

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Freeway Service Patrol

MEETING DATE: September 21, 2006

AGENDA ITEM: 6D

STAFF CONTACT: Brittany Odermann

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive a report on the first six months of operation of Freeway Service Patrol

SUMMARY:

The Santa Barbara County Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) began operation in March 2006. As of August 31, 2006 the FSP had made 941 service stops to assist motorists, clear debris, or assist the CHP in clearing accidents. The service is a cooperative effort between SBCAG and the California Highway Patrol (CHP). While the program is beneficial to individual motorists who have disabled vehicles, its primary purpose is to relieve traffic congestion by reducing incident response times. Staff is monitoring the program to ensure that the FSP program addresses the peak commute period and most congested segments on Highway 101 between the Ventura County Line and Turnpike Road. The attached spreadsheet summarizes information received from the FSP drivers and when available, motorists assisted. This information is collected through the completion and return of forms filled out by the FSP drivers and motorists at the time of the service stop.

DISCUSSION:

The Santa Barbara FSP is a public service comprised of a fleet of tow and service trucks that patrol designated portions (beats) of Highway 101 on the south coast corridor. The service is provided Monday – Friday during peak commute hours: 6:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. The services are provided under a contract by a local towing company and administered by SBCAG. During hours of FSP operation there is one tow truck and one service vehicle on-duty to assist motorists as they are discovered or as dispatched by the CHP. Services provided by the FSP include:

- Changing flat tires
- Jump starting vehicles
- Refilling radiators and taping leaky hoses
- Putting a gallon of fuel in gas tanks
- If the FSP cannot get the car running in a few minutes, it will tow the car, free of charge to a safe location off the freeway
- Clearing vehicles damaged in collisions under CHP direction
- Removing debris from traffic lanes under CHP direction

Member Agencies

Buellton ■ Carpinteria ■ Goleta ■ Guadalupe ■ Lompoc ■ Santa Barbara ■ Santa Maria ■ Solvang ■ Santa Barbara County

In addition to serving individual motorists as noted above, the FSP program provides congestion relief, safety and air quality benefits by:

- Reducing traffic jams by quickly clearing stalled cars which are one of the major causes of traffic congestion
- Reducing the chance of further accidents and bottlenecks caused by impatient drivers and onlookers
- Saving fuel and cutting air polluting emissions by reducing stop-and-go traffic
- Keeping narrowed lanes clear during highway construction projects, such as the upcoming Milpas-Hot Springs project

The Santa Barbara FSP program operates on the 101 corridor from Turnpike Road in Goleta to the Ventura County line. The FSP program was identified as a potential congestion relief project in the South Coast 101 Corridor Deficiency Plan and an early action item through 101 in Motion. The primary goal of the FSP program is to provide congestion relief on Highway 101. Other goals include reducing traffic delay and accidents caused by stranded or disabled vehicles; improving the overall efficiency of freeway operations for the motoring public; and providing safe emergency roadside service and towing.



The FSP program is funded jointly through a grant program dedicated to FSPs throughout the state and a 25% local match. Our local match is funded with call box revenues that SBCAG currently receives. Motorists who register a vehicle in Santa Barbara County pay a fee of \$1.00 toward the operation of the call box program. The County call box revenues generate a surplus that may only be used for additional motorist aid programs. The current annual contract cost for operating two trucks is approximately \$228,500.

Program Management

Staff actively manages the program through: regular communication with the tow contractor; monitoring program statistics; and facilitating quarterly meetings between the contractor and CHP. The FSP program partners met on August 1 to discuss the first quarter of FSP operation. Ventura County CHP dispatch and CHP representatives provided positive feedback regarding the program. The officers are satisfied with the service and feel that it is working well. CHP mentioned that they would like to improve communications between FSP drivers and dispatch in the future. Staff will pursue the purchase and installation of radios in each of the FSP vehicles to accommodate this request and replace the current cell phone system by which drivers talk to the CHP dispatch center in Ventura County. This will allow CHP and FSP drivers to communicate more efficiently.

The FSP contractor also expressed a need for bilingual brochures to assist the County's Spanish speaking motorists. Staff is currently working on a bilingual brochure for distribution by FSP drivers. To improve general communication with the public, staff is working on a FSP web page on the SBCAG website. In addition, staff will schedule a FSP media ride-along in the next six months to increase awareness and visibility of the program.

Statistics for 6 Months of Operations

- Engine problems, traffic accidents and flat tires are the top three reasons that motorists are breaking down and potentially congesting the highway. Approximately 14% of the service stops are to help motorists that have run out of gas.
- Most vehicles and debris on the roadway are spotted by the roving FSP drivers rather than being dispatched by the CHP. That indicates that a roving service, rather than a service where FSP drivers are parked waiting to be dispatched, is probably most effective.
- The majority of motorists are waiting less than 5 minutes before an FSP driver arrives to assist them. This quick response time helps rapidly clear the freeway of breakdowns that could cause rubbernecking and congestion.
- 94% of motorists' responses rate the program as "Excellent."
- Nearly 80% of motorists' responses say that they hadn't heard about the FSP program.
- Three-quarters of responses received indicate that they are satisfied with the current program; the most frequent suggestions for improvement are to extend the service hours and area.

The total number of FSP assists is one of the primary performance measurements. The following table lists the total number of assists for each month of operation. Staff will continue to track and monitor this information. An annual report will compare this information to other programs of similar size. Santa Barbara's FSP averages slightly more than 150 monthly assists.

Motorist Feedback

Currently, the FSP program receives motorist assist forms at approximately a 20% response rate. The towing contractor confirmed that this rate is comparable to other tow assist program response rates such as AAA. To increase the rate of return FSP drivers volunteered to distribute the form at the start of an assist and encourage completion and return. In August staff received nearly a 40% return rate.

	Number of Assists
March	143
April	126
May	168
June	178
July	151
August	175

Copies of various completed forms received are attached for your review. To date one complaint has been received. Overwhelmingly, motorist response has been positive and supportive.

Looking Ahead

Staff will continue to monitor the performance of the Freeway Service Patrol program. A full report on the performance measurements adopted by the SBCAG Board, including impacts to the corridor, service statistics, and a cost/benefit analysis will be provided in an annual report regarding FSP service at the close of one year of operation.

Future expansion of the program could occur on other freeways throughout the county as traffic congestion levels warrant expanding the program.

COMMITTEE REVIEW: None

SUMMARY SHEET

March 2006 through August 2006

FSP DRIVER ASSIST FORM

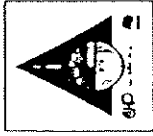
MONTH	TOTAL ASSISTS	1) Vehicle Problem										2) FSP pushed / towed vehicle to?				3) Was additional tow service required?					4) Type of vehicle assisted?						5) Vehicle found by		6) Location of disabled vehicle?							
		Out of Gas	Over Heated	Flat Tire	Dead Battery	Vehicle Fire	Engine Problem	Un-attended Vehicle	Debris	Traffic Accident	Other	Shoulder	Drop Location	Other Location	Did not push or tow	No	Rotation Tow	Member Tow	Big Rig Tow	Other Tow	Auto / van	Pickup	Truck >1 ton (not Big Rig)	Truck <1 ton (not Big Rig)	Motor cycle	Big Rig	Other	FSP Driver	CHP Dispatch	Freeway Lanes	Left Shoulder	Right Shoulder	Ramp	Gore Area	Unable to Locate	Other
March 2006	143	23	8	17	2	0	38	11	10	16	18	3	25	7	86	99	6	14	0	6	91	28	2	0	2	2	2	120	12	9	16	87	15	4	0	0
April 2006	126	19	4	9	0	0	41	5	10	24	14	3	24	11	76	71	6	14	0	21	91	19	1	0	0	0	109	17	13	15	68	22	3	0	3	
May 2006	168	19	9	27	1	0	33	12	18	31	18	4	26	11	90	69	9	21	2	15	101	29	3	1	0	2	115	46	14	33	83	27	1	0	2	
June 2006	178	27	12	28	1	1	54	15	17	12	11	3	20	21	86	66	3	31	0	26	104	29	2	1	5	0	133	35	13	13	116	17	3	0	0	
July 2006	151	15	7	28	1	1	35	10	18	25	11	6	17	15	87	73	13	19	0	19	97	33	0	0	1	0	116	35	12	19	95	17	5	0	2	
August 2006	175	28	9	29	0	0	43	8	17	33	8	4	17	26	109	96	4	22	1	17	111	38	5	0	2	1	145	36	16	22	97	39	4	0	1	
TOTALS	941	131	49	138	5	2	244	61	90	141	80	23	129	91	534	474	41	121	3	104	595	176	13	2	10	5	10	738	181	77	118	546	137	20	0	8

MOTORIST SURVEY FORM

MONTH	TOTAL RECEIVED	1) How long did you wait for FSP?					2) How did FSP know you needed help?					3) How would you rate FSP?					4) How long before additional tow service arrived?					5) How did you hear about FSP?							6) How would you improve FSP?					
		0-5 minutes	6-10 minutes	11-20 minutes	21-30 minutes	Longer	FSP Driver Saw Me	Used Call Box	Cellular	CHP Called	Other	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Other	0-5 minutes	6-10 minutes	11-20 minutes	21-30 minutes	Longer	News paper	Radio	Brochure	Friend/Relative	TV	Other	Hadn't Heard	Good - No Change	Extend Hours	Improve Courtesy	Quicker Service	Extend Area	Add'l Drop Location
March 2006	40	19	12	8	1	0	32	0	3	4	2	38	0	0	0	0	4	6	0	2	4	2	2	0	1	2	0	34	28	8	0	0	5	2
April 2006	29	20	5	3	1	0	25	1	0	2	1	28	0	0	0	0	5	1	1	2	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	26	20	3	0	0	6	2
May 2006	32	12	13	7	0	0	25	0	1	3	3	27	4	1	0	0	2	4	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	28	21	6	1	1	3	0	
June 2006	29	16	11	2	0	0	25	0	1	5	0	27	3	0	0	0	7	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	3	21	24	5	0	0	2	1
July 2006	32	20	10	2	0	0	26	0	2	4	0	32	0	0	0	0	2	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	3	23	27	3	0	0	2	0
August 2006	68	38	22	6	1	1	56	0	3	8	1	62	6	0	0	0	13	6	5	1	1	0	0	1	8	1	51	54	10	0	1	5	1	
TOTALS	230	125	73	28	3	1	189	1	10	26	7	214	13	1	0	0	33	22	8	7	8	5	2	2	12	9	14	183	174	35	1	2	23	6

FREEMAN SERVICE PATROL SURVEY

Dear Motorist: The Freeman Service Patrol is a free service designed to relieve some of the transportation delays associated with your daily commute in order to make this service as friendly and as swift as possible, please take a minute to answer the following questions. Your complete responses will be utilized in improving this service. Please return this form in the mail by using the prepaid postage on the back. THANKS!



1. How long did you wait for the freeway service patrol?
 0-5 minutes 6-10 minutes 11-20 minutes 21-30 minutes
 Longer

2. How did the Freeman Service Patrol know you needed help?
 Driver saw me Used a call box Used cellular
 CHP requested assistance Other _____

3. Overall, how would you rate the Freeman Service Patrol?
 Excellent Good Fair
 Poor Other _____

4. If your car was towed off the freeway by the Freeman Service Patrol, how long before additional help arrived?
 0-5 minutes 6-10 minutes 11-20 minutes 21-30 minutes
 Longer

5. How did you hear about the Freeman Service Patrol Program?
 Newspaper Radio Brochure Friend/Relative
 TV Other Hadn't heard about it until today

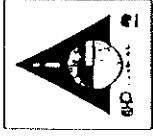
6. How would you improve the Freeman Service Patrol Program?
 Good service, no improvement necessary Quicker response time
 Extend hours of operation Extend freeway coverage
 Improve driver courtesy Provide additional safety drop locations
 Other This is an amazing service. Thanks to you

No gratuities or payments will be accepted by the Freeman Service Patrol truck drivers. Freeman Service Patrol truck drivers cannot recommend secondary tow operators.

Freeman Service Patrol is a joint effort of the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG), the California Highway Patrol (CHP), and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).
For comments, questions, and suggestions, please call (805) 961-8900. **No 0389**

FREEMAN SERVICE PATROL SURVEY

Dear Motorist: The Freeman Service Patrol is a free service designed to relieve some of the transportation delays associated with your daily commute in order to make this service as friendly and as swift as possible, please take a minute to answer the following questions. Your complete responses will be utilized in improving this service. Please return this form in the mail by using the prepaid postage on the back. THANKS!



1. How long did you wait for the freeway service patrol?
 0-5 minutes 6-10 minutes 11-20 minutes 21-30 minutes
 Longer

2. How did the Freeman Service Patrol know you needed help?
 Driver saw me Used a call box Used cellular
 CHP requested assistance Other Someone called me when they saw me stuck off the road.

3. Overall, how would you rate the Freeman Service Patrol?
 Excellent Good Fair
 Poor Other _____

4. If your car was towed off the freeway by the Freeman Service Patrol, how long before additional help arrived?
 0-5 minutes 6-10 minutes 11-20 minutes 21-30 minutes
 Longer Wasn't towed

5. How did you hear about the Freeman Service Patrol Program?
 Newspaper Radio Brochure Friend/Relative
 TV Other Hadn't heard about it until today

6. How would you improve the Freeman Service Patrol Program?
 Good service, no improvement necessary Quicker response time
 Extend hours of operation Extend freeway coverage
 Improve driver courtesy Provide additional safety drop locations
 Other _____

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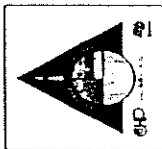
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For comments, questions, and suggestions, please call (805) 961-8900. **No 0245**

The gentlemen who assisted me was so nice, courteous, comforting and efficient! Thank you

upprax
9:00 AM
Nolan
Vancouver
Community
Service
(Stratford)
(Hondan)
Cove

FREEWAY SERVICE PATROL SURVEY

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1. How long did you wait for the freeway service patrol?

- 0-5 minutes
- 6-10 minutes
- 11-20 minutes
- 21-30 minutes
- Longer

2. How did the Freeway Service Patrol know you needed help?

- Driver saw me
- Used a call box
- Used cellular
- CHP requested assistance
- Other

3. Overall, how would you rate the Freeway Service Patrol?

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Other

4. If your car was towed off the freeway by the Freeway Service Patrol, how long before additional help arrived?

- 0-5 minutes
- 6-10 minutes
- 11-20 minutes
- 21-30 minutes
- Longer

5. How did you hear about the Freeway Service Patrol Program?

- Newspaper
- Radio
- Brochure
- Friend/Relative
- TV
- Other
- Hadn't heard about it until today

6. How would you improve the Freeway Service Patrol Program?

- Good service, no improvement necessary
- Quicker response time
- Extend hours of operation
- Extend freeway coverage
- Improve driver courtesy
- Provide additional safety drop locations
- Other

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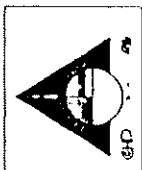
For comments, questions, and suggestions, please call (805) 961-8900

No

0362

FREEWAY SERVICE PATROL SURVEY

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1. How long did you wait for the freeway service patrol?

- 0-5 minutes
- 6-10 minutes
- 11-20 minutes
- 21-30 minutes
- Longer

2. How did the Freeway Service Patrol know you needed help?

- Driver saw me
- Used a call box
- Used cellular
- CHP requested assistance
- Other

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- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Other

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- Radio
- Brochure
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- TV
- Other
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- Good service, no improvement necessary
- Quicker response time
- Extend hours of operation
- Extend freeway coverage
- Improve driver courtesy
- Provide additional safety drop locations
- Other

THE DRIVER WAS EXCELLENT! I HAD A BLOW OUT IN THE FAST LANE OF THE 101N IN S.B. I WAS STRANDED AT THE CENTER DIVIDER

NEAR AN OVERPASS SO IT WAS VERY NARROW. I WAS A NERVOUS WRECK! THE DRIVER HELPED ME OUT OF MY CAR + INTO HIS TRUCK. THE

CHP ARRIVED, STOPPED ALL TRAFFIC FOR ABOUT 2 MINUTES WHILE THE DRIVER DROVE MY CAR TO THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE FREEWAY + THEN HE CHANGED MY TIRE. 911 CONTACTED AN IMPROBANT TOWING CO. THAT CAME MUCH LATER! 911 SHOULD HAVE CONTACTED FSP FIRST!

No

0958