

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: 2007 Appropriations Earmarks

MEETING DATE: November 16, 2006

AGENDA ITEM: 9

STAFF CONTACT: Jim Kemp, Steve VanDenburgh

RECOMMENDATION:

Discuss 2007 federal appropriations earmark projects and direct staff to return December with completed project applications.

SUMMARY:

SBCAG is periodically afforded an opportunity to request discretionary federal funding through the annual budget appropriations process. This report identifies project requests that could be submitted to our congressional representatives early next year for the FY 2007-08 appropriations bill.

DISCUSSION:

The federal 2007/2008 federal budget appropriations cycle will be starting after the New Year. Typically annual appropriations requests must be submitted by late March to members of Congress in order to meet the budget preparation timeline.

SBCAG staff has identified four projects that could be submitted by the Board to members of congress early next year. This list is intended to be discussed in November, and based on board direction, appropriation earmarks applications would be returned to the board for formal approval at a future meeting.

The potential requests include some that would augment previously received earmark requests shown on Table 1 (attached). Requests for FY 07/08 could include:

1. Additional Funding for ITS Projects on the South Coast.

SBCAG has received two \$800,000 earmarks for Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) projects on the South Coast. The funding will be used for a project that employs low cost ITS technologies for detection and management of freeway incidents and to provide real-time information about travel options and highway conditions. Since the ultimate cost of implementing all the elements of this project will exceed the funding currently appropriated, staff is recommending that the board consider requesting additional funding in the next budget appropriations bill.

Through the 101 in Motion process and other planning efforts, some potential “early action” projects have been identified that will help relieve traffic congestion in the 101 corridor. Funding and implementation of large scale congestion relief projects such as widening 101 are many years away and the board and the 101 in Motion Steering Committee emphasized the need to implement early action projects such as ITS projects that can relieve congestion and improve traffic flow quickly even if they are only partial solutions.

The major elements of the project could include (but are not limited to) establishment of a 511 Traveler Information System or establishment of highway surveillance system for traffic monitoring/incident detection. The project funded with the earmark would be selected by the board after adoption of an ITS Master Plan that staff is currently preparing with Caltrans Districts 5 and 7, South Coast city and the County public works departments, the sheriff and county fire departments, and the Ventura County Transportation Commission. The Master Plan would create a single list of ITS priorities for the South Coast that all agencies would support, so that funding that each has available for ITS purposes would be applied to implement elements of a coordinated and mutually supported ITS system.

The 511 Traveler Information System and highway surveillance system components of the project would be implemented to provide drivers with real-time information about local highway conditions including congestion, accidents, construction work, detours, lane closures, weather conditions, etc. Data on traffic conditions would be obtained with the installation of detection devices such as traffic counters, video surveillance, and other surveillance equipment. This system, which could be accessed by phone (dialing the universal 511 number) or by the internet, would allow drivers to make better informed travel choices. Travelers benefit by identifying travel options and having the ability to avoid driving during periods of peak congestion. The highway system benefits by reduced demand during peak periods.

It is recommended that the board consider requesting an additional \$800,000 for the South Coast 101 Corridor Operations and Management project and submit this request to Congressman Capps for the 07/08 budget. If the project is approved, the required local match of 20% could be provided from its Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE) budget or from regional Measure D funds.

2. Additional Funding for the Santa Maria River Bridge Widening Project

When the widening of Highway 101 to six lanes in Santa Maria, from Santa Maria Way to the Santa Maria River Bridge, is completed next year the four lane bridge over the Santa Maria River linking Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties will likely become a traffic bottleneck. In anticipation of this, SBCAG, SLOCOG and Caltrans programmed \$2.16 million in STIP funds, prorated 20%\20%\60%, for environmental studies for the bridge widening, which will be completed in December. SBCAG and SLOCOG also requested an earmark from Congresswoman Capps for design of the six lane bridge, and a \$2.7 million earmark was received. Caltrans has started to utilize the funds to do survey work in support of project design. However, an additional \$1.4 million earmark will be needed to complete design. SBCAG staff recommends that the Board consider another joint earmark request from Congressman Capps with SLOCOG to close the design funding shortfall. The estimated current cost of project construction, including Caltrans’ project administration, is \$58 million. No funds are currently

programmed to construction. SBCAG staff will recommend in December that the Board approve a joint submittal with SLOCOG and Caltrans for Corridor Mobility Improvement Account (CMIA) Proposition 1B funding to cover construction. This is a discretionary funding source under the administration of the California Transportation Commission (CTC).

3. Highway 101 \ Carpinteria Creek

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has released new 100 year flood maps in the Carpinteria area, and they show that water flows down Carpinteria Creek during a 100 year flood event would overtop the Highway 101 Carpinteria Creek Bridge. Any effort to widen Highway 101 to six lanes or to make improvements to the Casitas Pass Interchange as part of the currently programmed Linden\Casitas Pass Interchange STIP project would require raising the elevation of the bridge, and the profile of Highway 101 to the north and South. The cost of raising the bridge has not been calculated, but a rough estimate is \$10 million. That is the amount of an earmark that SBCAG staff recommends that the board consider requesting. Given the scope and cost of the earmark needed, and because it is driven by a FEMA flood map issue, Senators Feinstein and Boxer would be asked to assist on this earmark request, in addition to Congresswoman Capps.

SBCAG currently has \$24.3 million in STIP funds programmed to the Linden\Casitas Pass interchange project. There is \$1.9 million programmed to environmental and design (environmental is underway), \$6.6 million for right-of-way, and \$15.3 million programmed for construction. The project's purpose is to relieve congestion and improve operations at the two interchanges through widening and channelization of ramps and surface streets, provide a parallel facility to 101 by completing the connection of Via Real (frontage road) between the interchanges, and widening the Linden and Casitas Pass bridges over Highway 101 to allow for six lanes on Highway 101 to be built to Caltrans' standards. Improvements to the Casitas Pass interchange would require rebuilding, and therefore elevating, the bridge at Carpinteria Creek. This was not part of the scope and purpose of the project, but has become an issue because FEMA has released revised flood maps for Carpinteria. The current estimated construction cost of the Linden\Casitas project is being calculated by Caltrans for a Corridor Mobility Improvement Account (CMIA) application that will come to the Board in December, and the cost is expected to top \$60 million. So a \$10 million earmark and additional STIP funds programmed through future STIP cycles would be required to fully fund the project. Funds from the CMIA program could also be applied to the project to reduce the STIP funds that SBCAG would contribute to the project.

4. Highway 166 (East) Safety Improvements

At least nine people have been killed on Highway 166 this year, including in October the principal of Cuyama Valley Highway School. This increase in accidents has prompted the reactivation of the Highway 166 Safety Task Force, which includes the CHP, SBCAG, SLOCOG, the City of Santa Maria Fire Department, and representatives from the offices of Senator Maldonado, Assemblyman Blakeslee, and Supervisor Centeno. The Task Force meets to discuss ways to reduce fatalities on the highway and coordinate its resources towards that end. The CHP, for instance, has applied for and received a grant from the Office of Traffic Safety to increase patrols on Highway 166. Caltrans is designing SHOPP safety projects for the corridor, including a turn lane

project. SBCAG staff has begun talking internally about ways SAFE call box revenues could be applied to a safety public information campaign for the corridor. Requesting an earmark for Highway 166 would be another way that SBCAG could assist the Task Force. The earmark would be targeted towards the east end of Highway 166, from Highway 101 to the Kern\SLO county lines, which has been the location of six of nine fatalities. SBCAG staff has made contact with the office of Congressman Elton Gallegly to inform them of the safety problems on Highway 166 and the possible need for an earmark for a safety project. Congressman Gallegly's district covers East Highway 166, from Highway 101 to the Kern\SLO border. SBCAG staff has also contacted SLOCOG about the possibility of a two-congressional district earmark, including the 24th district (Cong. Gallegly) and the 22nd district. The dividing line between the 24th (Santa Barbara County) and 22nd (SLO County) districts is the Cuyama River, and Highway 166 meanders back and forth across the river east of Highway 101. SBCAG staff recommends that the Board consider requesting a two-district, \$6 million earmark, that could augment existing safety projects under design or study by Caltrans, or be targeted to other projects as advised by the Safety Task Force.

RECOMMENDATION:

This is a discussion item in November. Based upon Board direction, SBCAG staff would return with formal applications in December.

TABLE 1: RECENT SBCAG EARMARKS

SBCAG has had success recently in obtaining federal earmarks sponsored by Congresswoman Capps through the appropriations process or SAFETEA-LU authorization, including:

1.) 101 in Motion (\$600,000)

Funds have been utilized to complete the 101 in Motion study.

2.) U.S. Hwy Improvement Program (ITS Improvements) \$800,000

3.) U.S Highway 101 Operations\Management Improvements, including ITS \$800,000

Funds will be used to implement ITS projects on the South Coast upon completion of an ITS South Coast Master Plan by SBCAG, working with Caltrans Districts 5 and 7, local agencies, MTD, Ventura County Transportation Commission.

4.) Santa Barbara Coast Rail Track Improvement Project \$1,000,000

Funds could be used to improve tracks in Santa Barbara County in coordination with LOSSAN planning study underway.

5.) U.S. Hwy 101 Santa Maria River Bridge Widening \$2,700,000

Funds are being used by Caltrans to start design the widening of the bridge from 4 to 6 lanes, however, the earmark does not cover the full cost of bridge design. An additional \$1.4 million is needed to complete design.