

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

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***RECOMMENDATIONS***

This item is for information only.

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***DISCUSSION***

**Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project**

As a separate item in this agenda, Caltrans will make a presentation on the project components, and staff of the City of Santa Cruz will make a presentation on the Public Awareness Campaign.

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

As reported at the March RTC meeting, the consultant team is refining the geometric plans for the project alternatives and the traffic modeling analysis. The traffic analysis work continues to be the critical path work element to complete the preliminary design and environmental studies. The consultants have submitted a second draft of the reduced geometry alternative for review by Caltrans engineers and will meet in late March or early April to identify acceptable design exceptions to reduce project impacts and costs.

Preliminary traffic projections for the project alternatives have been produced and are currently under review by Caltrans staff. This data includes traffic projections on the highway mainline, ramps and parallel arterials. This information will be used to refine project design elements including operational characteristics of alternative interchange designs, the number of lanes on freeway ramps, and lane configurations at arterial intersections.

This information will also be used in the Transit Market Analysis to determine how transit ridership would be affected by facility and service enhancements associated with the Build and No-Build project alternatives. This work is being coordinated with staff of the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District.

The Project Development Team continually reviews the project schedule to determine if any time savings can be realized. Currently selection of the preferred project alternative is expected in the fall of 2007, following circulation of the draft environmental document and response to comments received from the public. State and Federal approval of the Final Environmental

Document is expected in January 2010, if subsurface archaeological excavation is required following identification of the preferred alternative.

## **Public Information and Outreach**

Staff is completing review of the Spanish translation for the project newsletter and expects to submit the newsletter to the printer in the beginning of April. The newsletter will be distributed to all individuals and organizations that have expressed interest and/or participated in the Highway 1 planning effort to date, to Transportation Funding Task Force members and organizations, and to all local libraries. In addition, it will be posted on the RTC website and Caltrans project website.

The Project Development Team is preparing materials for proposed informational open houses to be scheduled in early summer. The open houses are an important part of the Public Involvement Program to inform the community in a series of localized sessions about the status of the proposed project and the study effort. The meetings are not proposed as public hearings nor will any decisions be made at these meetings. A summary report of the open house meetings will be prepared as a reference document to ensure the full range of community interests and concerns are addressed through the environmental documentation process.

The Highway 1 open house meetings are planned to occur after the first round of the Transportation Funding Task Force (TFTF) workshops is complete in early June. Funds were provided in the FY 05/06 Budget for the public information meetings on the Highway 1 HOV Lane Project. Staff will present a proposed budget and resolution authorizing expenditures for the public information meetings at a future meeting.

## **Highway 1 Soquel Avenue to Morrissey Boulevard Auxiliary Lanes Project**

### **Funding**

As discussed at the March TPW meeting and in a separate item on the 2006 STIP in today's agenda, the availability of State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funds for this project is contingent upon the California Transportation Commission (CTC) including the project in the 2006 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) – scheduled for adoption on April 27, 2006 – and then releasing (allocating) the STIP funds designated for each phase of the project.

The Project Approval/Environmental Document (PA/ED) phase of the Highway 1 Soquel Avenue to Morrissey Boulevard Auxiliary Lanes Project will move forward in earnest after the CTC releases the STIP funds, which are needed to match the federal earmark secured by Congressman Farr in SAFETEA-LU (the federal transportation bill). The earliest that the CTC would allocate funds for PA/ED would be late July 2006.

As reported at past meetings, the amount and type of funding available for the 2006 STIP is subject to annual release of Proposition 42 revenues to transportation, repayment of prior loans

to the State General Fund, and the amount of State Highway Account funds directed to the State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP) and other Caltrans programs.

The CTC staff's recommendations for the 2006 STIP will be available on April 7th. Staff will report at the April TPW meeting about the likelihood of STIP funds being available for this and other projects at that time and will recommend how to proceed.

### **Coordination with Caltrans**

A Supplemental Project Study Report (SPSR), to update the Project Study Report (PSR) completed by Caltrans in the summer of 2002, has been completed and is circulating for approval in Caltrans's District Office.

Caltrans staff has begun work on a Cooperative Agreement to cover the roles and responsibilities of the RTC and Caltrans through the PA/ED phase of the project development process. This will be brought to the RTC at a future meeting.

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

The next scheduled meeting of the HCA is Friday, April 7, 2006 at 8:30 a.m., in the County Administrative Building.

### ***SUMMARY***

Updates are provided in this staff report on the Highway 1 HOV Lane Widening - Project Approval/Environmental Documentation (PA/ED) process and the Highway 1 Soquel Avenue to Morrissey Boulevard Auxiliary Lanes Project. A report on the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project is provided as a separate item in this agenda.