

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 May 2008 through July 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 and Parag Mehta, Nolte Project Managers, 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 and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Upon resolution of all outstanding items the updated documents will

be released for public review. An update on the target date for release of the draft environmental documents will be provided at the meeting.

When the draft environmental document is authorized for release to the public copies will be available electronically on the Caltrans project website, on CD available through Caltrans or RTC, in hard paper copy at Caltrans and RTC's offices, and at the Branchiforte and Central branch libraries. Caltrans has agreed to the use of the County Administrative Building and the Supervisor's Chambers for the Open House/Public Hearing. The public meeting will be scheduled at a point roughly halfway through the 30 day public review period. Additional information regarding opportunities for public input on the draft environmental document will be discussed as part of the consultant's presentation.

RTC's Role and Responsibility in the Environmental Process

At the last RTC meeting Commission Alternate Schiffrin asked for clarification on RTC's role and responsibility in the environmental process. RTC's role is determined by state and federal statute, and the Cooperative Agreement the RTC entered into with Caltrans which further defines agency roles and responsibilities. Caltrans, representing the State of California, is the Lead Agency responsible for approving the environmental document in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The RTC is the Implementing Agency responsible for managing the scope, cost, and schedule of the PA/ED process.

RTC is also a Responsible Agency in the development of the project as it has discretionary approval over project funding. Consideration of project funding will be critical in choosing the preferred project alternative as part of the PA/ED process. As the Lead Agency for CEQA, Caltrans will ultimately approve selection of the preferred alternative, and will seriously consider the RTC's recommendation.

Reference to RTC as a Sponsoring Agency pertains to funding activities, and is not part of the CEQA statutes. The Cooperative Agreement with Caltrans identifies the RTC as a Sponsoring Agency, responsible for securing the financial resources to fully fund the scope of work to satisfy all CEQA requirements, as determined by Caltrans serving as Lead Agency for CEQA compliance.

Preliminary and Final Engineering Work

Following completion of the environmental document, right-of-way certification is expected to be the critical path to the start of construction. Based on experience of the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes project, staff and Caltrans are in agreement that considerable lead time is necessary to coordinate the relocation of utilities as part of the preconstruction process.

To meet the accelerated construction schedule, the Project Development Team recommended that additional engineering design work be completed as part of the current PA/ED phase to provide right-of-way mapping and documentation necessary for Caltrans ROW staff to begin their work in a timely manner. To accommodate the additional design work, a portion of the funds previously programmed for the final engineering phase (referred to as Plans, Specifications

and Estimates (PS&E)), were transferred to the PA/ED phase as part of the *2008 Regional Transportation Improvement Program*. There were no additional funds added to the project budget from other sources.

The shift in funding for preliminary design work is included in RTC's *FY 2008/2009 Budget* for consultant services and the funding was authorized by the California Transportation Commission (CTC) in July 2008. Caltrans and RTC staff and project management consultant, Dale Dennis (dba PDM Group) have reviewed and agreed with the scope of services and cost estimate increasing the consultant contract by \$640,000. To accommodate this shift in expenditures, the budget for the PS&E phase has been reduced from \$1.96 million to \$1.26 million to complete final engineering activities.

Staff is negotiating with Nolte Associates to complete the remaining engineering work in the final design, PS&E phase for under \$900,000. This amount recognizes the additional engineering work to be completed in the PA/ED phase and will provide a buffer of \$360,000 in the PS&E budget to absorb an anticipated shortfall in Federal transportation revenues on this project. Federal funds in the amount of \$2.9 million were secured by Congressman Farr in 2005 and used to begin the PA/ED process on this project.

Cooperative Agreements with Caltrans

Staff is reviewing a draft Cooperative Agreement with Caltrans for the final design, PS&E phase of the project. This document will be presented to the RTC for review and approval in the next few months along with a consultant service agreement to begin work on the final design phase by January 2009.

Once the Cooperative Agreement and the scope of services for the PS&E phase are approved, staff will focus on the work program and budget for the RTC's consideration of assuming Construction Management responsibility for the Auxiliary Lanes project. This activity will include developing necessary agreements with Caltrans and consultant scope of services and costs to perform those services on behalf of the RTC. The timeline for the development of this material is late Fall/early Winter 2008/09.

Highway 1 HOV Lane Project

While the focus of activity during this period has been advancing work on the Auxiliary Lanes project, progress has been made in receipt of Caltrans comments on the initial draft environmental document and engineering studies for the Highway 1 HOV Lane project. The design of the northbound Soquel Avenue off-ramp is still unresolved. Two design alternatives have been developed and approved by Caltrans traffic operations division, and are now under review by Caltrans engineers. Any updates to this element of the project will be presented 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 current project schedule for circulation of the draft environmental document is Winter 2008/09.

Staff has continued to make presentations as part of the Speaker's Bureau program. A total of 30 presentations have been made or are scheduled through mid-September. An overview of the organizations to which presentations have been made is included in the progress report (Attachment 1, page 6). There is still time to schedule additional presentations prior to release of the draft environmental documents for the Auxiliary Lanes project. RTC members or any interested party is encouraged to notify staff of prospective speaking opportunities or the names of groups and organizations that may be interested in having such a presentation.

SUMMARY

Chris Metzger, Nolte Project Manager will make an oral presentation of the Progress Report (Attachment 1), for the period May 2008 through July 2008, for the Soquel/Morrissey Auxiliary Lanes Project and the Highway 1 HOV Lane Project. The staff report also provides clarification on RTC's role and responsibility in the environmental process.

Attachment 1: May 2008 through July 2008 Progress Report from Nolte Associates

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