

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
**FIRST QUARTER FY 04-05 PROGRESS REPORT**  
*July to September 2004*

**101 Work Program and Budget**

During this quarter, staff worked on the fall amendment to the FY04-05 Budget and Work Program. The Commission approved two TDA claims in August.

**General Administration**

Staff work was resume on updating of the Commission's Rules and Regulations and the Commission's response to the Triennial Performance Audit. Work on a potential new Memorandum of Understanding regarding the administrative relationship between the County and the SCCRTC continued to be on hold due to other high priority projects.

**112 Plan Coordination**

During this quarter, staff attended regular meetings of the California Transportation Commission, the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) Group, the California Association of Councils of Government (CALCOG), the Caltrans Regional Coordination Group, the SCMTD Board of Directors meetings, the local Planning Directors Roundtable, and the regional agency directors. The Executive Director met with UCSC & City of Santa Cruz representatives regarding an eastern access route to the University; she also moderated a panel on "Strengthening the Transportation and Health Link" at a national conference on transportation planning for small & medium communities; staff member Grace Blakeslee presented a paper in that session which was selected for presentation at the Transportation Research Board annual meeting in January..

While limited staff resources have restricted proactive engagement in legislative affairs, staff did monitor state and federal transportation funding issues and proposed legislation granting design-build authority to specific jurisdictions and alternative funding options (i.e. SB 1793 (McPherson), SB 1210 (Torlakson), and AB 3048 (Oropeza)). While these bills gained bipartisan support through the legislative process, all bills proposing new project delivery methods for state highway projects died in Conference Committee for lack of a consensus on approach and competing legislative priorities (i.e. the state budget crisis and presidential elections). Design-build authority for transit projects was extended until January 2007 through SB 1130 (Scott), but the bill explicitly excluded defining state highway construction as transit projects.

**113 Public Information**

A focus during this quarter was the development and distribution of public outreach materials for the expenditure plan of Measure J, the Local Transportation Improvement Act. Staff prepared and distributed press releases and worked with the Commission on the development and distribution plan for fact sheets on Measure J. The Commission's website was updated with the new fact sheets.

The SCCRTC provided the media, local jurisdictions and chambers of commerce press releases about state funding woes, release of the Santa Cruz Branch Railroad Line Business Plan, the Highway 1 Widening updates, and funding for the MetroBase project. In addition, the RTC continued to provide information/highlights from the monthly meetings about Commission actions.

The *Open House/Public Information Summary Report* of the two public meetings held on the Highway 1 HOV Lane Widening Project was presented to the Commission in August. This report was also published in its entirety on the RTC's website as public information. Staff regularly posts the Status Reports prepared for all policy committee meetings on all activities related to the Highway 1 Projects on the RTC website.

Improved organization, updates and maintenance to the current website continued. These included: posting current Commission and Committee packets, minutes and highlights, press releases, meeting schedules and reports and providing links to websites of transportation partners such as Caltrans. Work resumed on developing the content for the Commission's redesigned website. Staff continued to administer the E-News program of its website to alert subscribers news regarding the Commission's high priority projects.

#### **177 Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE)/Call Boxes**

SCCRTC staff continued to perform periodic inspections and worked with the Commission's call box service providers, including Comarco Wireless Technologies, to maintain the system. Staff continues to work with AT&T Wireless to ensure that cellular service is charged according to the existing service contract. Staff attended CalSAFE meetings.

Staff has been working with the CHP, Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) SAFE, the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) and the San Luis Obispo SAFE to privatize call box call answering through MTC SAFE's contract procurement process. At its August meeting, the Commission authorized the Executive Director to enter into an agreement with MTC SAFE for a joint procurement process. Staff has provided the required written six-month advanced notice to the CHP stating that CHP call box call answering services will not longer be needed after January 2005.

Staff continues to work with the CHP and Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) on the implementation of the Safe on 17 program's extra CHP enforcement. Staff presented an annual report on the Safe on 17 program to the Commission. At the Commission's August meeting, Jason Butler of the CHP reported that Highway 17 collision statistics for 2004 show a significant decrease over the 2003 statistics.

In July 2004, a new contract for Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) towing services on Highway 17 became effective. Staff is working with MTC SAFE, the CHP and Caltrans to prepare for the next round of request for proposals which will include the FSP service on Highway 1. Due to cellular service problems, new cellular phones were purchased and the cellular service provider was changed to Verizon Wireless.

**179 Transportation Demand Management TDM) - Commuter Services**

Commission staff wrapped-up the second phase of the Vanpool Incentive Program (VIP), provided last minute subsidies, and submitted a final report and billing invoice to the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District. Commission staff continued working with the SCATMA on general outreach. Staff continued to distribute relevant TDM materials developed for the Commission's former Don't Drive One in Five campaign.

Staff initiated the process of developing an Emergency Ride Home program, as awarded by a MBUAPCD grant, to serve all Commute Solutions ridematching database carpoolers and vanpoolers. Program development and implementation will be conducted by the SCATMA.

Through employer contacts, the website, 429-POOL phone line, and follow up contacts, Commute Solutions continued to produce match lists and provide follow up services and referrals. Staff continued its collaboration with RIDES for Bay Area Commuters for instant on-line ride matching system access and support. Staff provided assistance to various entities in their promotion of sustainable transportation modes and coordinated with area agencies and employers. Topic highlights have included obesity rates due to inactivity, dispersed land use patterns and dependence on single occupancy vehicles, as well as rising gas prices.

Park and Ride Lot program administration and development efforts (in the Watsonville area specifically) continued as did ex-officio service on the Board of Directors of the Santa Cruz Area Transportation Management Association.

**231 Transportation Monitoring and Evaluation**

Through the period, staff collected traffic data at over 40 locations, including regular locations monitored on an ongoing basis and special requests from local agencies. Staff is now implementing an updated Multi-Year Monitoring Program approved by the Interagency Transportation Advisory Committee (ITAC), including monitoring locations consistent with the screen lines used by AMBAG for the regional travel model.

Historic and current traffic data is now posted on RTC's website for easy access and updated on a monthly basis. Through this period staff also responded to requests for information from local agencies, business and service agencies.

**411 Land Use/Transportation Coordination**

Staff continued to monitor and review draft environmental documents for projects with potential transportation impacts.

**614 Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Program**

The Bicycle Committee met three times in this quarter. Staff attended monthly meetings of the Community Traffic Safety Coalition, coordinating with this group on issues relating to bicycle and pedestrian safety throughout the county. Staff continued to coordinate with the Electric Bicycle Program. Staff communicated with public works department staff at the various local jurisdictions regarding bicycle hazard report forms submitted by members of the public. Staff distributed bike racks through the Bikes Secure Program.

**621 Specialized Transportation**

During this quarter, the Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E/D TAC) met once. Discussion focused on the ADA Paratransit service transition updates, Unmet Paratransit and Transit Needs and taxicab operator/ordinance information. Also included were reports from the service providers.

The short term Paratransit Coordination Task Force held its initial meeting during this quarter. Members continued to meet monthly. Agenda topics included information on the current systems and demographics. The Task Force developed suggestions for outreach methods to help publicize the transition of ParaCruz paratransit services, and SC Metro and Community Bridges responded positively and implemented the suggestions. Future Task Force meetings will focus on formulating recommendations and an action plan.

The Commission held a hearing on unmet transit and paratransit needs at its August meeting.

**622 Regional Transportation Plan**

SCCRTC staff continued to participate in meetings with staff from AMBAG, the Transportation Agency for Monterey County and San Benito COG on coordination of the next updates of the county Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) and AMBAG's Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Staff continued to update project lists, graphs, text, and financial projections to reflect the most current information, including the Expenditure Plan for the proposed ½-cent local transportation sales tax measure. Staff worked on revising the text from the 2001 RTP. The consultant hired to prepare the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the RTP and MTP, began preparing the draft document.

**631 Transportation System Management**

Staff arranged and participated in a Traffic Operations System (TOS) Oversight Committee meeting. Staff continued to coordinate with Caltrans and the CHP on usage of and enhancements to the existing traffic information system. The Committee reviewed usage of the system and response to major incidents. Caltrans provided a preliminary assessment of curve warning sign and video camera on Highway 17 southbound before

Glenwood Drive stating that speeds have decreased but that it is difficult to isolate whether the decrease is due solely to the new sign, or to the increased patrols. Both the sign and the increased are likely contributing to the decrease in speed.

#### **641 Transportation Improvement Program**

Staff worked with Metro, legislators, and local community groups to advocate to California Transportation Commission staff and Commissioners for inclusion of projects in the *2004 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)*, as they were listed in the adopted *2004 Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP)*. In light of differences between the 2004 RTIP and the STIP adopted by the California Transportation Commission in August, staff worked with the Interagency Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC) to identify alternative funding options for the MetroBase project. At its September meeting, the SCCRTC scheduled a public hearing in October to consider the ITAC's recommendations, and approved them at the October meeting.

The SCCRTC programmed Surface Transportation Program Exchange funds at its September meeting. Staff continued to monitor progress with reauthorization and extensions of TEA-21. Staff also worked with AMBAG on development of the FY04/05-06/07 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) to ensure that the listings for federal and state funded projects in Santa Cruz County were consistent with SCCRTC and California Transportation Commission decisions.

Staff attended monthly meetings of the California Transportation Commission and the Regional Transportation Planning Agencies group that centered on the impacts of the state budget deficit on STIP and SHOPP projects, implementation of the 2004 STIP, and future GARVEE bonds. Staff continued to work with project sponsors to secure funding for local projects, as possible.

Staff met with Caltrans District 5, Caltrans Headquarters and local agency representatives regarding ongoing projects, including the Highway 1 Widening/HOV Project, the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes project, the Highway 17 TOS project, the Highway 17 roadway rehabilitation project and the Highway 1/Salinas Road Interchange. Staff updated the database of projects funded by the SCCRTC. The ITAC met one time this quarter.

#### **682 Rail/Trail Authority**

Following the Commission's release in May of the draft environmental impact report (EIR) for the proposed recreational rail service between Capitola and Aptos with an extension to Seascapes for a 60-day public comment period, the Commission held a public hearing and received oral and written comments. The public comment period ended on July 21, 2004. Staff addressed inquiries on the draft EIR throughout the public review period. The Commission authorized additional technical work to adequately respond to the public comments provided on the draft EIR including legal review of the draft Final EIR.

The appraisal consultants proceeded with their work to produce the various appraisals of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line required by Caltrans. Preliminary drafts of the Going Concern Valuation (GCV) and the Net Liquidation Valuation of Tracks, Signals, Structures and Other Railroad Improvements were produced by the consultants and are being reviewed by the review appraisal consultant and Caltrans.

Systra Consulting completed the draft business plan for the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line and copies were provided to the Commission. After reviewing the business plan, the Commission made the plan public and arranged for a presentation of the business plan by the consultants at a public meeting. Comments on the business plan were received by the Commission and the business plan will be updated as more information becomes available.

The RTC continued to negotiate with Union Pacific through its negotiator, Kirk Trost of Miller, Owen and Trost, and the RTC was informed of progress in closed sessions.

**683 Highway 1 Widening- Project Approval/Environmental Document (PA/ED)**  
**684**

The findings from the public meetings held in April are being referenced in development of options to consider in identifying additional project alternatives for analysis through the PA/ED process. The Project Development Team provided preliminary direction on the range of options to be more fully developed and presented to the RTC and the Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA) in the late November 2004.

Comments were received from Caltrans and appropriate state agencies on a suite of technical reports associated with the PA/ED process. Those reports included: *Historic Architectural Field Survey*, *Extended Phase 1 Archaeological Survey Report*, *Noise Work Plan*, and *Existing Traffic Conditions Report*. The Consultant Team will revise the respective reports for re-submittal to the responsible agencies. Once these reports are approved, they will be presented to the RTC and HCA, and made available to the public.

The project's critical path continues to be release of AMBAG's Regional Travel Model so work can begin on traffic operational analysis.

Two Project Development Team (PDT) meetings were held during this quarter. Staff presented updates on the project to the RTC at every RTC and Transportation Policy Workshop meeting, and at the Highway 1 Construction Authority. The Commission continued to monitor its federal earmark request for later phases of the project.

**683 Highway 1 Planning**

Expenditure Plan Development

The Commission and Board of Supervisors approved the Expenditure Plan, Ordinance, and Ballot Question placed on the November 2004 ballot as Measure J. The Expenditure Plan Subcommittee met once to discuss the Expenditure Plan, Ordinance and Public Information Program for the ½-cent sales tax measure for transportation on the November

2004 ballot.

The public information program on Measure J is discussed under the Public Information work element.

Staff attended monthly meetings of the Self Help Counties Coalition to track efforts in other counties working on transportation sales tax measures.

#### Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA)

The HCA Board of Directors approved the Consultant Evaluation Committee recommendation to begin negotiations to retain administrative/project management services with the consultant team led by S & C Engineers. RTC staff continued to assist Santa Cruz County staff, serving as interim staff to the HCA, in amending the Cooperative Agreement with Caltrans, and other budgetary and authorizing actions necessary to transfer authority for the Highway 1 HOV Lane Widening Project from the RTC to the HCA. This transfer is now anticipated to occur during the winter.

#### Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project

Staff met with Caltrans and staff from local jurisdictions for one Project Development Team meeting this quarter discussing: construction funding, project design, traffic management, right-of-way/utility negotiations, project schedule, public awareness campaign and a presentation to the December meeting of the RTC.

### **Santa Cruz Area Transportation Management Association**

#### **631 TMA Outreach Services Program**

The progress report is being submitted with the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Transportation Systems Management quarterly invoice.

### **LOCAL JURISDICTION PLANNING PROJECTS FUNDED BY FEDERAL CMAQ/STP AND STATE TSM FUNDS**

The progress reports are attached to the invoices.

### **SURFACE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM (STP) EXCHANGE PROGRAM**

The Commission approved the exchange of \$2.3 million in federal RSTP for state exchange funds for 7 projects. Staff made payments to projects previously approved to receive RSTP Exchange funds and continued to monitor projects receiving those funds.

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