

**AGENDA:** April 6, 2006

**TO:** Regional Transportation Commission  
**FROM:** Lyle Broschat, Planning Technician  
**RE:** AB2766 Grant Proposal for Funding Park and Ride Expansion

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Staff recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission approve the attached resolution ([Attachment 1](#)) authorizing the Executive Director to apply for a \$100,000 AB2766 grant from MBUAPCD for the purpose of enhancing, expanding, and promoting existing Park and Ride facilities within Santa Cruz County.

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## **BACKGROUND**

Park and Ride facilities in Santa Cruz County have offered county residents a safe and reliable work-commute option for over twenty years. Free parking is offered to carpoolers and vanpoolers at five formal lots and two informal lots adjacent to the Highway 1/17 commute corridor. During the economic boom years of the recent past, these lots were a heavily used alternative to driving alone to work. Park and Ride facilities in Santa Cruz County offered nearly 500 free and secure spaces to all commuters.

In 2005, RTC staff conducted a general survey of the seven Park and Ride lots and determined that they were at only 50% capacity of use. The most heavily used lots were the east lot of Resurrection Church (State Park Drive and Soquel Drive) and the informal lot at Pasatiempo exit off Highway 17 (owned by Caltrans). The lowest occupancy rates were at the newer west lot of Resurrection Church and the Metro facility near Soquel Avenue and Paul Sweet Road.

The demand for Park and Ride facilities is related to a variety of regional factors, some predictable, and some unpredictable, such as economic variations and the cost of fuel. Demand is also related to public awareness and public perceptions, so education and marketing also play a role in encouraging the use of these facilities. Maximizing usage of existing facilities is essential in promoting this important commute alternative, especially in supporting the continued use of vanpools, which significantly reduce traffic congestion and air pollution.

## DISCUSSION

A potential funding source for Park and Ride lot improvements is AB2766 funds, administered by the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District (Air District). Each year the Air District accepts AB2766 grant applications from public agencies for projects that promise a significant reduction in regional air pollution, and the creation and expansion of Park and Ride facilities is consistently valued by the Air District as a direct means for reducing vehicle emissions. In the past, the Air District has readily approved grant proposals for new and expanded Park and Ride facilities, including the Resurrection Church lot expansion. Grant applications are due May 31, 2006.

In discussions with the Air District, staff learned that AB2766 grant funds may be applied to expansion and enhancement of existing Park and Ride facilities, including promotional activities and RTC staff time that is devoted to quantifiable increases in Park and Ride lot usage. Given the impending construction of the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes project and the consequent effects on traffic congestion, the application of grant funds for improved and expanded Park and Ride facilities may prove to be highly beneficial and timely.

Staff research concludes that many improvements could be made to Santa Cruz County's Park and Ride infrastructure. These include: (1) Improving physical access and visibility with additional signage; (2) Adding telephones, lighting, bike cages; (3) Improving bus stops at Park and Ride lots; (4) Sealing and restriping lots to maximize usage of land area; (5) Adding wheel-stops for safety; (6) Promotional/educational activities to encourage lot usage and generate public feedback.

Given the Air District's preference for matching funds, RTC would likely improve its opportunity for securing funding by limiting the total request to \$100,000, with 20% dedicated to promotional activities, and the remaining 80% to physical improvements that would promise increased usage as well as some expanded usage. Additionally, to meet the Air District's request for matching funding, staff time can be offered from RTC's Commute Solutions program, public outreach that encourages and facilitates car-pooling and van-pooling alternatives for work commuters.

**Therefore staff recommends approval of the attached Resolution authorizing the Executive Director to apply for an AB2766 grant from the Air District for the purpose of increasing public usage of Santa Cruz County's Park and Ride system.**

## SUMMARY

Staff conducted a recent survey of county Park and Ride lots and concluded that a variety of improvements could be made that would increase public usage. The Air District, in its annual competitive process for AB2766 grant funding, ranks highly any proposals that support car-pooling and van-pooling commute options.

Attachment 1: Resolution

