

## AGENDA: February 2, 2006

**TO: Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission**  
**FROM: Karena Pushnik and Cory Caletti, Senior Transportation Planners**  
**RE: Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project Status Report**

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission:

1. Hear an oral update from Caltrans about the status of the construction bids;
  2. Accept information about the Public Awareness Campaign;
  3. Review and accept the Draft Transportation Demand Management Plan (Attachment 1);  
and
  4. Approve the attached resolution (Attachment 2) authorizing the Executive Director to implement the Transportation Demand Management Plan and expend funds in the amount of \$100,000 over three years according to the plan and the Commission's budgets.
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### **BACKGROUND**

The RTC, staff and Caltrans worked diligently to secure the funds for construction of this project and received an allocation of funds for the project at the California Transportation Commission's September 2005 meeting.

At previous RTC meetings, Caltrans reported that the construction bid package was released in December, bids are due on January 24, a separate tree removal project may need to be initiated early to avoid conflicts with nesting birds, and that construction is scheduled to begin in early spring 2006.

### **DISCUSSION**

At the time of this writing, it is unknown how many construction proposals will be received and whether the bids are reasonably close to the construction estimates. The Project Development Team – consisting of environmental, engineering, planning, landscaping, traffic, construction and maintenance staff from Caltrans, RTC and the City of Santa Cruz – will meet on January 26 to hear an update on the bids received.

As noted at the previous meeting, a separate tree removal bid request was issued in order to be ready to initiate tree work in advance of the main construction contract and avoid conflicts with the migratory bird nesting period should the construction bids be reasonable.

According to current information, the project schedule is as follows:

- Caltrans has issued a request for a separate tree removal contract with a work start date in early February if construction bids are reasonable.
- Caltrans will receive the bids for the main construction project on January 24 and do a quick review on January 25<sup>th</sup> to determine if the number of bids and overall cost would allow Caltrans to proceed with construction in Spring 2006.
- The Project Development Team (PDT) will meet on January 26<sup>th</sup> to hear the results of the construction bid process. If there is any uncertainty as to whether there will be an acceptable bid, the PDT will provide input to Caltrans. The option of suspending the tree removal contract is available, but it would only be invoked if extreme measures are needed.
- Tree removal would occur in early February, weather permitting.

**Caltrans will provide an oral project status report at the RTC meeting.**

Upcoming Public Awareness Campaign

The public information program for the Highway 1/17 Interchange Merge Lanes project will be implemented by Caltrans and City of Santa Cruz staff, with input from PDT members including RTC staff.

The first piece of the public awareness campaign is a mailer to be sent by the City of Santa Cruz to residents in the project area (zip codes 95060, 95062, 96065, 95061 and 95063). In addition, the mailer will be sent to the mailing list developed by Caltrans of people who have requested over the years to be kept informed about the project. Also, the City of Santa Cruz and Caltrans will forward the mailer to the RTC staff who will, in turn, send it in postal and email versions to the people in the RTC database who have requested information about the project (Enews). This way the RTC will not share their contact information, as requested by those who have added their names to the distribution list. Because Caltrans will be the keeper of the main mailing list for the project, people on the RTC mailing list will be notified that if they want regular project construction information they should also request to be included on the Caltrans mailing list. In addition, project materials will be distributed to libraries and made available at local events.

In addition, signs will be placed along the highway on the three entrances to the interchange in the northbound direction of Highway 1 and the southbound directions of Highways 17 and 1. Caltrans has secured a toll free hotline phone number (1-888-836-0866) for project updates and their website ([http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist05/projects/scr\\_1\\_17/](http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist05/projects/scr_1_17/)) has been expanded to include more about the project. Both the hot line phone number and the website will be listed on the highway signs.

In addition to the Highway 1/17 Interchange Merge Lanes project, two other projects include public outreach components in the first part of 2006: the Highway 1 HOV lanes project and the Transportation Funding Task Force. Staff will continue to review outreach materials to try to clarify and cross reference these projects to minimize confusion by the public.

A full report on the public information program will be provided at one of your upcoming meetings after the status of the bid packages is known. Staff currently plans for the item to be included in the regular March RTC meeting to take advantage of Community TV coverage.

## Transportation Demand Management Plan

The Regional Transportation Commission staff will coordinate a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program during construction urging increased use of carpools, vanpools and transit during peak congestion periods through public outreach, promotions and incentives. Funding for this effort in the amount of \$100,000 is included in the Caltrans construction costs and will be disbursed in a lump sum to the RTC according to the Cooperative Agreement between Caltrans and the RTC. At the Transportation Policy Workshop on November 17, 2005, the RTC received information and approved implementation of a TDM program for the 3-year duration of the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes project, approved amending the budget to program \$100,000 in FY 05/06 with \$10,000 to be expended during the current fiscal year and the remaining \$90,000 to be carried over to subsequent years.

A draft of the Transportation Demand Management Plan and a preliminary expenditure plan is attached (Attachment 1) for Commission review. The draft plan was provided to the Project Development Team and will be implemented with their involvement and in coordination with the City of Santa Cruz's Public Awareness Campaign. **Staff recommends that the Commission accept the plan, and approve the attached resolution authorizing the Executive Director to expend funds in accordance with the plan, the FY05/06 budget and future budgets.**

### SUMMARY

The construction bids for the Highway 1/17 Interchange Merge Lanes Project are scheduled to be received on January 24 and the Project Development Team will review the bids before tree removal work proceeds. Caltrans staff will give an oral update on the bids and tree work at your meeting on February 2, 2006.

Caltrans and the City of Santa Cruz will implement a Public Awareness Campaign and RTC staff will implement a Transportation Demand Management program. Staff recommends accepting the Draft Transportation Demand Management Plan and authorizing staff to expend \$100,000 in accordance to the plan, the FY05-06 budget and future budgets.

Attachment 1: Synopsis of the Draft Transportation Demand Management Plan

Attachment 2: Resolution

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## **Attachment 1: Synopsis of SCCRTC's Draft Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan**

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies are identified in the Transportation Management Plan (TMP) of the Highway 1/17 Interchange Merge Lanes Project and will be critical to introducing and encouraging alternative travel options especially during peak periods for the project's duration. Resources and incentives will provide education and enticements for transportation network users to consider alternatives such as carpooling, vanpooling, public transit, bicycling, walking, telecommuting, and flex time work arrangements, as well as trip reduction and/or consolidation.

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission's rideshare program, Commute Solutions, has been charged with the task of enhancing current TDM activities and providing additional programs and services for the 3-year construction time period. Caltrans is providing the SCCRTC \$100,000 for TDM efforts for the project's duration.

Commute Solutions employs the use of a local phone number advertised on the county's highways (429-POOL) and a website ([www.CommuteSolutions.org](http://www.CommuteSolutions.org)) to provide resources and services to commuters in their use of alternative transportation modes.

### **EXISTING PROGRAMS**

The following existing programs will be enhanced and increasingly promoted to area commuters and the public at large:

- Provide free customized instant online ridematching for carpoolers, vanpoolers, and bike buddies.
- Support existing vanpools on the Highway 1 and Highway 17 corridors; provide vanpool formation assistance to new vanpools and information regarding neighboring counties' subsidy programs.
- Distribute bike map, bike hazard reporting, pedestrian hazard reporting, safe routes information.
- Distribute informational brochures on organizing carpools, the True Cost of Driving, and general promotion of alternative modes.
- Promote transit ridership by providing bus schedules.
- Encourage the use of existing park and ride locations and provide maps.
- Provide referrals to Commission's affiliated programs such as Bike to Work, Electric Bike Incentive Program, Folding Bikes on Buses, TMA's Zero Interest Bike Loan Program, Emergency Guaranteed Ride Home Programs.

### **NEW PROGRAMS**

Several tested programs targeting different modes will be developed and implemented for the Hwy 1/17 Merge Lanes TDM program. A number of different approaches will be employed to maximize outreach methods, target populations and mode uses.

- Create and mail postcards or flyers to be distributed county-wide with a campaign slogan such as “Beat the Back-up”; use mailings to promote vanpool incentive program, instant online ridematching information, Park and Ride lot use and other resources.
- Develop additional temporary or permanent Park and Ride lots in collaboration with Caltrans; improve access, visibility, maintenance and safety of current lots.
- Use Changeable Message Signs to inform travelers of the 429-POOL phone number with reminders to “Beat the Backup” and other strategic messages.
- Use temporary informational signs posted on the county’s highways along with the existing “429-POOL/Ridesharing” signs to reinforce the “Beat the Back-up” message.
- Collaborate with the Public Awareness Campaign, tourist organizations and Chambers of Commerce to include TDM resources in mailers sent to neighbors as well as community wide outreach mailings or newsletters.
- In conjunction with the City and County of Santa Cruz, the City of Capitola, City of Watsonville, and the City of Scotts Valley, advertise alternative transportation modes and the “Beat the Back-up” message through city banners placed on major corridors.
- Consider reinstating the Vanpool Incentive Program and providing subsidies to offset the high start up cost of vanpooling in this corridor and providing critical assistance to vanpools in danger of folding.
- Perform annual evaluations of the TDM program and make adjustments based on results.

**ESTIMATED COSTS FOR 3 YEAR DURATION**

The available budget for TDM efforts, beyond existing programs, is \$100,000 for the 3-year duration of the construction project. The recommended programs are deemed to be cost effective and will reach the broadest audience while maximizing available funds. Estimated costs include staff time for the three year project duration.

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>FISCAL YEARS</b>			
	FY 05/05	FY 06/07	FY 07/08	FY 08/09
Staffing	\$8,000	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$16,000
Promotion/Outreach/Misc*	\$2,000	\$14,000	\$14,000	\$14,000
Sub Totals	\$10,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000

\* Park and Ride lot maintenance

**Overall Total: \$100,000**