

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission accept the Quarterly Progress Report (Attachment 1) from the consultant for the Highway 1 HOV Lane Project, and receive a status report on other activities related to Highway 1 projects.

DISCUSSION

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

Chris Metzger, Nolte Project Manager, will make an oral presentation of the Quarterly Progress Report (Attachment 1) for the Highway 1 HOV Lane Project. The critical path for completion of the PA/ED phase continues to be traffic analysis and investigation of cultural resources, specifically the excavation of potential archaeological sites. Scheduled completion date of the PA/ED process continues to be Fall 2009, with circulation of the draft environmental documents to the public scheduled for Fall 2007. Overall phasing/development schemes to expedite construction, should funding become available, will be developed over the coming year.

Traffic Analysis

As part of the engineering effort, traffic projections have been generated from AMBAG’s Travel Demand Model for the planning horizon year of 2035. The traffic projections are differentiated between the “No-Build” condition (meaning no changes are made to Highway 1) and the “Build” condition (meaning Highway 1 is widened to provide HOV lanes). Projections have been generated for both the freeway mainline and at specific locations on parallel arterials (i.e. Soquel Drive, Capitola Road, and Park Drive).

The travel demand data has been reviewed by members of the Project Development Team (PDT), including local agency representatives, and will now be used as input to a micro traffic operations analysis model. The detailed traffic analysis model will be used to determine the appropriate design features for the various project alternatives, including the location of auxiliary lanes along the corridor and number of lanes on the freeway on and off ramps. From this data measures of effectiveness (MOE) will be created to evaluate the various project alternatives including vehicle travel times and delay, person trips, and vehicle occupancy. The traffic projections generated from the AMBAG Travel Demand Model may change slightly when the

operations analysis is completed as more realistic capacity constraints will be applied to the model.

Work on the Transit Market Analysis is also progressing. Transit trips within the county have been analyzed, and transit trips outside of the county are now being assessed. Consultants and staff will be meeting with METRO staff to pursue discussion on potential service and facility design options that could be included in the respective Highway 1 project alternatives to improve transit operations and increase ridership.

Engineering

As previously reported, the consultant team continues to work with Caltrans engineers in refining the geometric design plans for the project alternatives. Highway 1 was originally designed and constructed in the 1950's and Caltrans has extensively revised freeway design standards since that time. To minimize impacts to the adjacent environment and minimize project construction costs, exceptions to current design standards will need to be accommodated. Even the proposed "Standard" Geometry alternative includes select exceptions to current design standards to accommodate existing conditions (i.e. the distance between the 41st Avenue Interchange and the Bay/Porter Avenue Interchange). The Reduced Geometry alternative will include additional design exceptions in areas that do not pose significant safety problems.

Caltrans traditionally requires that a fairly detailed engineering analysis be completed (characterized as the 35 percent level) for approval of design exceptions for each alternative under environmental analysis. To fit within the constrained budget allocated for the PA/ED phase, the scope of work was designed to avoid extensive engineering design on project alternatives not selected as the preferred design. Based on past experience of major projects in other localities, the level of design effort thought necessary for environmental review of the project alternatives was set at the 10 percent level in the consultant contract. Once a preferred alternative is selected the consultant will complete design work to the 35 percent level to receive formal approval of any design exceptions included in the preferred alternative.

The Project Development Team is working to identify an acceptable method that will allow Caltrans to agree to potential design exceptions "in concept" based on engineering work at the 10 percent design level. The "foot print" for the respective project alternatives can then be established and environmental analysis can be focused and advanced in those areas only to be impacted by the project alternatives.

Staff is hopeful that agreement can be reached on a method that will allow Caltrans to provide conditional approval of alternative design exceptions within the consultant's budget and project schedule.

Consultant Contract Task Budget Adjustments

Nolte and Associates and staff are reviewing adjustments to the consultant contract to address task budget issues. No funds need to be added to the consultant contract at this time.

Adjustments to the task budgets are being made to accommodate additional work under the existing contract scope as follows:

- Preparation of a Transit Market Assessment as part of the Traffic Operations Analysis to assess the demand and ability to supply transit alternatives in the project corridor.
- Review the Master Transportation Plan and Regional Transportation Plan Environmental Impact Report and provide comments to RTC staff.
- Advance the development of the Highway 1 Soquel Avenue to Morrissey Boulevard Auxiliary Lanes Project as an Independent Utility Project, including preparation of a Supplemental Project Study Report to qualify the project for STIP funds, and preparation and documentation of the public hearing held in November 2005.
- Allocate additional funds to Project Management efforts resulting from the increased schedule duration, the coordination with the Auxiliary Lane project, and additional coordination efforts required due to changing personnel at Caltrans.

In order to accommodate these changes without adding funds to the contract, funds will be reallocated from the following areas:

- Independent Utility Projects. Suspend work on advancing the remaining four “Independent Utility” projects identified in the original scope of services as separate independent projects. The three pedestrian and bike bridges will continue to be developed as part of the Highway 1 HOV Lane project, until there is available funding for them to be pursued independently. Similarly, the southbound Bay Avenue to Park Avenue Auxiliary Lane Project will not be advanced as a separate independent project.
- Project Study Report. Eliminate completion of a Supplemental Project Study Report of the southern segment of the Highway 1 project, State Park Drive to San Andreas/Larkin Valley Road, per agreement with Caltrans that this document is not necessary.
- Reassign funds previously budgeted for the preparation of the final environmental documents.

As staff and the consultant have reported in the past, it will be necessary to add funds to the contract in the future. Staff will return to the RTC for an authorization to add funds, when additional funding is available. At that time funding may be added to the contract tasks for which the task budget is currently being reduced.

The contract budget adjustments do not address work on the PA/ED phase of the Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lanes Project. Work on the Auxiliary Lanes project would be conducted under separate contract, subject to the review and approval of the RTC. Funding for that work effort is the subject of item #26 in this agenda.

Highway 1 Soquel Avenue to Morrissey Boulevard Auxiliary Lanes Project

Work on the environmental studies and engineering developed is posed to begin this summer once funding is secured to begin the Project Approval/Environmental Documentation (PA/ED) phase of the project. A proposal to provide funding for the PA/ED phase of the Auxiliary Lanes Project is discussed as another item in this agenda. In the meantime, Caltrans is preparing a

Cooperative Agreement outlining the respective roles of the RTC, serving as the Sponsoring Agency, and Caltrans, serving as the Lead Agency, through the PA/ED phase of the project.

Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project

Caltrans will provide a status report on the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes Project.

Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA)

The next scheduled meeting of the HCA is Friday, August 4, 2006, at 8:30 a.m., in the County Administrative Building.

SUMMARY

Chris Metzger, Nolte Project Manager, will make an oral presentation of the Quarterly Progress Report (Attachment 1) for the Highway 1 HOV Lane Project and the Highway 1 Soquel Avenue to Morrissey Boulevard Auxiliary Lane Project. The Quarterly Progress Report features travel demand forecasts for the year 2035 under the Build and No-Build scenarios, for both the Highway 1 freeway and parallel arterials.

Attachments:

1. Quarterly Progress Report on the Highway 1 HOV Lane Project and the Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lane Project, dated May 18, 2006.