

TO: Regional Transportation Commission

FROM: Linda Wilshusen, Executive Director

RE: Public Agency Sponsorship of the Santa Cruz Area Transportation Management Association's AB2766 Grant Application for an Expanded Emergency Ride Home Program

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission:

- 1) Approve the attached resolution (Attachment 1) authorizing the SCCRTC to serve as the public agency sponsor for the Santa Cruz Area Transportation Management Association's AB2766 grant application to the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District (Air District) for expansion of its Emergency Ride Home Program (Attachment 2); and,
 - 2) Authorize the Executive Director to execute an agreement with the Air District on behalf of the SCATMA, in the event the Expanded Emergency Ride Home Program grant is awarded.
-

BACKGROUND

For the past 25 years, the RTC's Commute Solutions program has provided direct services and assistance to commuters seeking to use alternative transportation modes. Through carpool matching, vanpool subsidies and personalized trip planning, Commute Solutions has helped thousands of commuters change their travel habits. The RTC has also been a champion, catalyst, partner and funder of many other alternative transportation programs in Santa Cruz County. Given these two roles, the Commission is a logical choice to serve as the public agency sponsor for the TMA's Expanded Emergency Ride Home Program grant application to the Air District.

DISCUSSION

The Santa Cruz Area Transportation Management Association (TMA) proposes to use an AB2766 grant to expand its current Emergency Ride Home (ERH) Program (Attachment 2). Part of the expansion is to include Santa Cruz County residents who are registered as carpoolers or vanpoolers in the Commute Solutions ridematching database. The inclusion of this population would significantly expand the Emergency Ride Program's impact since currently only those associated with the two local TMAs have such a commuter "safety net" available.

The Santa Cruz Area TMA requests that the SCCRTC serve as the public agency sponsor for the TMA's application to the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District for the proposed Expanded Emergency Ride Home Program. The RTC would benefit twofold. First, the grant would allow the Commute Solutions Program to offer a very attractive new service to commuters-at-large at no cost to the Commission. Second, by bolstering interest in using Commute Solutions on-line ride-matching database, there is potential to convert new people to transportation alternatives, thereby reducing traffic congestion and improving the efficiency of our existing transportation network

Emergency Ride Programs

One of the key barriers to broader use of transportation alternatives is fear about not being able to respond to a personal or family emergency that occurs during the work shift. This is precisely the anxiety Emergency Ride Home (ERH) programs are designed to alleviate. The programs deliver an immediate taxi ride or rental car to get a commuter home (or to another location) in an emergency. While typically used infrequently, ERH programs provide both a psychological and a real “safety net” for people doing something other than driving alone to work.

Both the Santa Cruz Area TMA and the Pajaro Valley TMA operate ERH programs for member-employers and their immediate outreach community, respectively. Their experience operating these programs for the past decade has found that the peace of mind these programs provide commuters is substantial while the number of rides taken under the programs are actually quite few.

Public Agency Sponsorship

Regional projects that improve air quality by reducing emissions are eligible for the AB2766 grant program which is open to public agencies and to others that have a public agency sponsor. It is in this context that the non-profit TMA has requested the RTC to sponsor its application to the Air District for an Expanded Emergency Ride Home Program.

As the agency sponsor for the TMA’s FY04/05 AB2766 grant application to the Air District, the RTC would be responsible for executing a grant agreement with the Air District on behalf of the TMA if the grant is awarded. Because final applications are due June 1, 2004, the TMA has already submitted a grant application to the Air District. (NOTE: This funding request will be withdrawn should the RTC choose not to serve as the public agency sponsor for this application.)

The proposed \$70,750 grant would cover the TMA’s ERH Program staff costs for 2 years including: development, marketing, rides and operation, and evaluation. Estimates of \$55 per ride are based on current TMA costs and adjusted for out of county travel. Since rides would be offered to local commuters as well as to residents traveling over Highway 17 from Silicon Valley, both taxi and car rental services would be offered. Given the direct benefit of this grant program to the RTC’s Commute Solutions program, no administrative costs have been included in the proposal and the RTC would not receive any funds from this grant

SUMMARY

An Emergency Guaranteed Home program (ERH) would provide a critical safety net for those wishing to use transportation alternatives and very likely increase the frequency of such use. Staff recommends that the Commission approve public agency sponsorship of the Santa Cruz Area TMA’s \$70,750 AB2766 grant application to the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District for an expanded county-wide Emergency Ride Home Program. RTC staff recommends that the Commission authorize the Executive Director to sign an agreement with the Air District in the event the grant application is successful.

Attachment 1: Resolution

Attachment 2: Description & Budget for the Santa Cruz Area TMA’s Proposed Emergency Ride Home Program Grant

Prepared by: Cory Irimes, Senior Transportation Planner

\\Rtcserv1\Shared\RTC\2004\0604\ERHgrant.doc