

AGENDA: September 16, 2004

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

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission accept this Status Report on activities related to the Highway 1 Project.

DISCUSSION

Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project

As reported at the RTC meeting, final design details and right of way clearance activities are being undertaken by Caltrans. Cost estimates are being updated to reflect recent price increases in asphalt, concrete and steel, but estimates are expected to be within the current programmed amount.

Caltrans design team has been meeting with staff of the City of Santa Cruz to discuss city street detour plans associated with closure of the Branciforte overcrossing, Emeline off-ramp, and other temporary ramp closures. They are also discussing landscape maintenance responsibilities on city side of the soundwalls. Caltrans plans to make a comprehensive presentation to the RTC about the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project in the next few months.

Highway 1/Morrissey Interchange Improvements

Assemblymember Laird's office called a meeting a few months ago in response to concern with pedestrian bicycle access and safety at the Highway 1/Morrissey Interchange. Participants in that meeting included Commissioner Emily Reilly, and staff from the City of Santa Cruz, Caltrans, CHP, RTC, De Laveaga Elementary School, and staff from Assemblymember Laird's District Office.

As a follow up, Caltrans and the City of Santa Cruz staff met early last month to discuss near, intermediate and long term improvements to the Morrissey Boulevard Interchange to improve motorist, pedestrian and bicyclist access, particularly through the northern portion of the interchange. Initial response to some near term proposals by Caltrans were mixed as it restricted community access, though it may improve safety through the intersection. For the intermediate term, Caltrans will conduct an analysis to see if a traffic signal at the Morrissey Boulevard northbound off-ramp is warranted, while the City will conduct bicycle and pedestrian counts, and potentially survey parents with children at DeLaveaga Elementary School for input.

City staff has proposed some design modifications to existing ramps and the addition of median islands as part of the Highway 1/17 project to improve circulation and pedestrian/bicycle access in the area. Caltrans staff is reviewing these options to determine their viability, and cost and schedule implications.

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

As reported at our last meeting, Nolte Associates will contract with a subconsultant to secure “friendly” Rights of Entry on five parcels for archaeological subsurface excavation and analysis. This work will be accommodated under the existing contract for the PA/ED phase, without increasing the contract fees, provided costs are minimal and capped. In the event eminent domain authority is necessary, the respective jurisdictions where the parcels are located must first provide authorization to proceed, and the fees associated with this action would increase. Ultimately, staff recommends real property services be directly contracted by the Highway 1 Construction Authority, given the sensitive nature of these activities.

As highlighted at your last meeting, the ongoing delay in release of AMBAG’s Updated Regional Travel Model, originally expected in November 2003, has resulted in a delay of the expected completion date of the environmental process from May 2007 to November/December 2007. The Commission has requested a written report from AMBAG on the status of the Travel Model, and Commissioner Campos has also written a letter and offered his support to resolve this issue.

The Project Development Team for the Highway 1 HOV Lane Widening Project continues to meet monthly.

Highway 1 Construction Authority

County staff, serving as interim staff to the HCA, are continuing work with Caltrans, with assistance from the RTC, to put in place the necessary agreements and other activities to assume responsibility for the Highway 1 HOV Lane Widening Project. County staff is also working with the County Auditor-Controller’s Office to prepare for a preaward audit conducted by Caltrans prior to approving a Master Agreement with the HCA allowing state and federal funds to be received and expended by the HCA on the project. Negotiations are ongoing with the consultant team lead by S & C Engineering on a scope of services to fit the HCA’s available budget for administrative and project management services for the Highway 1 HOV Lane Widening Project.

Presentation of the Fourth Quarterly Progress Report and the *Draft Public Information Summary Report* was held over to the October HCA Board meeting as Highway 17 was temporarily shut down the morning of the September HCA Board meeting preventing Chris Metzger from attending the meeting.

SUMMARY

City of Santa Cruz and Caltrans are meeting to review the Highway 1/17 Merge Lane construction plans, landscape maintenance, and pedestrian/bicycle access improvements to the Morrissey Boulevard Interchange. Staff has requested a written report on the status of the AMBAG Travel Demand Model.

Prepared by: Kim Shultz

\\Rtcserv1\Shared\TPW\TPW2004\0904\hwy 1 status-091604.doc