

AGENDA: March 1, 2007

TO: Regional Transportation Commission
FROM: Kim Shultz, Senior Transportation 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. Mr. Metzger's presentation will provide an update of environmental and engineering work completed in this quarter, and upcoming public outreach activities.

Over the past several months the focus of attention has been on the traffic analysis work to refine the engineering drawings for review by Caltrans and to determine the project footprint for detailed environmental studies. As previously reported, some challenges have been experienced in cost effective methods to address prospective design exceptions, particularly on the HOV build alternatives. Integration of the design options into the newly constituted HOV Build Alternative, discussed below, will help to focus attention of the engineers and allow work to proceed. Later this year, the consultants will be completing environmental studies and begin work on preparing the draft environmental document proposed for public release in Spring 2008. The scheduled completion date of the PA/ED process remains Winter 2009/2010. Overall phasing/development schemes to expedite construction, should funding become available, will be discussed in the future by the Project Development Team.

Engineering

Through this period the engineering consultants finalized the design plans that combines the "best" aspects of the previous Standard Design and Reduced Width HOV project alternatives into a single HOV Build Alternative. The new HOV Lane Alternative includes standard inside median and outside shoulders where there is sufficient right-of-way width (generally in the southern section of the project), but would seek design exceptions for a narrower inside median and/or outside shoulders and would incorporate retaining walls and other design techniques to minimize impacts where the right-of-way is narrow. With this

approach the HOV Build Alternative reduces impacts to right-of-way, homes and businesses, wetlands and other sensitive environmental areas, and ancillary project elements such as bridges and parallel roadways.

The newly developed HOV Build Alternative was submitted to Caltrans in February 2007 with requests for exceptions to design standards at the most critical elements (i.e. median and shoulder widths). Approval of design exceptions must be assessed on a case by case basis to ensure no compromises are made to motorist safety, but are commonly seen in areas that otherwise would entail considerable impact to the adjacent built environment or sensitive areas. Formal "approval" of design exceptions will be pursued with the benefit of full "Geometric Approval Drawings" to be submitted to Caltrans in early 2009, after the selection of the preferred project alternative anticipated in the Summer/Fall of 2008.

Transit Market Analysis

As part of the traffic engineering analysis, the project consultants are preparing a Transit Market Analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of each of the project alternatives (i.e. the Transportation System Management (TSM) alternative including auxiliary lanes and ramp metering, and the HOV Build Alternative that includes HOV lanes, auxiliary lanes and ramp metering) in supporting and enhancing transit service. RTC and consultant staff will be meeting with staff of the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (SCMTD) in early March to review preliminary results of the study. The preliminary results indicate that a substantial increase in ridership demand would be realized due to the HOV lane, ramp metering (with HOV by-pass lanes), Park & Ride lot facilities, and additional operational enhancements designed to improve bus service dependability and average speed.

Environmental

The environmental studies are all now in full process. An initial meeting was held with the California Coastal Commission (CCC) in mid January to begin discussion related to impacts to CCC wetlands. The focus of attention for CCC staff will be in review of the stream crossing design plans and review of assessments made by project biologists and water quality design staff. The next coordination meeting with the CCC will be held in the Spring/Summer 2007, after completion of environmental technical studies and prior to preparation of the circulation of the draft environmental documents.

Public Outreach

The draft Summary Report of the Open House meetings held in September has been submitted to Caltrans for incorporation in the draft environmental document. An Executive Summary of the public comments received at the meeting will be posted on the RTC's Highway 1 website in the near future. Work has begun on an outline for another newsletter reporting on the progress of the Highway 1 PA/ED process with a target date for distribution in the Spring/Summer 2007.

Schedule/Budget

There is no change in the project schedule from the last report that shows an anticipated completion date of late Fall 2009, or early 2010. Overall phasing and development

scenarios to expedite project construction, should money become available, will be discussed in the near future.

Additional funds will be required to complete the environmental document. As previously reported, current estimates are that the remaining budget will allow the consultant team to complete and circulate the draft environmental document, but will not allow for review/response to comments following circulation and finalization of the environmental process. The consultant team and RTC staff are currently reviewing appropriate scope amendments and funding needs for consideration in the call for projects to amend the RTC's 2006 Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP).

Highway 1 Soquel Avenue to Morrissey Boulevard Auxiliary Lanes Project

Staff issued a Notice to Proceed to the consultant in early January upon a favorable report from Caltrans on the Preaward Contract Review. The current scope of work involves the PA/ED process for the proposal to build northbound and southbound auxiliary lanes between Soquel Avenue and Morrissey Boulevard, and for reconstruction of the La Fonda Avenue overcrossing.

Depending on the outcome of Caltrans and RTC's application for Corridor Mobility Improvement Account (CMIA) funds, this project could be expanded to include modification of the Morrissey Boulevard interchange including replacement of the bridge over Highway 1 and realignment of the northbound ramps to improve motorist, pedestrian and bicyclist safety at that location. The California Transportation Commission (CTC) is expected to formally adopt the list of CMIA funded projects on February 28th.

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 meeting of the HCA is scheduled for Friday, March 2nd at the County Administrative Building in the Board of Supervisors Chambers.

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 information on the development of the geometric plans for the HOV Lane project alternatives traffic studies, environmental studies, and public outreach. The RTC issued a Notice to Proceed to the consultant team in early January to begin the PA/ED phase of the Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lane Project.

Attachments:

1. Quarterly Progress Report on the Highway 1 HOV Lane Project and the Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lane Project, dated February 14, 2007.