

**TO:** Regional Transportation Commission

**FROM:** Pat Dellin, Acting Executive Director

**RE:** Receive *Draft 2005 Regional Transportation Plan* and *Draft Environmental Impact Report*

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission:

1. Receive the *Draft 2005 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)* and *Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR)* (copies to be distributed at the meeting); and
  2. Schedule a public hearing on the Draft RTP and EIR to be held at the March 17, 2005 Transportation Policy Workshop at a location accessible to Community TV.
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## BACKGROUND

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission is in the process of updating its long range plan, the *Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)*. The RTP is a state-mandated document that establishes a blueprint for transportation projects and funding in Santa Cruz County through 2030. It includes transportation projects and the amount of funding anticipated for transportation projects over the next 25 years. The plan is an essential first step in securing funding from federal, state and local sources. As required by state law, the RTP includes discussion of highways, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, transit services, specialized transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities, and airports.

The last update of the RTP was completed in 2001. The 2005 RTP is a minor update which includes some changes to the project lists, revisions to the text to reflect the most up-to-date information available on the existing transportation system, and updated funding assumptions.

## DISCUSSION

### The Draft 2005 Regional Transportation Plan

The RTP consists of four main elements:

1. A description of the existing transportation system
2. Policy Element
3. Action Element
4. Financial Element

The **Policy Element** identifies the goals, policies, and evaluation measures that guide transportation funding decisions and prioritization. At the February 2004 meeting the Commission re-approved

the goals and policies from the Policy Element of the 2001 RTP, with minor amendments. The **Action Element** of the RTP identifies specific projects, programs and actions necessary to implement the policy element of the RTP. The **Financial Element** of the 2005 RTP identifies funds available to the region, lists the additional funding needs over the next 25 years, distinguishes between dedicated and discretionary funds and explains uses of both. Both the Action and Financial Elements are included in Chapter 4: The Investment Program. The Commission approved the draft project list and financial projections following a public hearing in April 2004, with additional revisions to the list approved in October 2004.

Projects included in the 2005 RTP are sorted into two lists, the “Within Project Funds” (constrained) and “Need New Funds” (unconstrained) lists, as required by state and federal law. The emphasis of the “Within Projected Funds” list is on projects that fill critical gaps in the transportation network, benefit a large number of people, address safety, are located along major transportation corridors, specifically address needs identified in the draft goals and policies of the Policy Element or have identified dedicated, programmed funding. This complete project list is constrained within the projected funds identified in the draft Financial Element. Projects on the “Need New Funds” list are typically of lower priority, have potentially significant environmental constraints, or are not currently financially feasible.

As directed by the Commission last spring, the financial projections for the 2005 RTP and corresponding project lists assume that a local half-cent sales tax will be approved by voters in the next few years. In so doing, the Commission was able to include the entire Highway 1 Widening/Carpool Lane project in the “Within Project Funds” list in this RTP update.

### Environmental Impact Report

As approved by the Commission at its September 2003 meeting, the *Draft Environmental Impact Report* (EIR) for the *Regional Transportation Plan* is a joint effort with the Commission’s partner agencies: the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) and Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC). The reasons for the collaboration on the EIR were to reduce costs and reduce duplication of effort. The Draft EIR is a program level environmental analysis for the Monterey Bay region and serves as the Draft EIR for the Commission’s 2005 RTP, the 2005 TAMC RTP and the 2005 AMBAG *Metropolitan Transportation Plan* (MTP).

Because the Draft EIR addresses the three counties of the AMBAG region (Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Benito counties), all the impacts listed in the Draft EIR may not be relevant to Santa Cruz County’s transportation projects. Please note that the Draft EIR includes a larger number of potentially significant and unavoidable impacts than were in the EIR for the *2001 RTP* for Santa Cruz County.

### Public Outreach

Over the past year, staff has been informing the public and Commission committees, as well as the Commission, about various components of the RTP. Outreach conducted to solicit public input on the document up to this point included mailers to community-based organizations, chambers of commerce, local schools, and email distribution lists; presentations to groups and committees; website postings; news releases; and notices in local newspapers.

## Next Steps

The timing of release of the Draft RTP and the Draft EIR was coordinated with TAMC and AMBAG staff to meet federal deadlines for approval of the MTP. As such, the document will be released on Tuesday February 15<sup>th</sup> and will be distributed at this meeting. On February 15<sup>th</sup>, notices about the availability of the document and the Executive Summary will be sent to the media, schools, and community-based groups, including business, social services, environmental and neighborhood groups. Compact disks (CD) containing both documents will be mailed to SCCRTC committee members, member agencies and local jurisdiction representatives. In addition, the *Draft 2005 Plan* and *EIR* will be posted on the Commission's web site and copies will be sent to local libraries. Consistent with RTC polices, all draft documents are available free to members of the public who request them. Because the website and CDs use less paper and are less expensive, those choices will be highlighted.

There is a 45-day review period for the draft RTP and EIR. **Staff recommends Commissioners review the documents by mid-March and schedule a public hearing the morning of March 17, 2005 to hear comments on both documents.** In order to have enough room for commentors as well as Community TV broadcast of the meeting, staff recommends that the meeting be held in the City of Santa Cruz Council Chambers ( the County Board of Supervisors Chambers were not available). Any outstanding substantive issues will be discussed at the April 21, 2005 Transportation Policy Workshop, where staff will ask the Commission to provide direction for revisions to the RTP. SCCRTC certification of the Final EIR and adoption of the 2005 RTP are scheduled for the regular morning meeting of the Commission on May 5, 2005. AMBAG and TAMC will also certify the Final EIR.

In order to meet federal air quality mandates, the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) must adopt the federally mandated MTP, which incorporates the *Regional Transportation Plans* and corresponding project lists for Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito Counties, by June 2005. AMBAG will also hold a public hearing on the draft MTP and EIR.

## **SUMMARY**

The draft *2005 Regional Transportation Plan* and draft *Environmental Impact Report* were released on Tuesday February 15<sup>th</sup>, starting the 45-day review period which will end on April 1, 2005. Both documents will be distributed to Commissioners at the February 17, 2005 Transportation Policy Workshop. The documents will also be available at area libraries and on the Commission's website, [www.sccrtc.org](http://www.sccrtc.org). Compact disks including the 2005 Draft RTP and EIR will be sent to SCCRTC committee members, member agencies and local jurisdiction representatives. Notices will be sent to interested parties. Staff recommends scheduling a public hearing on both documents for the March 17<sup>th</sup> Transportation Policy Workshop, to be held at the City of Santa Cruz Council Chambers.

Attachments (to be distributed at the meeting):

1. *Draft 2005 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)*
2. *Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)*

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