

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 receive a Status Report on activities related to the Highway 1 projects.

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***DISCUSSION***

**Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project**

As of the writing of this staff report, the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project is on the California Transportation Commission's (CTC) agenda for a State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) allocation. Caltrans District staff have been working diligently with Caltrans staff in Sacramento to complete final review of the engineering design plans, and the plans submitted by the utility companies to complete the right-of-way certification process. Staff has also been in close contact with staff of the CTC to reserve the necessary funds for this project.

The upcoming CTC meeting is on September 28th and 29th in Monterey. RTC staff will contact Commissioners when we have additional information to report. In the event the project receives a STIP allocation, construction could begin in the Spring of 2006.

RTC and Caltrans staff will provide an oral report at the RTC meeting.

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

**Public Meeting on November 17<sup>th</sup>**

As directed at the September RTC meeting, staff of Caltrans, RTC and the Highway 1 consultant are preparing to hold an Open House/Project Information meeting and RTC Public Hearing on the Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lane Project in the Board of Supervisor's Chambers on the evening of November 17th. Arrangements have been made with Community TV to broadcast the Public Hearing.

**Commissioners are invited to attend the Open House/Project Information meeting beginning at 6:00 pm**, where members of the public will have an opportunity to meet

with Caltrans and the Highway 1 consultant staff on a one-on-one basis an hour before the formal RTC Public Hearing begins.

**The RTC Public Hearing will begin at 7:15 p.m.** with a presentation of the project features by the Highway 1 consultants and Caltrans, followed by an opportunity for the RTC and members of the public to provide comments. All comments provided by the RTC or the public will be considered by the Project Development Team in preparation of the project's environmental document, and subsequent staff recommendations regarding project planning and programming issues.

### **Project Development and Funding**

The Highway 1 consultant team has submitted an administrative draft Supplemental Project Study Report (PSR) for the Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lane Project. This document will focus on updated information on the auxiliary lane project previously included in the larger PSR for Operational Improvements on Highway 1 between State Park Drive and Morrissey Boulevard, approved in September 2002. The information in the Supplemental PSR will be used to secure Caltrans project development support and programming the cost, scope, and project development schedule in the Regional Transportation Improvement Program/State Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP/STIP).

In the meantime, Caltrans District 5 staff has prepared a project nomination form to secure state-controlled Interregional Transportation Improvement Program (ITIP) funds for this project as a partnership effort with federal, state and local participation. Caltrans has proposed funding participation level in the amount of 25 percent of the total estimated cost of \$11.1 million for final design and construction phases of the project. Caltrans action was taken in recognition of the RTC decision to consider programming a portion of the RTC's share of RTIP funds to the Highway 1 Soquel-Morrissey Auxiliary Lane Project and overall merits of the projects.

In December the RTC will review the draft RTIP in preparation of approving the final RTIP at a Public Hearing in January/February timeframe.

### **Highway 1 Morrissey Interchange**

As you know, Caltrans, City of Santa Cruz and RTC staff have met to discuss needed improvements for pedestrian and bicyclist safety at the Highway 1/ Morrissey Boulevard Interchange. Staff provides the following status report on agency actions to address near term, mid-term, and long term improvements.

#### **City of Santa Cruz – Near Term Improvements**

Immediate actions are underway by City traffic crews who recently installed signage advising motorists to yield to pedestrians at the confluence of local streets and the

northbound freeway off ramp. City crews also painted sidewalk markings, stop lines, and turning radii at the intersection of Morrissey Boulevard/Rodney Street/Pacheco Avenue with the freeway ramp. City staff have also begun survey work to establish property lines for the design of sidewalks in this same area as part of the De Laveaga Elementary School - Safe Routes To School project. City staff will complete the design work for the sidewalks and construction will be completed by private contractors.

RTC staff have agreed to lend traffic monitoring equipment necessary for city staff to conduct warrant studies at the intersections to determine what additional near term operational improvements are appropriate for the area.

### **Caltrans – Mid-Term Improvements**

Improvements to the northbound off ramp of the Morrissey Boulevard Interchange are included in the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project to allow placement of a stop sign at the freeway ramp and 4-way intersection with Morrissey Boulevard, Rodney Street, and Pacheco Avenue. Placing a stop sign at this location will greatly improve conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists crossing through the interchange. Caltrans project engineers are confident that this portion of the Highway 1/17 Merge Lane Project could be advanced early on in the overall construction schedule

Caltrans traffic engineers required additional vehicle stacking area on the northbound off ramp as a prerequisite to placing a stop sign at the intersection to avoid peak period ques on the ramp extending onto the mainline freeway.

If STIP funding is released by the CTC for this project, construction could start in the Spring 2006. In the event funding is delayed for the Highway 1/17 Merge Lane Project, RTC and Caltrans staff will meet to develop an alternative method to deliver the mid-term improvements.

### **RTC/Highway 1 Consultants – Long Term Improvements**

Long term improvement of the interchange is part of the alternatives analysis for the Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lane PA/ED process. Three interchange locations are under particular analysis, including Morrissey Boulevard, Soquel Avenue, and State Park Drive. This alternative was established in response to public comments that interchange configurations be considered that eliminate high speed free flowing vehicle speeds and thereby improve pedestrian and bicycle access through the subject interchanges.

The decision to reconstruct any particular interchange can be pursued independently of the decision regarding capacity improvements to the mainline freeway. In other words, the SCCRTC may recommend that the preferred alternative include reconstruction of specific interchanges with or without the addition of HOV lanes. Staff anticipates full review of design options at the selected interchanges will be available for review, along with traffic operations information, in the summer of 2006.

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

### **Project Schedule and Budget**

As reported at the last Quarterly Progress Meeting, Caltrans direction, per State Historic Office of Preservation (SHPO) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), that subsurface archaeological work be postponed until after identification of the preferred alternative will have a significant impact on the project schedule. The Project Development Team is still reviewing the overall magnitude of the project delay and potential impact to project costs for the PA/ED phase.

Staff and the Highway 1 Project Consultants are also negotiating the scope and costs of completing the PA/ED phase for the Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lane Project as an Independent Utility project, separate and apart from the Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lane project. Processing the project as an Independent Utility project will allow earlier delivery of the project than the current schedule for the Highway 1 project. However, the environmental review process is potentially greater than initially assumed in the scope of services for the Highway 1 project. Caltrans staff is currently reviewing the draft Preliminary Environmental Analysis Report for the Auxiliary Lane project to determine the appropriate level of environmental review in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA).

Staff and the Highway 1 consultant team will discuss these items as part of the upcoming Quarterly Progress Report in November.

### **Project Website and Newsletter**

Work continues in development of an independent project website for the Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lane Project, administered by Caltrans. As previously mentioned, one of the principal reasons for setting up a separate website is to minimize public confusion regarding the respective roles played by Caltrans and the RTC through the project development process. While the RTC website will still carry broad based status reports on the project and information on upcoming milestone events and public meetings, hotlinks to the Caltrans website will be established for pursuit of more technical information.

A similar approach is being taken with the project newsletter, where the respective roles of the project will be clarified and recognition given to the role of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as the lead agency for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Caltrans for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

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

The next scheduled meeting of the HCA is November 4, 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, the Highway 1 Widening/HOV Lane Widening Project Approval/Environmental Documentation (PA/ED) process, the Highway 1 Morrissey Boulevard Interchange, and the Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA) are included in this staff report. As directed by the RTC, staff is preparing for an Open House/Project Information meeting and RTC Public Hearing on the Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lane Project the evening of November 17th, beginning at 6:00 pm at the County Board of Supervisor's Chambers.

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