

TO: Regional Transportation Commission
FROM: Kim Shultz, Senior Transportation Planner
REGARDING: Highway 1 Projects Progress Report

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission accept the Progress Report (Attachment 1), for the period December 2007 through April 2008, from the consultant for the Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lanes Project and the Highway 1 HOV Lane Project.

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 add high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes to Highway 1 from Morrissey Boulevard in Santa Cruz to Larkin Valley Road in Aptos. 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. In late 2005, the RTC received \$2.9 million in federal funds secured with the assistance of Congressman Sam Farr, which allowed preliminary work to begin on the project. In March 2007, the RTC was successful in securing \$16.2 million in Corridor Mobility Improvement Account (CMIA) funds which provide all necessary funds to construct the Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lanes Project.

DISCUSSION

Chris Metzger, Nolte Project Manager, will provide an oral presentation of the Progress Report (Attachment 1) for both the Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lanes Project and the Highway 1 HOV Lane Project.

Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lanes Project

The focal point during this reporting period has been on updating the engineering and environmental documents based on comments received from Caltrans on the initial administrative draft versions of these documents. Following a second review by Caltrans

District staff, the documents will be reviewed again by Caltrans legal and technical staff in Sacramento, and finally reviewed by staff of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Through each step of the way the project consultants will make all necessary modifications to the respective documents. The Project Development Team (PDT) is working collectively to advance this process and individually to resolve specific issues as they arise.

Only after the multiple reviews described above are completed will the documents be ready for distribution to local agencies and the public for review and comment. The current project schedule indicates a public circulation date in late August, but the exact date will be dependent on the timeliness of the preceding reviews.

Staff and the project consultants are working on an outline of the approach and format for the proposed release/review of the Draft Environmental Documents for presentation at the PDT meeting in late April. Staff proposes to present this outline to the RTC at the Transportation Policy Workshop in May for discussion and input from Commission members.

In the meantime, RTC staff has been working with staff of Caltrans and the California Transportation Commission (CTC) to make adjustments in the program funding between project phases to meet the accelerated project schedule as part of the approval of the 2008 *Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP)*. Following completion of the environmental document, right-of-way certification is expected to be the critical path to delivering the project, due largely to the long lead time necessary in coordinating the relocation of utilities as part of this project. Staff does not anticipate a need to purchase right of way; however, it may be necessary to negotiate temporary easements for construction of the project.

Highway 1 HOV Lane Project

On the Highway 1 HOV Lane project, the project team has been focusing on resolving outstanding design issues along the corridor so that all engineering plans and environmental documents can be updated. As previously reported, senior management of Caltrans, RTC and the consultant team toured the corridor in late January to advance discussion on outstanding engineering design issues. The meeting was very productive in identifying approaches to analyze and resolve issues in areas where engineering design exceptions may be warranted to reduce impacts to the natural and built environment, and contain project costs.

Included in the field review was discussion regarding the redesign of the Soquel Avenue Interchange. A potential resolution concerning the configuration of the northbound off-ramp is currently being analyzed using a micro-traffic simulation model and applied engineering standards to ensure safe and acceptable traffic operations. Mr. Metzger will provide any potential updates at the RTC meeting.

Delays encountered in resolving engineering issues on the HOV Lane project and the emphasis on expediting the Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lane project have impacted the projected date for circulating the draft environmental documents on the HOV Lane project. The draft documents for the HOV Lane project must undergo the same review as that described above for the

Auxiliary Lane project; however, the review time is much longer given the comparative magnitude of the project. The current project schedule for circulation of the draft environmental document is late Fall 2008.

As discussed above, staff will present an outline of the approach and format for the proposed release/review of the draft environmental documents for discussion at the the Transportation Policy Workshop in May.

In the meantime, staff has continued to make presentations as part of the Speaker's Bureau program. As of this writing staff has made ten (10) presentations and only used consultants when making presentations before the cities to contain project costs. Presentations are scheduled before the Cities of Santa Cruz and Scotts Valley in late May.

RTC members are encouraged to notify staff of prospective speaking opportunities or the names of groups and organizations that may be interested in having such a presentation.

Highway 1 Construction Authority

The Highway 1 Construction Authority (HCA) was created in 2004 for the purpose of managing the implementation of the Highway 1 HOV Lane Project. In 2005, the HCA directed that the RTC retain management of the Highway 1 HOV Lane project until funds are secured for design and construction. The HCA, staffed by the Santa Cruz County Public Works Agency, convenes periodically to review progress of the Highway 1 projects.

The HCA is scheduled to meet on Monday, May 19, 2007 at 8:30 a.m. in the County Supervisor's Chambers.

SUMMARY

Chris Metzger, Nolte Project Manager, will make an oral presentation of a Progress Report (Attachment 1) for the Highway 1 Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lanes Project and the Highway 1 HOV Lane Project.

Attachment:

1. Memorandum from Nolte Associates providing a Progress Report for the period December 2007 through April 2008, dated April 16, 2008.