

AGENDA: May 5, 2005

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

RECOMMENDATIONS:

This item is for information only.

BACKGROUND

The Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA) was created in February 2004 to manage the implementation of the Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lane Project. In January 2005, the HCA decided that the RTC should retain management of the Highway 1 Project and the HCA would continue to meet on a quarterly basis staffed by the County Public Works Agency. In January 2005, the RTC recommended a list of alternatives, subsequently approved by Caltrans, for development through the preliminary design/environmental review phase of the project referred to as Project Approval/Environmental Documentation (PA/ED) phase.

The Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project is managed by Caltrans District-5, located in San Luis Obispo. The environmental document for the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project was approved in August 2002 and the final design element (the soundwall) was approved in March 2005. The start of construction is subject to the availability of state transportation funds.

Thanks to Congressman Farr, the House version of the transportation reauthorization bill includes \$3.67 million for the Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Merge Lane Project.

DISCUSSION

Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA)

The HCA held their second quarterly meeting in 2005 on April 1st and received a Quarterly Status Report on the Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lane Project, from Chris Metzger, the Project Manager for the Highway 1 Consultant Team. In other business, the HCA Board authorized a letter to State Legislators on behalf of the HCA opposing the continued diversion of Proposition 42 Transportation Revenues to the State General Fund.

The next meeting of the HCA, scheduled for Friday, July 1st, is subject to rescheduling to avoid conflicts with the July 4th Holiday Weekend.

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

As reported at your last meeting, the Highway 1 consultant team is moving ahead on the full range of activities required through the PA/ED process. With approval of Phase II funding and receipt of the AMBAG Travel Demand Model the consultants are reviewing the full project schedule to determine if any time savings can be achieved. Potential project adjustments will be discussed at the next Project Development Team and shared with the RTC at the May Transportation Policy Workshop (TPW) meeting.

In addition to travel demand and operation analysis, the other critical path item is cultural resources, which involves archaeological excavations. A right-of-way sub-consultant is in the process of securing Right of Entry on three private parcels and the remaining excavation work is within Caltrans right of way. Work should get underway in the next two months and all activities are being coordinated with the requirements of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and local representatives of the Ohlone and Costanoan tribes.

Two working meetings are planned the evening of May 19th and May 24th with representatives of the school districts, and pedestrian and cycling advocates to collect information useful to determine the best locations for up to three pedestrian/bike crossings of Highway 1. The list of invitees, shared at the last RTC meeting is attached along with the draft agenda (Attachments 1 & 2, respectively). Following review of the information collected, staff and consultants will bring recommendations to the RTC in the next few months.

Consistent with the major milestones recently completed, staff and consultants are working on a project newsletter describing the project alternatives and environmental studies that will be performed. Staff and the Project Development Team (PDT) is discussing the distribution method and audience for the newsletter. The target date for distribution of the newsletter is late May.

Highway 1/ 17 Merge Lanes Project

All right of way easement acquisitions have been secured and final engineering plans submitted to Caltrans Contracts Unit so contractor bid packages can be developed. As part of this process the project will be subject to value engineering, constructability review, and compliance with environmental documentation. Caltrans and the City of Santa Cruz are finalizing a Cooperative Agreement for the project's public awareness campaign, while discussion continues on other construction related impacts, including: traffic control personnel, pedestrian access, and street improvements to facilitate detoured traffic. Staff continues to monitor the state budget discussions to determine the availability of transportation funding to advance this project in the coming Fiscal Year. (See separate agenda item on state transportation funding issues.)

Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Merge Lane Project

The Senate's version of the TEA-21 reauthorization bill has passed out of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee without earmarks for member's individual highway or transit projects. It is expected the earmarks will be addressed in the future House-Senate conference committee on the bill.

Meanwhile, the Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lane – Project Development Team (PDT) will begin discussion on the preliminary design and analysis for environmental clearance of the Highway 1

Soquel/Morrissey Merge Lane Project later this month. These activities were included in the scope of services, as an independent utility project, to the larger Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lane project.

SUMMARY

Updates on the Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA), the Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lane-Project Approval/Environmental Documentation (PA/ED) process, the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project, and the Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Merge Lane Project are included in this staff report.

Attachments:

1. List of Invitees to the Highway 1 Bike/Pedestrian Crossing Stakeholders Meetings
2. Draft Agenda for the Bike/Pedestrian Working Meetings