

**TO:** Regional Transportation Commission

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

**RE:** Public Hearing on the *2005 Regional Transportation Plan* and Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Staff recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission hold a public hearing to receive public testimony on the *Draft 2005 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)* and *Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)*.

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## **BACKGROUND**

### The Draft 2005 Regional Transportation Plan

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission has released the draft 2005 Regional Transportation Plan and accompanying draft Environmental Impact Report. Periodic updates of the Regional Transportation Plan, mandated by the state, provide both a short and long range transportation blueprint of goals, policies, funding projections and project lists to guide decisions regarding the region's transportation infrastructure, services and operations/maintenance of the infrastructure. The Draft 2005 Regional Transportation Plan includes a description of the existing transportation system, projects the amount of funding anticipated for transportation projects over the next 25 years, and identifies transportation needs for the region. The plan is an essential first step in securing funding from federal, state and local sources. Projects identified in the draft RTP include improvements for roadways, highways, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, transit service, specialized transportation for seniors and people with disabilities, park and ride lot construction and transportation demand management programs.

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 in order to present the most up-to-date information available on the existing transportation system, and updated funding assumptions.

Staff has been working with the public, Commission committees and Commissioners on each of the components included in the RTP. Outreach conducted to solicit public input on the document up to this point included mailers to community-based organizations, chambers, local schools, e-mail distribution lists, presentations to groups and committees, web information, media releases and paid ads in local newspapers and radio. The Commission decided to carryover the Goals and Policies from the *2001 Plan* into the *2005 Plan* at its February 2004

meeting. 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. In order to meet federal air quality mandates, the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) must adopt the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, which incorporates the Regional Transportation Plans for Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito Counties by July 2005.

## **DISCUSSION**

Both the Draft RTP and the Draft EIR were released February 15. Notices about the availability of the document were sent to the media, schools, and community-based organizations, such as business, social services, environmental and neighborhood groups. Compact disks containing both documents were mailed to SCCRTC committee members, member agencies and local jurisdiction representatives. In addition, the *Draft 2005 Plan* and *EIR* are posted on the Commission's website ([www.sccrtc.org/rtp.html](http://www.sccrtc.org/rtp.html)) and copies were sent to most local libraries. Consistent with RTC policies, draft documents are also available free to the public.

**Copies of the Draft RTP and Draft EIR were distributed to Commissioners and Alternates the week of February 15<sup>th</sup>. Please bring your copies to this meeting.**

### The Draft RTP

The RTP consists of four main sections: a description of the existing transportation system, the Policy Element, the Action Element, and the Financial Element. The Policy Element identifies the goals, policies, and evaluation measures that guide transportation funding decisions and prioritization. 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 and the additional funding needs over the next 25 years. The Executive Summary of the Draft 2005 RTP is attached for your convenience (Attachment 1).

### Environmental Impact Report

As approved by the Commission at its September 2003 meeting, the *Environmental Impact Report for the Regional Transportation Plan* (EIR) for the RTP is a joint effort with the Commission's partner agencies the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) and the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC). The Draft EIR is a program level environmental analysis for the tri-county region and serves as the Draft EIR for the 2005 SCCRTC RTP, the 2005 TAMC RTP and the 2005 AMBAG RTP. The potential impacts identified in the document are **not** cumulative impacts and in some instances may only be relevant to one of the projects from the three counties. A one-page summary of the Draft EIR is attached (Attachment 2).

Staff and John Courtney of Lamphier-Gregory will give a brief presentation on the draft RTP and draft EIR at your meeting.

**Staff recommends the Commission accept public comments on both the *Draft 2005 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)* and *Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)* during the public hearing immediately following the presentation.** If any written comments are received prior to the meeting, staff will distribute those comments at the meeting.

### Next Steps

Comments on the Draft RTP and EIR are due April 1, 2005. Any outstanding substantive issues will be discussed at the April Commission Transportation Policy Workshop, where staff will ask the Commission to provide direction for revisions to the draft Regional Transportation Plan. Certification of the EIR and adoption of the 2005 RTP are currently scheduled for the regular morning meeting of the Commission on May 5, 2005. However, depending on the volume of comments received, additional time may be needed.

### **SUMMARY**

The draft Regional Transportation Plan and draft Environmental Impact Report were released on Tuesday February 15, starting the 45 day review period which ends on April 1, 2005. Staff recommends that the Commission receive public comments on the documents at this meeting.

### Attachments:

1. Draft RTP Executive Summary
2. Draft EIR One-Page Summary

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