

AGENDA: June 19, 2008

TO: Regional Transportation Commission/Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies
FROM: Grace Blakeslee, Transportation Planner
RE: Safe on 17 Safety Corridor Project – 2007 Annual Report

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission/Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE):

1. Accept the attached 2007 Annual Report for the Safe on 17 Safety Corridor Project (Attachment 1),
 2. Approve continued funding for the Safe on 17 extra CHP enforcement (Attachment 2) at an estimated amount \$50,000 per year not to exceed \$150,000 over a three-year period (January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2011),
 3. Approve the attached resolution (Attachment 2) authorizing the Executive Director to allow Santa Cruz CHP to carry-over prior year fund balances into future program years; and,
 4. Approve the attached resolution (Attachment 2) authorizing the Executive Director to extend the funding agreement with MTC and the extra enforcement contract with CHP to ensure continuation of the Safe on 17 extra CHP enforcement for three years (January 1, 2009-December 31, 2011).
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BACKGROUND

In 1998, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) initiated the Safe on 17 Program with the aid of a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS). The OTS grant was available from March 1999 to March 2002. During that period, injury collisions were reduced by 37% on Highway 17 through a combination of enforcement, roadway improvements and a public information campaign.

In 2002, SCCRTC SAFE entered into a three-year cooperative funding agreement with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways (MTC SAFE) and into a contract agreement with the CHP to continue providing extra CHP enforcement services on Highway 17. The agreement was extended three-years through December 2008 at the same funding level. The goal of the funding agreement is to maintain the reduced collision rate achieved on Highway 17 during the OTS grant period. MTC SAFE provides \$50,000 per year for extra CHP enforcement by the San Jose CHP office and SCCRTC SAFE provides \$50,000 per year for extra CHP enforcement by the Santa Cruz Area CHP office. In addition to the extra enforcement, the CHP continues to convene the Safe on 17 Task Force, and compile collision and citation statistics.

DISCUSSION

2007 Safe on 17 Annual Report

The 2007 Safe on 17 Annual Report ([Attachment 1](#)) reviews the work done by the CHP, Caltrans, SCCRTC and other stakeholders to continue to improve safety on Highway 17. The annual report was prepared by Regional Transportation Commission staff with input from Caltrans and CHP staff. The 2007 Safe on 17 Program includes: Extra enforcement, collision and citation data, Safe on 17 Task Force Meetings, public information and highway safety improvements. Below is a brief description of the 2007 Safe on 17 accomplishments. More detailed information regarding these activities is available in the attached *2007 Annual Report*.

Extra Enforcement: Extra enforcement on Highway 17 increases CHP visibility and citations and intends to have a deterrent effect on unsafe driving behavior. In 2007, the CHP provided 1,474 hours of extra enforcement through the Safe on 17 funding arrangement. This is a 30 hour increase from 2006. 565 hours were provided by the Santa Cruz area CHP and 909 hours were provided by the San Jose area CHP. Personnel and fuel cost increases have resulted in fewer CHP service hours for the \$50,000 investment in extra enforcement. Beginning in 2006, the MTC SAFE permitted San Jose CHP to carry-over prior year fund balances which allowed for San Jose CHP to provide up to \$77,000 worth of service hours in 2007.

Collisions: There were 129 injury collisions and 1 fatal collision in 2007; for a total of 130. This is lower than the total injury and fatal collisions in 2006 and lower than the program average of 159 (1998-2006). The *2007 Annual Report: Attachment 1* breaks-out annual collisions by type since 1998. The *2007 Annual Report: Attachment 2* includes 2007 monthly collision data for Highway 17 compared to historical monthly averages. The *2007 Annual Report* also considers the relationship between rainfall levels and injury and fatal collisions.

Citations: In 2007, 10,923 citations were given on Highway 17. Approximately 23% of these citations were given during Safe on 17 extra CHP enforcement hours. Total citations were less than those given in 2006. Primary Collision Factors (PCF) including, but not limited to, unsafe speed, improper turning and improper lane changes account for approximately 76% of all citations and 84% of extra enforcement hours citations.

Safe on 17 Task Force Meetings: Two Safe on 17 Task Force meetings were held in 2007 to discuss outcomes of CHP's extra enforcement efforts, to share updates on Caltrans' Highway 17 projects and to discuss safety issues on the Highway 17 corridor and coordination between partner agencies. Task Force members include CHP, Caltrans Districts 4 and 5, MTC SAFE, SCCRTC SAFE, local legislators, local media and local police.

Public Information: Public information educates residents and motorists about safety on Highway 17. In 2007, CHP included information about safe driving on Highway 17 at CHP sponsored events, during regular radio interviews and when speaking to the media. SCCRTC provided Highway 17 safety corridor information to driver education programs and traffic schools. Also, press releases from the CHP highlighted statewide extra enforcement efforts and safe driving messages were posted on changeable message signs.

Highway 17 Safety Improvements: Highway improvements are developed, coordinated and implemented by Caltrans, with input from the Safe on 17 Task Force. In 2007, Caltrans advanced several important safety projects on Highway 17. Construction of the Laurel Curve Improvements was completed and the Glenwood Curve Safety Project went out to bid in November 2007. In line with Safe on 17 Program goals, both projects focus on decreasing the number and severity of collisions at the project locations. Upgrades to some motorist advisory signs and the installation of some signs were completed in 2007 on southbound Highway 17 near Pasatiempo and on northbound Highway 17 near Crescent Road. Additional upgrades to signs near Ocean Street were investigated in 2007. Further improvements to Highway 17 continued to move through the planning stages during 2007 including, the Santa's Village Guardrail Improvement Project, improvements at the intersection of Vine Hill Road and Highway 17, and the Wet Pavement Correction Project which will improve the roadway between Summit Road to approximately three miles north of Summit Road. Details about these projects are available in the *2007 Safe on 17 Annual Report*.

The *2007 Safe on 17 Annual Report* without its attachments is included with this staff report. The complete report with attachments is available at the RTC offices and on the RTC's website (www.sccrtc.org). **Staff recommends that the RTC accept the 2007 Safe on 17 Annual Report.**

Continued Funding for the Safe on 17 Program

The Safe on 17 Program continues to achieve the program goal of preventing injury and fatal collisions on Highway 17 and improving the safety on this corridor. The extra CHP enforcement is a critical component of the Safe on 17 Program. Since 2003, the extra enforcement by the Santa Cruz and San Jose CHP on Highway 17 has been funded by \$50,000 from SCCRTC SAFE and \$50,000 from MTC SAFE. During this period the cost of each hour of extra CHP enforcement has increased over 40% with the most significant cost increase occurring in 2007. As a result, fewer hours of extra CHP enforcement were leveraged by each agency's \$50,000 investment in the program in 2007.

Meanwhile, the SCCRTC SAFE funds, generated from a \$1 fee on all vehicles registered in Santa Cruz County and used to pay for the extra CHP enforcement on Highway 17, have remained flat since the initiation of the Safe on 17 Program. In addition, the SCCRTC SAFE funds also support the call box program and have been used to support the Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) program when State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funds requested for Santa Cruz County FSP service were not received. Notably, the SCCRTC's request for future STIP funding (FY08/09-FY12/13) for the FSP program was not approved by the California Transportation Commission at their May meeting. As a result of future funding uncertainties for the FSP Program and other programs potentially funded using SCCRTC SAFE funds, staff is not recommending an increase to the funding amount for the extra CHP enforcement on Highway 17 at this time, despite the increases in extra enforcement hourly rates.

In some prior years the CHP has not fully used the \$50,000 allocated for extra enforcement. In 2006, MTC SAFE amended the funding agreement to allow the CHP to rollover unused funding balances allowing the San Jose CHP usage of up \$41,000 in accumulated unused balances. There is currently an accumulated unused balance of \$12,132 (through 2007) for the Santa Cruz CHP which can be rolled over to future program years.

Based on the program's continued success and funding uncertainties, staff recommends that the SCCRTC SAFE:

- **Approve continued funding at an estimated amount of \$50,000 per year for the Safe on 17 extra CHP enforcement for three year's (January 2009- December 2011) up to \$150,000, plus the prior year program fund balances (Attachment 2); and,**
- **Authorize the Executive Director to extend the funding agreement with MTC and the extra enforcement contract with the CHP to ensure continuation of the Safe on 17 extra CHP enforcement for an additional three years (Attachment 2).**

SUMMARY

In 2007, the Safe on 17 Program achieved the goal of maintaining the reduced injury and fatal collisions experienced during the initial Office of Traffic Safety (1998-2002) grant period. Strategies implemented in 2007 to achieve this goal include enhanced enforcement, engineering improvements, signing and striping, motorist assistance and public education and awareness. The attached annual report shows the work done to achieve this goal and to continue to improve safety on Highway 17. The Safe on 17 funding and contract agreements for CHP extra enforcement on Highway 17 will expire on December 2008. Staff recommends continued funding for the Safe on 17 Program.

Attachment 1: Safe on 17 Highway 17 Safety Corridor Project *2007 Annual Report*

Attachment 2: Resolution Authorizing the Executive Director to Amend and/or Execute the Necessary Agreements and Expend Funds to Continue the Safe on 17 Program for Three-Years and to Carry-Over Prior Year Unspent Funds in Subsequent Project Years