

TO: Regional Transportation Commission – Policy Workshop
FROM: Kim Shultz, Senior Transportation Planner
REGARDING: 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. 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. The RTC recommended a list of alternatives, subsequently approved by Caltrans, for the Project Approval/Environmental Documentation (PA/ED) phase of the project.

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 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/ 17 Interchange Merge Lanes Project

A total of \$45 million in State Transportation Improvement Project (STIP) funds has been programmed in Fiscal Year 2005-06 for construction of this project. Additionally, \$2 million in state soundwall funds are programmed in the same year.

As reported at your last meeting, California Transportation Commission staff have recently indicated that if the Governor's May state budget proposal for transportation is approved, there will be sufficient funds available to allocate (release) funds for most if not all STIP projects programmed in FY05/06. This gives staff and Caltrans reason to be cautiously optimistic about the availability of funding for this project in the near term. Staff will attend workshops on the CTC's plans for allocating projects programmed in the

STIP on June 9th and June 16th. An oral update about the STIP funds will be provided under another item on this agenda.

Caltrans has notified staff that there are still two outstanding issues to be completed before the project is ready to list and receive an allocation from Caltrans: 1) approval of utility relocation plans from PG&E and 2) Caltrans completion of the Plans, Specifications and Estimates (PS&E) bid package in November. Regarding the utility plans, Caltrans expects to receive a cost estimate in August and final relocation plans completed in November. PG&E and Caltrans must both approve the plan to certify the right-of-way element.

All parties understand that the only way for this project to be eligible for funds in FY 05-06 is to complete all pre-construction phases and be ready to list at the earliest possible date.

Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Merge Lane Project

In response to questions raised at your last meeting, staff has included the Project Information Sheet (Attachment 1) provided to the RTC in February 2005 when taking action to submit a Federal earmark request for the Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Merge Lane Project. As reported in the last meeting by Rich Krumholz, Caltrans Deputy Director, a traffic analysis was conducted in 1997 as part of the Project Study Report (PSR) for construction of auxiliary lanes and ramp meters along the Highway 1 corridor.

As previously reported, Caltrans staff projected that annual traffic delay would be reduced by a total of 581,000 hours with the proposed Soquel/Morrissey Merge Lane Project beginning in year 2020 (315,000 hour reduction in the northbound delay and 266,000 hour reduction in southbound delay, see Attachment 1). These projections did not include the construction of ramp meters along the corridor.

In her capacity as a County Supervisor, Ellen Pirie has written a letter to Congressman Sam Farr supporting this project (Attachment 2).

The Nolte consultant team is developing a project schedule for preliminary design and environmental review for the project and the schedule will include a public hearing on the proposed project. The proposed project schedule will be presented to the RTC as part of the Quarterly Highway 1 Progress Report at your August 5th meeting.

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

Work proceeds on schedule and within budget on the full range of engineering and environmental study activities. Chris Metzger, Nolte Project Manager, will present a Quarterly Progress Report at the August RTC meeting.

Staff and the consultant team are working on a project newsletter marking the major milestones recently completed. The newsletter will provide a description of the project

alternatives identified for analysis, a description of the environmental studies that will be performed, and milestone project schedule. The newsletter will be distributed soon by US mail and email to community groups and to all individuals who have requested updates on the project.

Highway 1 Bike/Pedestrian Crossings

Consultant staff is preparing a draft report on the proposed crossings based on information received at the stakeholder meetings held on May 19th and May 24th. RTC staff proposes to meet once again with local agency staff to review the range of findings and highest priority pedestrian/bicycle crossings of Highway 1 prior to presenting recommendations to the RTC in August.

Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA)

The HCA next meets on August 5, 2005, at 8:30 a.m. in the County Administrative Building.

SUMMARY

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

Attachments:

1. Project Information Sheet, Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Merge Lanes Project, prepared January 2005
2. Letter from Supervisor Ellen Pirie to Congressman Farr regarding the Soquel/Morrissey Merge Lane Project, dated June 8, 2005