

TO: Regional Transportation Commission  
FROM: Kim Shultz, Senior Transportation Planner  
REGARDING: Highway 1 Projects

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***RECOMMENDATIONS***

Staff recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission:

1. Request that Caltrans and Pacific Gas and Electric finish their work in time for the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project to be submitted to the California Transportation Commission for an allocation of STIP funds at its September meeting;
  2. Accept a Quarterly Progress Report from the consultant on the Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lane Project, and receive a Status Report on other activities related to the Highway 1 project; and,
  3. Direct staff to return in September with a recommended date and location for an evening public information open house/ RTC public hearing on the Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lane project.
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***BACKGROUND***

The RTC initiated work on the current phase of the Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lane Project in June 2003. The Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA), created in February 2004 to manage the implementation of the Highway 1 Project, decided in January 2005 that the RTC should retain management of the Project. The HCA continues to meet on a quarterly basis, staffed by the County Public Works Agency. In March 2005, Caltrans approved a list of alternatives 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. The environmental document for the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project was approved in August 2002 and the final design of the project is nearing completion. 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, now in Congressional Conference Committee, includes \$3.67 million for the Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lane Project.

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## *DISCUSSION*

### **Highway 1/ 17 Merge Lanes Project**

The Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes project is programmed to receive \$39 million in FY05-06 STIP funds for construction. Therefore it is eligible for an allocation of STIP funds by the CTC. If it gets the allocation, construction could start in 2006.

For the past two years, insufficient state transportation funding has been available and many projects have been delayed. The state transportation picture has improved for the short term in that the recently approved state budget includes some transportation funding for this year. Consequently, the California Transportation Commission (CTC) has begun allocating FY05-06 STIP funds to projects. (For more information on the state budget and the STIP, see the separate agenda item.)

It is a very competitive environment for STIP funding allocations. The amount of FY05-06 STIP funds available for allocation is significantly less than the amount of funding programmed to projects. If tribal gaming bond revenues are not realized this fiscal year, the September CTC meeting is probably the last meeting when STIP funds for this fiscal year will be available for allocation to projects such as the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project. The situation might improve later in the fiscal year, but it is very uncertain. Any FY05-06 programmed projects which do not receive an allocation of funding this fiscal year will be folded into the 2006 STIP and will be delayed.

Over the past year, RTC staff has stressed to Caltrans the need to complete the final preparations for the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes projects so that this project would be eligible to an allocation of STIP funding as soon as any STIP funding were released. That first opportunity for an allocation occurred at the July 14<sup>th</sup> CTC meeting when the CTC allocated \$1 billion of its available \$3 billion in FY05-06 STIP funds to ready projects. Unfortunately, the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes project was not among them.

Staff was informed by Caltrans last month that the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes project may not even be ready for an allocation by the September CTC meeting. This is an extremely serious situation which may result in the project not getting its funding this year, and delaying the start of construction once again.

Since RTC staff became aware of this issue, our staff has been aggressively working with all responsible parties to qualify this project for a funding allocation by the September CTC meeting.

The critical paths to qualify this project for a STIP allocation are threefold:

1. **Completion of the engineering/design package** in preparation to bid the project for construction. Design plans are currently under internal review by Caltrans District 5 staff, prior to submittal to Sacramento (Caltrans Headquarters) which typically takes up to 16 weeks to complete final review of up to 500 pages of

engineering/design sheets, and creation of the bid package. It will be challenging to complete this task in time for a September allocation

2. **Completion of the Utility Relocation Plans and Right of Way Certification.**  
The critical path is PG&E's submittal of engineering plans for the relocation of their utility lines. PG&E's stated plan submittal date is early November as reported to Caltrans. It will be challenging to complete this task in time for a September allocation.
3. **Execution of Cooperative Agreements** between Caltrans and the RTC, and between Caltrans and the City of Santa Cruz to provide state funding for transportation management efforts to mitigate the traffic and community impacts during the construction process. The agreement with the RTC will be to develop and implement traffic demand management strategies and for freeway service patrol coverage. The agreement with the City of Santa Cruz is largely to implement a public awareness program for area residents and motorists in cooperation with Caltrans. This task will be completed in time for a September allocation. Staff will present the traffic demand management plan to the RTC prior to implementation.

Gregg Albright, the District 5 Director of Caltrans, is also very concerned about the project timing and is working with his staff and PG&E to try to get the project ready for an allocation at the September CTC meeting. He will provide an oral report on the status of these efforts at your meeting.

**Staff recommends that the RTC request that Caltrans and PG&E finish their work in time for the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project to be submitted to the CTC for an allocation of STIP funds at its September meeting.**

### **Highway 1 Widening/ HOV Lane Project –Project Approval/Environmental Documentation (PA/ED)**

Chris Metzger, Nolte Project Manager, will make an oral presentation of his Quarterly Progress Report (Attachment 1) for the Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lane Project. Mr. Metzger's presentation will feature a Power Point presentation of design plans of the project alternatives now under examination (Attachment 2 – to be distributed at the meeting).

The critical path for completion of the PA/ED phase continues to be traffic analysis and investigation of cultural resources, specifically the completion of archaeological site investigations.

## **Traffic Analysis**

The consultant team has initiated monthly teleconference meetings on traffic issues. Participants include key staff from Caltrans, AMBAG, RTC and the consultant team. Work is currently focusing on validating base year traffic projections from the Regional Travel Demand Model with actual counts collected by the consultant. The initial work in analyzing the project alternatives will focus on the Ramp Metering and Auxiliary Lane Alternative to measure the effectiveness of this alternative in meeting the stated Purpose and Need of the project.

## **Cultural Resources**

Work on the archaeological site investigations is at a crossroads. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) procedures prevent invasive investigations of potential cultural sites that would not be affected by the project. Given that the project alternatives would affect different locations, Caltrans, RTC staff and the consultant team met on July 7<sup>th</sup> to develop a consistent strategy for moving forward.

Caltrans' current recommendation is that subsurface work be done following identification of the preferred alternative, between the draft and final environmental documents. However, postponing subsurface site investigations until that time will significantly affect the scheduled completion of the PA/ED phase. The Team is seeking confirmation of this policy from Caltrans, SHPO and FHWA.

## **Bike/Pedestrian Crossings**

The Consultant Team has prepared a draft summary report with recommendations on the process to determine the best locations for three pedestrian/bike crossings of Highway 1. The report includes the input received from community stakeholder meetings held in May and local agency input. The report is currently being reviewed by the RTC's committees (i.e. the Elderly & Disabled Technical Advisory Committee, the Bike Committee, and the Interagency Technical Advisory Committee). The full report and recommendations will be presented to the Commission at one of your next two meetings.

## **Newsletter**

Staff and the consultant team are drafting a project newsletter marking the major milestones recently completed. Publication of the newsletter will follow the RTC's determination of locations for the pedestrian/bicycle crossings and Congress's action on federal funding for the proposed Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lane Project. The newsletter will also include a description of the project alternatives identified for environmental analysis, a description of the environmental studies that will be performed, and milestone project schedule.

## **Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lane Project**

As of the writing of this staff report, the federal TEA Reauthorization bill is under review in Congressional Conference Committee and may be approved soon. Funding for the Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Merge Lanes Project in the amount of \$3.67 million is in the current version of the bill, thanks to Congressman Farr. The RTC's Washington Assistant, Carolyn Chaney, reports that members of Congress are hopeful a bill will be approved by Congress by the end of July. Staff will provide an oral report at your meeting on the status of the bill and funding for this project.

Staff has met with Caltrans to discuss a funding partnership using Inter Regional and Regional Transportation Improvement Program (ITIP/RTIP) funds to finance the balance of the project costs, estimated to range from \$5 - \$9 million. Staff will discuss this option further in the context of upcoming discussions on the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) in the next few months.

The Highway 1 Consultant Team is doing the project development work on this project as an independent utility project. The draft schedule is shown in Attachment 3. The consultant team is developing conceptual engineering plans and will present current design options as part of the Highway 1 Quarterly Progress Report.

As part of the current preliminary design work, staff proposes to hold a Public Information Open House/ RTC Public Hearing in the fall before the holiday season. The Open House would occur in the hour before the official RTC meeting begins and would provide interested members of the public and the RTC to view maps and informational materials and ask questions of the consultants. The RTC meeting will include a formal presentation by the Highway 1 consultants followed by a public hearing.

Staff proposes the meeting be held on a weekday evening and that arrangements be made for the meeting to be televised on Community TV. **Staff recommends that the RTC direct staff to return in September with a recommended date and location for an evening public information open house/ RTC public hearing on the Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lane project.**

## **Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA)**

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

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### ***SUMMARY***

Updates on the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project, Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lane Widening Project Approval/Environmental Documentation (PA/ED) process, the Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lane Project, and the Highway 1 Construction

Authority (HCA) are included in this staff report. The Caltrans District 5 Director will make an oral report on efforts to finalize project development tasks so that the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes project will be ready for an allocation of funding from the CTC. The Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lane project consultant team will provide an oral report on the status of the full project and the Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Merge Lanes Project as an independent utility project. An evening open house/public hearing on the Merge Lanes project is recommended for October.

Attachments:

1. Quarterly Progress Report on the Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lane Project, dated July 12, 2005.
2. Copy of Power Point Presentation accompanying the Quarterly Progress Report - to be distributed at the meeting.
3. Correspondence to Claudia Espino, Caltrans District 5, on the Route 1 Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lane Project, dated July 14, 2005.

*Prepared by: Kim Shultz*

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