

AGENDA: October 4, 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:

1. Receive a status report on activities related to the Highway 1 Projects;
 2. Recommend a 60 day public review period for the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment for the Highway 1 HOV Lane Project; and,
 3. Authorize the circulation of a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for On-Call Right of Way support services (Attachment 2); and,
 4. Authorize the Executive Director to sign the Charter for Development and Implementation of a Corridor System Management Plan for the State Route 1 Corridor in Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties (Attachment 3).
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BACKGROUND

The 1986 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) identified the widening of Highway 1 as a high priority project to address growing congestion along the corridor. In 2003, the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC), in cooperation with Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), initiated preliminary design and environmental studies (referred to as the Project Approval/Environmental Documentation (PA/ED) phase) to widen Highway 1 to six through lanes from Morrissey Boulevard in Santa Cruz to Larkin Valley Road in Aptos. The new lanes, one in each direction, would be freeway lanes that are restricted to vehicles carrying two or more people, including buses and emergency vehicles, during designated times of the day, usually during peak periods. For additional background and current information on the project, visit the project website at: www.sccrtc.org/hov

In 2002, Caltrans identified auxiliary lanes between Soquel Avenue and Morrissey Boulevard as a relatively low cost operational improvement that would provide congestion relief to the busiest segment of Highway 1. Full funding through construction has been programmed for this project with the inclusion of \$2.9 million in federal funds secured with the assistance of Congressman Sam Farr, \$16.2 million in Proposition 1B – Corridor Mobility Improvement Account (CMIA)

transportation bond funds, and other sources in the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP). The preliminary design/environmental review phase of the project began in January 2007. For additional background and current information on the project, visit the project website at: www.scrtc.org/SoquelMorrissey.

DISCUSSION

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

As reported at the September meeting, the consultant team has completed the administrative draft of the engineering design and environmental studies for the Highway 1 HOV Lane Project. These documents are being reviewed simultaneously by Caltrans and the RTC. Following this initial review, and response to any comments Caltrans and RTC may have, representatives of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will review the documents. After the FHWA's authorization, the draft environmental documents will be released to the public and local agencies for review and comment.

In preparation for the release of the draft environmental documents, the Project Development Team (PDT) has created a second project newsletter published in English and Spanish. The purpose of the newsletter is to present current project information and solicit interest from community organizations in having presentations on the project given to their group.

The PDT is currently developing material for presentations to target groups to include neighborhood associations, business organizations, social/civic organizations, and special interest groups. Staff anticipates scheduling presentations beginning in the Fall of 2007 and concluding just prior to the release of the draft environmental document. Spanish speakers will be available for presentations.

Separate Open House meetings and formal Public Hearing(s) will be conducted in the Summer of 2008 in association with the release of the draft environmental document.

Duration of the Public Review Period of the Draft Environmental Documents

The project schedule adopted by the PDT early in the project development process provided a 60 day public review period beginning with release of the complete body of environmental studies. California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines and the Public Resource Code direct the public review period for draft Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) must be no less than 30 days following the date of the notice of availability, or 45 days where the draft EIRs are submitted to the State Clearinghouse.

Caltrans, the Lead Agency for environmental review, routinely follows this guidance allowing a 45 day review period for draft EIRs ([Attachment 1](#)). Caltrans maintains that the review period not be longer than 60 days, except in unusual circumstances, and "... that a 45 day review period is a practice most agencies, environmental groups, and individuals are aware of, and appreciate."

For the Highway 1 HOV Lane Project, the PDT recommended an extended public review period of 60 business days given the scope of the project, level of community interest, and diverse public opinion. Extending the review period beyond that date would lengthen the overall project schedule for completion of the PA/ED process. The public outreach program discussed above is intended to assist the public's understanding of the project thereby help in the review and critique of the draft environmental documents within the timeframe provided.

To avoid delays in the overall PA/ED process, **staff recommends the extended 60 day public review period for the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment for the Highway 1 HOV Lane Project.**

In the near future, staff will present a draft outreach plan to the RTC for input on how best to insure public access to all environmental material during the public review period.

On-Call Right of Way Support Services

As part of the PA/ED process, right of way data research and valuation must be completed for inclusion in the Project Report accompanying the Environmental Document. While the Nolte project team has done much of the initial mapping and parcel identification work, expertise is needed in the valuation of the properties required for acquisition. Additional work may be needed in efforts to secure Rights of Entry for archeological investigations once a preferred project alternative has been selected.

Caltrans requires that these duties be performed by a certified right of way agent knowledgeable of state regulations. Among the public agencies in the county, only the County of Santa Cruz Real Property staff is certified to perform these duties. However, the county's current work load precludes their ability to perform the required activities in a consistent and timely manner.

In consultation with Caltrans and the consultant project team, it is staff's recommendation that the RTC secure an On-Call Right of Way (ROW) consultant to provide the necessary expertise to perform these duties. In addition to the activities identified above, the ROW consultant would participate in the PDT and in policy discussions of alternative project delivery scenarios, planning and participation in public meetings, and coordination with Caltrans and local agencies along the corridor on issues related to right of way.

Accordingly, **staff recommends that the RTC authorize the circulation of a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for On-Call Right of Way support services (Attachment 2).** A Consultant Selection Team will be established comprised of RTC staff, Caltrans, and a local agency representative. The first task of the consultant recommended by the Consultant Selection Team, will be to work with RTC staff in the preparation of a scope of services and cost estimate for presentation to the RTC Board for approval at the Transportation Policy Workshop in January 2008.

The estimated cost for this work is \$85,000 to \$135,000. There are sufficient unappropriated revenues in FY 07/08 for the Highway 1 HOV Lanes Project to fund this activity. The necessary

funds will be added to the budget during the budget amendment in the fall. Work will not begin before then.

Highway 1 Soquel to Morrissey Auxiliary Lanes Project

Over the past month the consultant team and Caltrans have been working closely to define what improvements can be made to the Morrissey Boulevard Interchange within the existing project budget and schedule. Several design alternatives have been developed and are currently being analyzed for traffic operations, including consideration of pedestrian and bicycle safety.

The preliminary results of this analysis have been shared with City of Santa Cruz staff to determine localized sensitivities in that area. One area of particular concern identified by City staff is extended disruption to the community on the north or mountain side of the highway which is already impacted by the construction activity associated by the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes project. At the request of City staff, a presentation of the design alternatives will be made to the City Transportation Commission in early October. The results of that meeting will be reported to the RTC.

Once the scope of improvements for the Morrissey interchange are better defined staff proposes to hold an Informational Open House for the benefit of the neighboring community. Staff anticipates holding this Open House in the Winter 2008.

This project is under close scrutiny by the California Transportation Commission (CTC), as are all projects receiving Proposition 1B –Transportation Bond funds. Caltrans staff in Sacramento are working on a “Bond Accountability” website to provide full public disclosure on the status of projects through the development process. RTC and Caltrans District staff are working together to ensure the most accurate information is reported.

Corridor System Management Plan

To receive Proposition 1B – Corridor Management Improvement Account (CMIA) funds, the legislature requires the development and implementation of a management plan that will monitor and strive to maintain the level of congestion relief attained on corridors receiving CMIA funding. Highway 1 is a designated corridor by virtue of the CMIA funds granted to RTC for the Soquel to Morrissey Auxiliary Lanes project and to the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) for the Salinas Road Interchange project.

This effort is entitled the Corridor System Management Plan (CSMP). The intent is to establish a management tool “... to achieve optimal mobility benefits, across all jurisdictions and modes, for both regional and interregional travelers” (Attachment 3). The near term practical effect will be the accelerated deployment of traffic detection and monitoring systems, at state expense, to significantly expand the traffic data base to better analyze and manage current conditions and identify improvement strategies and projects to maintain or improve conditions.

Charter members for the development and implementation of the CSMP on the Highway 1 corridor include RTC, TAMC, the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG), and Caltrans. The Charter ([Attachment 3](#)) establishes a commitment among the partners to initiate the process that will include the involvement of local agencies, modal operators (i.e. Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District), listed in [Attachment 4](#).

Staff recommends that **the RTC authorize the Executive Director to sign the Charter for Development and Implementation of a Corridor System Management Plan for the State Route 1 Corridor in Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties ([Attachment 3](#)).**

The kick-off meeting for the CSMP is planned for late October. Staff will provide periodic reports on the progress of the planning process.

Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA)

The Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA) last met in August to receive the same Quarterly Progress Report received by the RTC and to approved an operating budget for FT 07-08. The next meeting of the HCA is tentatively scheduled for December 2007.

SUMMARY

A status report on the Highway 1 projects is presented including recommendations to establish a 60 day public review period for the Draft Environmental Documents ([Attachment 1](#)) on the Highway 1 HOV Lane Project, and to authorize the circulation of a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for On-Call Right of Way support services ([Attachment 2](#)). Staff also recommends that the RTC authorize the Executive Director to sign the Charter for Development and Implementation of a Corridor System Management Plan (CSMP) for the State Route 1 Corridor in Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties ([Attachment 3](#)). The CSMP is a legislative requirement for the receipt of Proposition 1B – Corridor Management Improvement Account (CMIA) funds for the Highway 1 Soquel to Morrissey Auxiliary Lanes Project.

Attachments:

1. Correspondence from Richard Krumholz, re Review Period for Draft Environmental Documents, dated September 19, 2007
2. Request for Qualifications for On-Call Right of Way Support Services for the Highway 1 HOV Lanes Project
3. Charter Agreement for the Corridor System Management Plan for Highway 1 in Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties
4. Corridor System Management Plan Team Members