflation). In response to Major Transportation Investment Study (MTIS) funding caps and other funding limitations, some projects appear on both the “Within Project Funds” and “Need New Funds” lists.

#### Inclusion of Draft Expenditure Plan Project List

The SCCRTC’s Expenditure Plan Subcommittee is in the process of developing an expenditure plan for the proposed county wide transportation sales tax measure (Attachment 4). The primary purpose of the sales tax measure is to fund the widening of Highway 1; however other transportation projects may be included in this measure. **Staff recommends that the Commission include revenues from the proposed sales tax measure in the Financial Element of the RTP and that the Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lanes project and other transportation projects from the Draft Expenditure Plan be included in the Constrained “Within Projected Funds” list.**

When the SCCRTC approves the final Expenditure Plan at a later date, staff will make any necessary revisions to the RTP project lists to add or delete these projects or funds.

If expenditure projects and revenues are included in the Constrained element of the RTP, but in November 2004, the sales tax measure does not pass, the Commission would need to provide a compelling argument to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that the sales tax measure would pass in the future to fund the expenditure plan projects. Otherwise the FHWA will require the RTP and MTP be amended and a new air quality conformity determination be made.

**Staff recommends that the Commission review the Draft RTP Project List which contains both the Constrained “Within Projected Funds” list and the Unconstrained Need New Funds**

**list (Attachments 1 and 2), hold a public hearing and approve the draft list for inclusion in the Draft 2005 Regional Transportation Plan.**

### Next Steps

Once the draft list is approved, the environmental consultant will be able to initiate the Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and staff will be able to complete the Draft RTP, both scheduled for public and committee review in Fall 2004 (see consent agenda item on the Request for Proposals for consultant services to prepare an EIR for AMBAG's MTP and SCCRTC and TAMC's RTP). Though staff does not anticipate significant changes to the list, updated financial information, impacts and mitigation measures identified in the EIR could result in some changes for the final project list, scheduled to be adopted by the Commission as part of the final adoption of the 2005 Regional Transportation Plan this winter.

### **Draft Financial Element**

The Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) worked with RTC and local agency staff to develop the draft financial element for the RTP. All of Santa Cruz County's projects on the Constrained "Within Projected Funds" list must fit within this estimate. This is included as Attachment 5 for your review. The Financial Element shows that \$2.4 billion will be available for transportation projects in Santa Cruz County over the next 25 years, including \$530 million in revenues from a ½ cent local sales tax if approved by the voters in November 2004. An additional \$500 million is available for the tri-county AMBAG region from various fund sources such as State Highway Operations and Protection Plan (SHOPP) and Highway Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation Program (HBRR). The exact amount that will be directed to Santa Cruz County projects cannot be predicted.

### **SUMMARY**

As part of the Action Element of the Regional Transportation Plan update, staff has worked with local agencies and advisory Committees to update the Draft RTP Project Lists (Attachments 1 and 2) and Financial Element (Attachment 5). Staff recommends that the Commission review this recommended project list and approve the draft list & Financial Element. Individual projects listed in the plan will undergo project-level environmental review and design evaluation once funded.

#### Attachments:

1. Draft RTP Project List- Projects Within Projected Funds (Constrained)
2. Draft RTP Project List- Projects that Need New Funds (Unconstrained)
3. New Projects for the 2005 RTP
4. Preliminary Draft Expenditure Plan
5. Draft Financial Element