

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
SECOND QUARTER FY 04-05 PROGRESS REPORT
October to December 2004

101 Work Program and Budget

During this quarter, staff worked on the proposed FY05-06 Budget and Work Program and an amendment to the FY04-05 Budget and Work Program. The Budget and Administration/Personnel Committee met twice during this quarter.

General Administration

The Commission approved an updated Rules and Regulations. The Budget and Administration/Personnel Committee approved responses to recommendations in 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. An analysis of the Commission's mailing operations and expenses was undertaken and a recommendation is being formulated.

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.

During this period staff reviewed the past legislative session, State and Federal, in development of the Draft 2005 State and Federal Legislative Agenda. At the state level the focus of attention and concern is the ongoing impact of the state budget crisis on transportation revenues, and formulation of an appropriate response by the regional transportation agencies. In the closing weeks of the quarter, staff was engaged with our Washington Assistants in review and comment on the FY 2005 Omnibus Spending Bill which includes the Transportation Department budget. Through the efforts of Congressman Farr, Santa Cruz County was successful in securing \$400,000 for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail and \$1.5 million for Metro's Pacific Station Multimodal-Multiuse Facility.

113 Public Information

During this quarter, public outreach continued regarding the expenditure plan for Measure J, the Local Transportation Improvement Act and staff responded to many inquiries about the measure from the public and media.

The SCCRTC provided the media, local jurisdictions and chambers of commerce press releases about state funding woes, the preliminary agreement reached on acquisition of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, \$7.5 million in funding approved for the MetroBase project, release of the Business Plan for acquisition of the rail line, Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lane Project and Unmet Transit and Paratransit Needs. In addition, the RTC continued to provide information/highlights from the monthly meetings about Commission actions.

Staff initiated a public outreach effort associated with an evening Public Hearing scheduled for January 2005, on the selection of project alternatives for the Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lane Project Environmental Impact Report. A mailing list was developed of all individuals and organizations including environmental and community interest groups that have actively participated in various ways on Highway 1 and Highway 1/17 Projects and Transportation Sales Tax Measure activities. This distribution list also included policy, management and key technical staff of public agencies involved with the project or participating on the Project Development Team. A meeting announcement in the form of a project status report and informational newsletter was created and distributed to nearly 1,000 parties via both postal and electronic mail. Staff continued to emphasize subscription to the E-News program as the most efficient and effective method of disseminating public information on these projects. Staff also reorganized the RTC website and Highway 1 webpage to prominently display public information associated with the selection of project alternatives for the Highway 1 project.

Improved organization, updates and maintenance to the current website continued. These included: posting current Commission packets and Committee agendas, 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 to alert subscribers about 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 Cingular/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. Through a joint procurement process with MTC SAFE a request for proposals (RFP) was released, proposals were received and evaluated and in December all of the SAFEs listed above selected Connections Communication of San Francisco to provide the call box call answering services.

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. A joint meeting of the Safe on 17 Task Force and the Traffic Operations System Oversight Committee was held in November.

Staff is worked with MTC SAFE, the CHP and Caltrans to finalize an RFP that would include FSP service on Highway 1. Two pre-proposal conferences were held including one in Santa Cruz. Staff called all of the tow companies in Santa Cruz County to ensure that they were informed of the RFP and the pre-proposal conference. Proposals have been received and are being evaluated. One of the FSP cellular phones was replaced because it was damaged when the FSP tow truck caught fire after an electrical wire fell on it.

179 Transportation Demand Management (TDM) - Commuter Services

Commission staff continued working with employers, partnering agencies and the SCATMA on general sustainable transportation outreach. Staff continued to distribute relevant TDM materials developed for the Commission's former Don't Drive One in Five campaign.

Staff continued 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 revised the Multi-Year Monitoring Program in response to reduced allocation of staff resources, as presented in the approved FY 2005 Budget Amendment in November 2005. Along with the reduction in staff resources, the budget amendment provided \$5,000 for a private contractor to conduct traffic counts at selected locations where safety and liability concerns have been raised due to heavy traffic volumes. Staff has prepared a preliminary scope of services to retain a private contractor and will pursue this action in the spring of

2005. Traffic monitoring staff also contributed with research and data gathering for the draft Update of the *Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)*, and began work on the *Draft 2004 Traffic Monitoring Report*. Staff continues to post historic and current traffic data on RTC's website for easy public access and updates the information on a monthly basis.

411 Land Use/Transportation Coordination

Staff reviewed and commented on the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Coast Hotel and Conference Center, the Notice of Preparation for the Tannery Arts Center and the Santa Cruz County Bike Plan Update. 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 conducted a recruitment to fill vacancies on the Committee and processed applications, in addition to clarifying quorum requirements. 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, Unmet Paratransit and Transit Needs, accessibility accommodations for electric bicycles, planning and partnership grants, and taxicab operator/ordinance information. Also included were reports from the service providers.

The short term Paratransit Coordination Task Force continued to hold monthly meetings during this quarter. Agenda topics included information on legal mandates and other program requirements, ADA Paratransit transition updates, demographics and definitions, and funding effectiveness/efficiency. The Task Force has continued to develop suggestions to ease the transition of ParaCruz paratransit services and has worked on developing preliminary recommendations.

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 development of an

administrative draft of the *2005 RTP*. The administrative draft of the *2005 RTP* includes updated project lists, graphs, text, and financial projections to reflect the most current information.

Staff continued to work with the hired consultant, AMBAG and TAMC on the Draft EIR covering their three plans. Staff reviewed and commented on the administrative draft of the EIR. The consultant hired to prepare the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the RTP and MTP, incorporated comments on the administrative draft of the EIR and began preparing the draft document.

631 Transportation System Management

Staff worked with the CHP to arrange 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. Staff was informed of a new safety project for Highway 17 being designed by Caltrans. The project involves drainage improvements to improve safety between Woodwardia Highway and just north of Laurel Road.

641 Transportation Improvement Program

This quarter the Commission amended the *2004 Regional Transportation Improvement Program* (RTIP) to program \$7.5 million in State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) to the MetroBase project, and traded \$6.3 million in STIP funds for RSTP funds for sixteen local projects. Staff worked with the Transit District, Caltrans, and the California Transportation Commission (CTC) to amend these changes into the 2004 STIP.

Staff continued to monitor progress with reauthorization and extensions of TEA-21. 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 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 once this quarter.

682 Rail/Trail Authority

Based on comments on the draft environmental impact report (EIR) for the proposed recreational rail service between Capitola and Aptos with an extension to Seascape, the

Commission contracted with Remy, Thomas, Moose and Manley to provide legal review of the final EIR. At the December 2004 meeting, the RTC directed staff and consultants to revise the Draft EIR. The purpose of preparing a Revised DEIR for the Recreational Rail project is to include the *Business Plan* alternative that was made available after the initial DEIR was circulated and to indicate that if a Quiet Zone is not established, there may be a potentially significant noise impact.

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

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. At its December 2, 2004 meeting, the RTC authorized entering into a Letter of Intent to purchase the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line right-of-way for \$19 million. The Letter of Intent outlines responsibilities and contingencies for both Union Pacific and the RTC. Before making a final decision on acquisition of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, the RTC will perform its due diligence and have several reports completed

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

The consultant and Project Development Team (PDT) completed the development of a proposed set of project alternatives for the purpose of recommending those alternatives that will be developed through the PA/ED process to arrive at a preferred project alternative. Staff and consultants presented the preliminary recommendations to the Commission in November and received input on the recommendations and direction to hold a public hearing in January to engage community participation in this process.

While the RTC serves as the “responsible” agency in the conduct of the PA/ED process, Caltrans retains the role of “lead agency” for the environmental process, pursuant to CEQA requirements. Accordingly, staff will submit the alternatives identified by the Commission to Caltrans for approval.

The project schedule has been impacted by the continued delay in access to the AMBAG Travel Forecast Model. The original project schedule, developed with AMBAG’s input, had assumed availability of the Travel Model in November 2003. AMBAG completed production of the model in November 2004, and subsequently introduced a revised model use agreement requiring a trust account deposit. As of this writing, staff and the project consultant are reviewing options to satisfy this latest requirement. The ongoing 14 month delay in delivery of the model has resulted in a 9 month delay to the overall project schedule. The end date has now been moved from May 2007 to February 2008.

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. Staff began work on updating the Commission's federal earmark request for the upcoming legislative and reauthorization bill for TEA 21.

683 Highway 1 Planning

Expenditure Plan Development

In addition to public information program implementation for Measure J, discussed under the Public Information work element, staff prepared a summary of other transportation measures in the state that were on the November 2004 ballot. Additionally, staff met with Commission consultant Eileen Goodwin to discuss options for a future tax measure in Santa Cruz County.

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 County Public Works Department, serving as interim staff to the HCA, continued work with Caltrans on the terms and conditions of the Master and Cooperative Agreements necessary for the HCA to assume responsibility for the Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lane Project. Negotiations have continued with the consultant team selected to provide administrative/project management services to the HCA. The December meeting of the HCA Board of Directors was canceled and the Board will resume meeting in January 2005.

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 February 2005 meeting of the RTC. In addition, staff met with Caltrans and staff from the City of Santa Cruz to develop solutions to pedestrian and bicycle crossing issues at the Morrissey off ramp. This situation is exacerbated by an increase in children attending DeLaveaga Elementary School due to the closing of Branciforte Elementary School.

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

Staff made payments to projects previously approved to receive RSTP Exchange funds and continued to monitor projects receiving those funds.

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