

**AGENDA:** November 18, 2004

**TO:** SCCRTC – Transportation Policy Workshop

**FROM:** Linda Wilshusen, Executive Director

**RE:** Highway 1 Widening HOV Lane Project: Process to Select Alternatives for the Project Approval/Environmental Document (PA/ED)

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Staff recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission:

1. Receive an oral report from the PA/ED consultants on the proposed set of alternatives for the Project Approval/ Environmental Document (PA/ED) for the Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lane project (Attachment 1) and how the project selected at the end of the PA/ED could include elements of different alternatives studied in the PA/ED;
  2. Provide preliminary comments and direction on the proposed set of PA/ED alternatives; and,
  3. Approve the proposed process to select the PA/ED alternatives;
  4. Schedule an evening public hearing in January to receive community input on the PA/ED alternatives;
  5. Direct staff to publicize the alternatives and the public hearing to the media, individuals and groups;
  6. Accept a report on the status of other activities related to Highway 1 projects.
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**DISCUSSION**

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

**Proposed Process to Select Alternatives for the PA/ED**

As mentioned at your last meeting, it is time for the SCCRTC to select alternatives for the Project Approval/ Environmental Document (PA/ED). The PA/ED consultants consulted with SCCRTC staff and members of the Project Development Team (PDT) to develop the following proposed process to select the alternatives:

1. November TPW meeting - RTC to determine process and provide preliminary comments on PDT's proposed set of alternatives.
2. Mid-November to early January – SCCRTC to publicize the process. Staff distributes press releases and email/postal mail notices to people who have signed up to receive information on the project and community groups who have shown interest in the project.
3. December or January Highway 1 Construction Authority Board meeting – Highway 1 Construction Authority to provide input on the alternatives.

4. January – SCCRTC to hold an evening public hearing on the alternatives and decide on the alternatives. **Staff suggests a 7pm public hearing in January at the County Board of Supervisors Chambers.** Staff will report orally on the available options.

Staff seeks the SCCRTC's approval of the proposed process.

### **Proposed Set of Alternatives for Public Input**

Chris Metzger, Project Manager-Nolte Associates, and Pat Gelb, Environmental Manager-Parsons Transportation Group, will present the proposed set of PA/ED alternatives, as described in the attached Project Alternatives memo ([Attachment 1](#)). The consultants worked with staff and the Project Development Team (PDT) over the course of several months to develop this set of proposed alternatives.

Per the original scope of services and contract budget, up to seven (7) alternatives can be considered as part of the environmental document. Four alternatives were identified at the time the project was initiated based on Caltrans Project Study Report and were included in the consultant contract scope of work. These alternatives are listed below and discussed in [Attachment 1](#).

- Proposed Alternative 1: One HOV Lane in each direction** – full shoulder width standards
- Proposed Alternative 2: One HOV Lane in each direction** – reduced shoulder width standard
- Proposed Alternative 3: Traffic System Management (TSM) with Auxiliary Lanes**
- Proposed Alternative 4: No Build Alternative**

Up to three (3) additional alternatives can be carried through the PA/ED. Potential options available for the three remaining alternatives were developed within the framework of the approved Purpose and Need for the project, and in consideration of input received at the Community Information meetings in April 2004. For the three additional alternatives, it is important to note any alternative that would enlarge the Area of Potential Effect (APE) for environmental analysis, currently defined using the largest footprint of the full standard HOV Lane alternative, would have budget and schedule implications to the current work effort. The proposed three additional alternatives are discussed briefly below and in more detail in [Attachment 1](#):

**Proposed Alternative 5: Diamond Interchange Configuration** This alternative offers an alternative design configuration for select interchanges along the corridor to potentially reduce right-of-way and environmental impacts. This interchange design is generally preferred by bicyclists and pedestrians as it eliminates high speed free flowing ramp operations found at many existing interchanges. A variation of this design is also included for the 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue-Bay Avenue/Porter Street interchange complex as a single interchange system utilizing one-way frontage roads (see [Attachment 1](#)).

**Proposed Alternative 6: Improved Transit Access** This alternative would analyze opportunities to provide improved transit access to/from the HOV lanes, primarily for buses. Two preliminary options to be considered for this alternative include direct ramps from the HOV lanes to the local streets, and bus access or stops on the freeway outside of the freeway mainline using the on/off ramps. The goal of this alternative is to increase the effectiveness of buses using the HOV lanes by reducing the time it takes a bus to leave the freeway to load and unload passengers. This alternative has the potential to increase the APE but variations may be able to be developed within the APE.

**Proposed Alternative 7 – Undefined Hybrid** The final alternative is undefined at this time and could be used to develop a hybrid alternative that would incorporate elements of other alternatives analyzed through the course of the environmental study.

It is important to note that the consultant/PDT team developed this proposed set of alternatives prior to the November 2<sup>nd</sup> election. It might be wise to develop another lower-cost alternative for Alternative number 7. Alternatively, an additional eighth alternative could be added but the cost for the PA/ED would increase.

Other concepts for project alternatives were considered by the consultant/PDT team, but are not recommended for further study based on technical considerations and community input, and consistency with the adopted Purpose and Need statement for the project. These are discussed on pages 5 and 6 of Attachment 1.

At your last RTC meeting, the RTC briefly discussed the alternatives process and individual commissioners provided input. One idea forwarded was that information on the relative “order of magnitude” costs for the alternatives should be presented. Staff will work with the PA/ED consultants to develop this type of information for the January public hearing. In addition, the Commission directed staff to contact groups who have shown interest in the Highway 1 Widening/HOV project to solicit their input on the set of alternatives to be included in the PA/ED. This outreach idea has been included in the proposed process above. Finally, Commissioners also requested information on if and how, at the end of the PA/ED, the Commission could take elements of different alternatives to formulate the project to move forward. This concept is addressed in the proposed Alternative 7, as described above and in the attached memo.

### **Status of Other Aspects of the Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lane Project**

At the time of writing of this staff report, it is unknown whether AMBAG has met its target of November 15<sup>th</sup> to deliver the regional traffic model to the PA/ED consultants.

Project consultants and local agency representatives will be meeting on the afternoon of November 18<sup>th</sup> in the first of a series with meetings to determine the best locations for proposed pedestrian/bicycle crossings of the Highway 1 corridor. Future meetings will be scheduled with pedestrian and bicycle stakeholders and advocates, including the school districts and neighborhood community groups.

Nolte Associates has requested some administrative adjustments to the current Phase I task budget and scope of services. Staff plans to provide a report on scope of work and budget in December.

### **Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA)**

The HCA Board met November 5<sup>th</sup>, to review the result of the election, receive a quarterly update on the Highway 1 HOV Lane Widening Project from Chris Metzger, and accept a status report on efforts with Caltrans on the Cooperative and Master Agreements necessary for the HCA to assume responsibility for the Highway 1 HOV Lane Widening Project. No actions were taken at this meeting. The next scheduled meeting, December 3, 2004, may be cancelled.

## Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project

The Project Development Team for this project is planning to make a full presentation on this project to the RTC in the next few months. Final project design plans are nearing completion. At your last meeting, Commissioners asked for a written response from Caltrans on the provision of bicycle lanes and sidewalks on arterial overcrossings and undercrossings subject to reconstruction associated with the Highway 1/17 Merge Lane Project. This will be provided to the Commission as soon as it is available.

Staff continues to work with Caltrans, the California Transportation Commission, CALCOG and the RTPA Group on issues related to releasing funding to STIP projects. Staff will provide an update to the RTC as soon as we know more about the availability of state transportation funds for construction to begin in August 2005.

### **SUMMARY**

The project consultants will initiate discussion on potential alternatives to be studied as part of the PA/ED phase of the Highway 1 HOV Lane Widening Project ([Attachment 1](#)). Staff requests preliminary comments and direction on the proposed set of alternatives, and approval to schedule a public hearing in January to receive community input prior to approval on the final set of project alternatives.

Attachment 1. Project Alternatives memo from Nolte Associates, dated November 5, 2005

Prepared by: Kim Shultz

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