

AGENDA: June 29, 2006

TO: Regional Transportation Commission/Transportation Policy Workshop

FROM: Rachel Moriconi and Kim Shultz, Senior Transportation Planners

SUBJECT: Request to Caltrans for New Project Study Reports

RECOMMENDATION

The Interagency Technical Advisory Committee and staff recommend that the Regional Transportation Commission ask Caltrans to prepare a Project Study Report for the deployment of Intelligent Transportation Systems on Highways 9, 129, and 152.

BACKGROUND

The preparation of a Project Study Report (PSR) is a required step in the project implementation process for major transportation improvements that will utilize state or federal funds. A Project Study Report is an analysis of a project's cost, scope and schedule, as well as an initial review of potential environmental issues related to the project. The purpose of the PSR is to set the basic scope for the project and develop a reliable cost estimate and schedule based on the scope so that the project can be considered for funding in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

Each spring, Caltrans requests that regional transportation planning agencies prepare a list of candidate state highway PSRs for the coming fiscal year ([Attachment 1](#)).

DISCUSSION

In deciding which new Project Study Reports (PSR) to request, the Commission will need to consider which state highway projects it would likely fund in the near future using regional share State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) monies or new local tax revenues. This is because any unused PSRs become “stale” over time. In addition, Caltrans’ resources are limited for the preparation of PSRs.

Based on past requests and projects previously identified as candidates for STIP funding, PSRs have already been completed or are underway for the following highway projects in Santa Cruz County:

- Highway 1 Bridge Widening over San Lorenzo River – currently being finalized by City of Santa Cruz Redevelopment Agency
- Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lanes Project – Supplemental PSR (to update the PSR completed by Caltrans in 2002 for Route 1 operational improvements) completed by the Highway 1 Project Consultant Team earlier this year

- Route 1 Ramp Meters and Operational Improvements – completed
- Route 1 Widening with HOV Lanes – completed
- Route 1/9 Intersection Improvements - completed
- Traffic Operations Systems (TOS) Elements on Highway 17 - underway
- Interchange Modifications at Granite Creek on Highway 17 – recently completed

Additionally, the Highway 1 Consultant Team is currently studying the following potential modifications to Highway 1 as part of the PA/ED phase of the Highway 1 HOV Lane project:

- Highway 1 Widening- south of State Park Drive
- Highway 1 Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Deployment: Changeable message signs, freeway service patrol coordination, CCTV, vehicle loop detection, Highway Advisory Radio, etc. Estimated cost (from RTP): \$2.9 million.
- Widening the 41st Avenue Overcrossing over Highway 1
- Pedestrian/Bike Crossings of Highway 1

Taking into consideration the fact that there are insufficient STIP revenues available to fund the projects listed above, the large number of projects currently programmed in the RTIP that need additional funds, and the short lifespan of PSRs, **the ITAC and staff recommend that the RTC ask Caltrans to only prepare one new Project Study Report during FY06/07: the deployment of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) on Highways 9, 129, and 152.**

This ITS project includes installation of changeable message signs, freeway service patrol coordination, CCTV, vehicle loop detection, Highway Advisory Radio, and other systems as appropriate for the respective corridors. ITS projects are low-cost, near-term options for relieving traffic congestion.

Other Projects Considered

Staff and the ITAC did consider several other state highway projects that have been identified as potential candidates for PSRs by Commissioners, Commission staff, local jurisdictions and/or members of the public in the past:

- Realignment of Highway 152 in Watsonville from the existing alignment through downtown Watsonville, to an alternate route. - Caltrans determined that a Systems Analysis evaluation (rather than a PSR) was the more appropriate course of action and has begun that work in coordination with the City of Watsonville. Caltrans is in the process of rehabilitating Highway 152 prior to relinquishing a portion of the highway to the City of Watsonville.
- Highway 1 Improvements between Highway 1/9 Intersection and Mission Street: Due to resource limitations and the lower priority status of this project compared to the Highway 1/9 intersection project and Highway 1/San Lorenzo Bridge Widening project, it is unlikely that this project could be funded with STIP funds in the near future, thus ITAC and staff do not recommend requesting a PSR for this project at this time.
- Highway 17 Mid-Town Interchange, Scotts Valley

- Miscellaneous operational improvements on Highways 129, 152, and 9
- Highway 129 Widening

Due to funding limitations affecting the potential delivery of these projects, the ITAC and staff do not recommend requesting PSRs for these projects at this time.

SUMMARY

Each year Caltrans requests that the Commission forward a list of its Project Study Report (PSR) candidates for the coming Fiscal Year. In consideration of availability of funds and resources, the backlog of unfunded projects in the RTIP, and the short lifespan of PSRs, the ITAC and staff recommend that the RTC only ask Caltrans to prepare one Project Study Report for the deployment of Intelligent Transportation Systems on Highways 9, 129, and 152.

Attachments:

1. Caltrans correspondence re STIP PSR Candidates for FY 06/07 and 07/08, dated March 20, 2006.