

**AGENDA:** April 6, 2006

**TO:** Regional Transportation Commission/Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies

**FROM:** Grace Blakeslee, Transportation Planner

**RE:** Freeway Service Patrol Program (FSP) –Cooperative Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding with Partner Agencies

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Staff recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission serving as the Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SCCRTC SAFE):

1. Accept the Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) Operational and Financial Report (Attachment 1);
  2. Approve the attached resolution (Attachment 2) authorizing the Executive Director to enter into a Cooperative Agreement with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and a new Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the California Highway Patrol for the operation of an FSP program in Santa Cruz County; and,
  3. Approve the attached resolution (Attachment 3) authorizing the Executive Director to compensate the assigned FSP back-up service contractors directly for FSP back-up service provided on Santa Cruz County FSP Beats.
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**BACKGROUND**

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SCCRTC SAFE) began the Santa Cruz County Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) program in 1994 at which point the SCCRTC SAFE entered into a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways (MTC SAFE) and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and MTC SAFE to initiate and operate the program. The agreements defined each agency's roles and responsibilities. In addition, the JPA allowed MTC SAFE to enter into service contracts on behalf of SCCRTC SAFE and provided a mechanism for SCCRTC SAFE to pay MTC SAFE for administrative services provided on behalf of the Santa Cruz County FSP program.

About one year ago, MTC SAFE and the Golden Gate CHP expressed an interest in revising their roles and responsibilities due the significant growth of the FSP program in the San Francisco Bay Area. SCCTC SAFE staff and the Santa Cruz Area CHP have been working with MTC SAFE and Golden Gate CHP to take on more responsibility for the Santa Cruz County FSP program. This requires changes to the existing agreements defining those roles and responsibilities.

**DISCUSSION**

## FSP Program Operations and Funding

The Santa Cruz County FSP program continues to achieve its goal of minimizing impediments including secondary collisions to expedite the flow of traffic and reduce hours of congestion on Santa Cruz County highways. The 2005 FSP Program Operations and Funding Report (Attachment 1) provides a summary of the Santa Cruz County FSP program achievements in 2005 and the most current cost/benefit analysis. In 2005, the Santa Cruz County FSP program made over 2000 assists, decreased wait times for FSP service by approximately one minute compared with 2004 and received overall excellent service ratings. The most recent cost/benefit model results, using FY 02/03 data, calculate the average benefit/cost ratio for Santa Cruz County FSP programs to be 10.8:1, an excellent rating, with 142,830 hours of congestion saved by having the FSP program on Santa Cruz County highways. Caltrans expects to run a new cost/benefit ration model using FY04/05 data in Summer 2006. **Staff recommends that the SCCRTC accept the attached (Attachment 1) FSP Operational and Financial Report.**

## New Cooperative Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding

MTC SAFE, SCCRTC SAFE and CHP staff have been working on the transition of administrative duties and responsibilities from MTC SAFE to SCCRTC SAFE. SCCRTC SAFE staff will assume responsibility for the majority of the Santa Cruz County FSP program administrative tasks currently under MTC SAFE's purview including procurement and award of contracts, preparation of monthly invoices and FSP contract administration. MTC SAFE will continue to provide minimal administrative support to the Santa Cruz County FSP Program including preparing monthly invoice templates, tracking fuel costs, arranging back-up service and advertising Santa Cruz County FSP program RFPs as necessary. SCCRTC SAFE staff anticipates a 20% to 30% increase in FSP staff time for the additional FSP program administration required under the new arrangement. SCCRTC SAFE will explore measures to reduce the amount of staff time required including extending FSP tow service contract periods from 3 to 4 years.

The transition of administrative duties from MTC SAFE to SCCRTC SAFE has direct implication on the roles and responsibilities of Caltrans and CHP as it relates to the Santa Cruz County FSP program and established in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Caltrans and CHP personnel have been involved in the revision of roles and responsibilities. The revised roles and responsibilities require a revised MOU and a different agreement between SCCRTC SAFE and MTC SAFE. Since MTC SAFE will no longer enter into contracts for SCCRTC SAFE and SCCRTC SAFE will not be required to pay MTC SAFE, a JPA is no longer required and a Cooperative Agreement will suffice to establish the new roles and responsibilities.

**Staff recommends that the RTC approve the attached resolution (Attachment 2) authorizing the Executive Director to enter into a Cooperative Agreement with MTC SAFE and to revise the Memorandum of Understanding for the Santa Cruz County FSP program to reflect the transition of administrative duties for the Santa Cruz County FSP program from MTC SAFE to SCCRTC SAFE and to describe the roles and responsibilities of the various partner agencies.**

## Back-Up Service for Santa Cruz County Freeway Service Patrol Beats

MTC SAFE contracts with tow service providers to provide back up FSP service when a regular FSP service contractor is unable to provide that service. In order to minimize SCCRTC SAFE costs, MTC SAFE contractors will continue to be available for back up FSP service. However, SCCRTC SAFE will now be required to pay contractors directly for back up services. The RTC needs to establish a mechanism for the direct payment of back-up service to the tow contractors. Therefore, **staff recommends that the RTC approve the attached resolution (Attachment 3) authorizing the Executive Director to directly compensate the MTC SAFE assigned back-up service contractors for back-up service provided on Santa Cruz County FSP Beats.**

## **SUMMARY**

SCCRTC SAFE staff has been working with the various FSP partners on revising the administrative arrangements with MTC SAFE, at MTC's request. Staff recommends approval of the attached resolutions to enter into new agreements as required by revised roles and responsibilities.

### Attachments:

1. FSP Operational and Financial Report
2. Resolution Authorizing the Executive Director to Enter into a New Cooperative Agreement with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways and to Enter into a New Memorandum of Understanding with Caltrans and the California Highway Patrol
3. Resolution Authorizing the Executive Director to Directly Compensate the Assigned Back-up Service Contractors for FSP Back-up Service Provided on Santa Cruz County FSP Beats

## Attachment 1

### Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission Service Authority for Freeway and Emergencies

#### 2005 Operational and Financial Report



#### Santa Cruz County FSP program

As the Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE), SCCRTC operates the Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) program in Santa Cruz County. The FSP program began in April 1994 with service on Highway 17. Service on Highway 1 began in 2000. Today this program consists of two tow trucks patrolling Highway 1 from Highway 9 to State Park Drive (Beat 24) and Highway 17 from Granite Creek Road to the Santa Clara County Line (Beat 17). Both highway segments are patrolled during weekday commute periods (6:00 am to 9:00 am and 3:30 pm to 6:30 pm). The Highway 17 segment is also patrolled on Sundays from 1:00 pm to 7:00 pm all year round and Saturdays from 1:00 pm to 7:00 pm during the spring and summer tourist periods.

Disabled vehicles and other incidents increase non recurrent congestion on urban freeways and increase auto emissions related to congestion during peak commute periods. The FSP program is designed to reduce congestion, improve safety, and reduce fuel consumption and auto emissions by minimizing the congestion associated with collisions and other incidents. FSP tow truck drivers are trained and supervised by the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and assist stranded motorists, clear collisions and remove debris from the roadway to keep traffic moving.

SCCRTC staff, in coordination with Caltrans and CHP, monitors the FSP implementation plan to ensure that FSP service addresses the highest congestion periods and segments on Highway 17 and Highway 1.

#### FSP Operational Report

Several variables are used to evaluate the level, quality and benefit of FSP service. The total annual number of FSP assists is one of the primary service indicators. Other indicators include average weight time for FSP service, hours of congestion saved, average assists per truck hour, a cost-benefit ratio and customer service ratings.

- FSP assists since 2000 have been as follows:

*Annual Santa Cruz County FSP Assists*

Year	Highway 1	Highway 17
2000	1486	1296
2001	1312	1162
2002	1110	687
2003	1073	696
2004	991	1195
2005	1041	1442

During 2004 and 2005, the number of Highway 17 assists per FSP beat increased back to previous assist levels. The lower number of assists experienced in 2002 and 2003 may be attributed to an economic down turn which decreased Highway 17 traffic. In addition, the tow contractor during these years exhibited less reliable performance. This tow contractor is no longer engaged to provide service on Highway 17 or at any other location in the Bay Area.

- The average weight time for FSP service in 2005 reflected a decrease from previous years from over ten minutes to less than nine minutes.
- In FY02/03 the FSP service saved a total of 142,830 hours of congestion in Santa Cruz County.
- In 2005, approximately 87% of motorists assisted by the FSP who filled out a survey gave the program an excellent service rating.
- The average number of assists per truck hour has increased to .75 in 2005 from .6 assists per truck hour in 2004 and .55 assists per truck hour in 2003.
- The cost-benefit ratio considers response time, incident delays and delay savings which reflect the level of congestion relief provided by the FSP service. Investment in the FSP program is essential for providing congestion relief during a time of reduced transportation budgets and few capital projects. The Cost/Benefit Ratio for Santa Cruz County Beats for FY02/03 are as follows:

FSP Beat	Benefit Cost Ratio
Highway 1	20.1:1
Highway 17	1.5:1
Santa Cruz County Average	10.8:1
San Francisco Bay Area Average (31 Beats)	4.1:1

The Cost/Benefit Ratio is calculated using a model developed by Caltrans in conjunction with UC Berkeley. The model was developed using studies on multi-lane urban freeways in the San Francisco bay Area and the Los Angeles Area. Many of the parameters assumed by the Cost/Benefit software program do not apply to Highway 17 characteristics, thus reflecting a low Cost/Benefit Ratio for Highway 17.

Caltrans, local SAFEs and UC Berkeley are working together to improve the Cost/Benefit Ratio Model to better reflect unique highway geometries and the most accurate highway count data. Highway geometry directly affects the Volume/Capacity Ratio assumptions used by the model. For example, the existence of auxiliary lanes, High Occupancy Vehicles Lanes and shoulder width are not always accounted for in the existing model; however, all affect actual capacity levels. In addition, highway counts data reflected in the model are collected by counters strategically placed on highways. In many cases counter data is not updated on a regular basis and may reflect counts from one or two locations of an entire highway segment. The next model update is expected to be released in Summer 2006.

### Funding

The services provided by the FSP drivers are free to the motorists. In FY04/05, the funding for the Santa Cruz County FSP program was a combination of State FSP funds and SAFE Program reserves due to the delay in programmed STIP funds for that year. SAFE reserves are not currently available to cover FSP program shortfalls due to the cost of call box upgrades and improvements. In FY05/06 the funding for the FSP program is a combination of State FSP funds and State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funds. The annual expenditure for the FSP Program in FY04/05 was \$251,000. The FY05/06 estimated annual expenditure is \$283,000. The cost increase can be attributed to an increase in contractor hourly rates, the increase in the cost of fuel and to the limited FSP two truck contractor competition in Santa Cruz County.

The State FSP funds allocated to each FSP program are determined annually using a formula which includes population, freeway lane miles and hours of congestion. Because of the manner in which the data is collected, the congestion hours figure can fluctuate from year to year. In FY05/06, State FSP funds were increased by \$2 million dollars to accommodate three new FSP Programs. The Santa Cruz County shares remained on par with previous years. In FY05/06 Santa Cruz County received \$153,000 in State FSP funds.

FSP programs across the state are experiencing significant cost increases primarily due to increased fuel prices. At the same time, the Statewide FSP funding has remained constant for a number of years with the exception of additional funding for new FSP programs. FSP programs throughout the state are communicating the need for increased State FSP funding levels consistent with cost of living increases and increased fuel costs. The Statewide FSP group continues to show decision makers that FSP programs are very effective congestion relief programs.

