

TO: Regional Transportation Commission
FROM: Kim Shultz, Senior Transportation Planner
RE: Status Report on Related Highway 1

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

Staff is coordinating with Caltrans to develop appropriate soundwall design options, for the 500-ft section of soundwall that can not be landscaped, based on Commission input at the February 3rd RTC meeting. Included elsewhere in this packet is the information requested by the RTC about abstract design options and whether planting on top of the non-landscaped wall is feasible. The goal remains to complete the design phase for the project prior to June 2005 to be “Ready to List” and better compete for limited state funding.

Highway 1/Morrissey Boulevard Interchange Improvement

Caltrans has agreed to improve the Morrissey northbound off ramp and install a stop sign at the end of the ramp and intersection with Pacheco Avenue, Rooney Street and Morrissey Boulevard, as part of the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project. Staff will continue discussions with Caltrans and City of Santa Cruz staff to consider a stand-alone project that could be delivered sooner in the event the Merge Lanes Project is delayed due to state funding constraints.

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

As of the writing of this staff report, staff has not yet received written approval from Caltrans for the project alternatives selected by the RTC in January. The project consultants are prepared to fully develop the alternatives for environmental analysis once Caltrans approval has been secured.

In association with this major milestone in the PA/ED process, staff and consultants have begun work on a project newsletter fully describing the project alternatives and environmental studies that will be performed. Middle of April is the target date for distributing the newsletter.

Project consultants are preparing for Phase 2 Archaeological Studies at select locations identified along the corridor. Many of sites are located within the existing Caltrans right-of-way for Highway 1. As previously discussed, a right-of-way subconsultant to Nolte is pursuing Permits to Enter on two privately owned parcels with oversight provided by the County's Real Estate Division. All Phase 2 archaeological activities, which include limited subsurface excavation, are being coordinated with participation of local representatives of Native American affiliations. Sixteen representatives have been contacted with ancestral ties to various tribes including the Ohlone and the Costanoan.

Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Merge Lanes Project

The SCCRTC's request for a federal earmark of \$9.85 million for the Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Merge Lanes Project was transmitted to Congressman Farr's office prior to the February 7th deadline by the RTC's Washington Assistant, Carolyn Chaney. Letters of support for the project from AMBAG and Caltrans are attached (Attachments 1 and 2, respectively). Staff will keep the RTC informed of the progress of this project in the TEA-21 Transportation Reauthorization legislation.

SUMMARY

Caltrans staff are working to resolve the soundwall design for the Highway 1/17 Merge Lane project to complete all engineering work no later than June 2005. Staff is continuing to investigate options with Caltrans and the City of Santa Cruz to mitigate pedestrian and bicycle safety issues at the Highway 1/Morrissey Boulevard Interchange as soon as possible. Efforts are underway to create the first project newsletter for the Highway I Widening/HOV Lane Project describing the project alternatives selected for environmental analysis. The Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Merge Lanes Project was submitted for a federal earmark.

Attachments:

1. AMBAG, Letter of support for the Soquel/Morrissey Merge Lanes Project, February 9, 2005
2. Caltrans, Letter of support for the Soquel/Morrissey Merge Lanes Project, February 14, 2005