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**STAFF REPORT**

**SUBJECT:** Draft Regional Transportation Plan

**MEETING DATE:** August 21, 2008 **AGENDA ITEM:** 9

**STAFF CONTACT:** Aubrey Spilde, Michael Powers

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Hold public hearing to receive public comments on draft 2008 Regional Transportation Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Report.

**SUMMARY:**

The draft 2008 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) were released for public comment on July 18, 2008. SBCAG published a notice of public review and public hearing in local newspapers, and notified interested parties via mail and e-mail. SBCAG held public workshops in Santa Maria and Santa Barbara on August 5 and 6, respectively. SBCAG has also received two letters of comment. Today’s meeting includes a public hearing on the draft documents. Comments on the draft RTP and draft EIR will be accepted until September 2, 2008, the end of the 45-day review period.

Staff expects to release the final RTP and final EIR in September. The SBCAG Board will consider adoption of the final RTP and certification of the final EIR at either its September or October meeting.

**DISCUSSION:**

The draft 2008 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) were approved for public distribution and review at the SBCAG Board meeting on July 17, 2008. (A description of the RTP is included as Attachment 4.) The 45-day public review period for both documents commenced July 18, 2008, and continues until September 2, 2008.

The notice of public review and public hearing (see Attachment 1) was published in local newspapers throughout the County and on the SBCAG website. SBCAG also sent the notice via mail to nearly 40 agencies and individuals, and via e-mail to approximately 600 individual SBCAG contacts. Some of the agencies that received copies of the documents include local city

and county public works/planning departments, transit agencies, airports, and partner agencies such as the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments and the Ventura County Transportation Commission. Other recipients include the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, Caltrans, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Federal Transit Administration. The draft RTP and DEIR were also sent to main county libraries. The State Clearinghouse was provided a copy of the environmental document for distribution to state agencies.

To solicit input on the draft RTP and draft EIR, SBCAG held public workshops in Santa Maria and Santa Barbara on August 5 and 6, respectively. The workshop included a PowerPoint summary of the two documents and time for discussion, questions, and comments. Paper copies of the complete DEIR, the complete Draft RTP, the RTP Executive Summary and project lists, and the PowerPoint slides were available at the workshop, as were CDs of the RTP and DEIR.

Five persons attended the Santa Maria workshop. Comments received at the Santa Maria workshop are detailed in Attachment 2 and summarized below:

- A safe, continuous bikeway is needed for students riding to Santa Ynez Valley Union High School and SBCAG needs to provide the High School with information on TDM measures to reduce traffic congestion.
- Improvements are needed to the park and ride lot in Santa Ynez, adjacent to the SR 246/SR 154 intersection.
- The intersection of SR 246/SR 154 needs to be modified to accommodate heavy northbound left-turns (left turns from SR 154 onto SR 246).
- To properly address climate change, more funding should be allocated to public transportation.
- More funding should be allocated to transit projects.

One person attended the Santa Barbara Workshop. Comments received at the Santa Barbara workshop are detailed in Attachment 2 and summarized below:

- What is the source of funding for the Coastal Express and does oil impact mitigation money provide financial support for this transit service.

Detailed staff responses to the comments, including proposed changes to the narrative of the RTP are also included in Attachment 2. All comments received to date have been directed at the Draft RTP and none at the DEIR.

SBCAG staff briefed TTAC on the Draft RTP at its meeting on August 7. One representative asked about the implications to the project list and financial analysis should Measure A fail to pass in November. Staff responded that of the new \$5 billion in total funding that is forecast to be available over the 20 year horizon of the RTP, one-fifth, or \$1 billion, is represented by Measure A. Loss of this local option sales tax revenue source will have severe consequences to the likelihood and timeliness of highway, roadway, transit, and bike project delivery. It is likely that many planned projects will have to be moved to the illustrative project list (ie. Projects that cannot be completed with revenues expected to be available).

SBCAG has received two comment letters thus far.

- A letter from the California Department of Transportation Division of Aeronautics states that the RTP adequately discusses policies, goals, objectives, issues, needs, and proposed actions applicable to the regional aviation system; assesses ground access improvements for each primary airport; considers multi-modal needs connecting airport access to other forms of transportation; adequately involves the public; and shows

financial feasibility. The Division requests that if the new California Space Center, to be located on a 66-acre site outside the front gate of Vandenberg Air Force Base on Highway 1, is moving forward, the SBCAG RTP address the additional transportation needs of the facility, considering tourists, employees, and any emergency vehicle transportation that may be occasionally required. ‘

- Response: Coincidentally staff recently received a briefing on the California Space Center project by project sponsors. Staff will add reference to the California Space Center project and the potential transportation issues in the discussion of roadway system needs for the Lompoc Valley, pg. 2-36. As the project moves forward, staff will work collaboratively in assessing traffic impacts to the Lompoc Valley.
- The County of Santa Barbara Public Works Department also sent a comment letter requesting that SBCAG include a project to widen SR 192 through the Montecito area on the Illustrative project list. The project would provide shoulders to increase safety for pedestrians and bicyclists, and the County estimates it would cost approximately \$75 million.
  - Response: SBCAG will accommodate the County’s request and add this project to the illustrative, financially unconstrained project list.

Comments will be accepted until September 2. The draft RTP and draft EIR are available for review at the following locations:

- SBCAG website: [www.sbcag.org](http://www.sbcag.org)
- SBCAG office: 260 North San Antonio Road, Suite B  
Santa Barbara, CA, 93110
- Local main libraries

Staff will evaluate, respond to, and, as appropriate, incorporate the comments received, and release the final RTP and final EIR in September. The two documents are scheduled for adoption and certification at either the September or October SBCAG Board meeting.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Public Notice of Availability of Draft 2008 Regional Transportation Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Report]

Attachment 2: Summary of Comments from Santa Maria and Santa Barbara Public Workshops

Attachment 3: Summary Description of the RTP

**Attachment 1: Public Notice of Availability of Draft 2008 Regional Transportation Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Report**



**Public Notice of Availability of  
Draft Environmental Document**

**2008 Draft Regional Transportation Plan**

As lead agency, the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) has made available for public review and comment the 2008 Santa Barbara County Regional Transportation Plan. The RTP provides for a comprehensive transportation system of facilities and services that meets the public's need for the movement of people and goods, and that is consistent with the region's social, economic, and environmental goals and policies.

The RTP covers state highways, county roads and local streets, airports, transit services, bikeways, rail and marine transportation within the cities of Santa Barbara, Carpinteria, Goleta, Lompoc, Buellton, Santa Maria, Solvang, and Guadalupe as well as the unincorporated communities of Santa Barbara County. The Draft RTP also contains all the projects from the Measure A 2008 Investment Plan.

Copies of the Draft 2008 RTP and Draft EIR are available for review at the SBCAG Offices and public libraries, or on the SBCAG website at [www.sbcag.org](http://www.sbcag.org).

**Public Workshops will be held to answer questions and take comments from the public on:**

**Tuesday, August 5<sup>th</sup>  
6:30 PM  
BOS Hearing Room  
511 East Lakeside Pkwy  
Santa Maria, CA**

**Wednesday, August 6<sup>th</sup>  
6:30 PM  
BOS Hearing Room  
105 East Anapamu St.  
Santa Barbara, CA**

The SBCAG Board will also hold a public hearing to receive public comments on August 21, 2008 in the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors Hearing Room at 105 East Anapamu Street in Santa Barbara.

Written comments must be received by September 2, 2008. Mail comments to SBCAG at 260 North San Antonio Road, Suite B, Santa Barbara, CA 93110 or e-mail comments to [comments@sbcbag.org](mailto:comments@sbcbag.org).

For more information, call SBCAG at 961-8900. Favor de llamar a SBCAG al 961-8918, para más información del reunión.

## **Attachment 2: Summary of Comments from Public Workshops**

### **Santa Maria Workshop**

6:30 PM on Tuesday, August 5, 2008  
Board of Supervisors Hearing Room  
511 East Lakeside Parkway  
Santa Maria, CA

**Attendees:** Sam Cohen (Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians), Joann Marmolejo, Carol Herrera (Women's Environmental Watch), Deborah Brasket (SBCAN)

### **Comments:**

#### Carol Herrera:

- In Santa Ynez, there is congestion on SR 246 between Refugio Road and the Chumash Casino, generated by Santa Ynez Valley Union High School (SYVUHS) students and casino patrons.
- Ms. Herrera's organization, Women's Environmental Watch, is looking to meet with administrative staff from the SYVUHS to develop a program that would encourage students to ride bicycles to school. Ms. Herrera would like to see a safe bikeway in the RTP that provides access to the school for students. She asked what SBCAG could do to help with TDM measures for the High School
- Ms. Herrera is also concerned about plans to expand the Casino.
- Transit is a peculiar issue in the area, particularly with only one high school for the entire Santa Ynez area. Students travel from throughout a large decentralized area, making the transit options difficult.
- Currently the bicycle path is not contiguous and thus not ideal for students.
- The park and ride lot in Santa Ynez, adjacent to the SR 246/SR 154 intersection, is outdated and could use facilities similar to those at the newer park and ride lot in Buellton.
- The intersection of SR 246/SR 154 needs to be modified to accommodate heavy northbound left-turns (left turns from SR 154 onto SR 246) during the afternoon/evening peak period. There is not enough room in the left-turn pocket to accommodate everyone coming from the south destined for Solvang and the Casino.
- Ms. Herrera inquired as to whether or not transportation projects ever receive private funding.
- Ms. Herrera inquired about the time of the public hearing.

#### Response:

- SBCAG and Caltrans staff met with the principal of SYVUHS several years ago regarding student transportation and received no response to TDM proposals. Now, with a new principal, it might be a good time for SBCAG's Traffic Solutions to meet with the School Administrator.
- Staff is unaware of plans for casino expansion.
- Improved bike lanes are in the long range plan, but are not currently funded.
- SBCAG plans to conduct a Park-and-Ride lot study this fiscal year to address issues like capacity, amenities, etc. This project is in our current work program.
- The Group II improvements to SR 154 funded by Measure D, currently under construction will address this heavy turning movement by lengthening the turning lane by 250' – which is equivalent to about 10 to 15 car lengths depending on separation and speed. This

project should be completed by July, 2009. For more information, consult the Highway 154 Improvements logo on the front page of the SBCAG web site: [www.sbcag.org](http://www.sbcag.org)

- Transportation projects generally do not receive private funding, with the exception of developer fees, which make up a very small portion of funding for new projects.
- A new paragraph (p. 2-38) will be added to the roadway system needs for the Santa Ynez Valley that explains the traffic near the Casino is compounded by the traffic generated by Santa Ynez Valley Union High School (SYVUHS). The heavy northbound left-turns from SR 154 onto SR 246 will also be mentioned.
- There is no set time for the public hearing on August 21st. The Board meeting begins at 8:30 am; since the public hearing item is early on the agenda, it will likely start around 9:00 or 9:30.

Joann Marmolejo:

- Ms. Marmolejo requested more information on the SR 166 passing lanes. Will these lanes be on the west (toward Guadalupe) or east (toward Bakersfield) segments? Where will the lanes be located specifically? When will the passing lanes be fully constructed?

Response:

- Passing lanes are proposed for both segments Santa Maria to Guadalupe and between the junction of Highway 101 and SR 166 and Cuyama. Initially the SR 166 improvements being considered to the west address the problems of open drainage ditches along the road between Santa Maria and Guadalupe. To the east the focus is adding message signs, rest areas, shoulder improvements, and passing lanes. The projects are all intended to improve safety. Specific projects and specific locations are still to be determined. Planned projects CT PL 1, 6, 9, and 34 address these issues.
- It is difficult to say when the projects will be implemented. The ditch improvements will likely take place within five years. Caltrans has a menu of projects and it chips away at the list as funding becomes available. Renewal of the local option sales tax, Measure A will be critical to expedited project delivery.
- There is a 166 Task Force that meets regularly and discusses options to improve safety on the road. The group considers ideas such as increasing CHP presence and implementing Caltrans improvement projects.

Deborah Brasket:

- Ms. Brasket inquired as to how often the RTP is updated.
- She also asked what is the most significant difference between the previous RTP and the 2008 RTP.
- Ms. Brasket also inquired about how the RTP addresses global warming. What percentage of funds is allocated to alternative transportation? Is it more or less than what was allocated in the previous RTP? If the Plan discusses climate change, shouldn't alternative transportation be a priority? Does the Plan account for major shifts away from gasoline-powered vehicles to electric vehicles?
- She also expressed concerns about the lack of funding for alternatives including transit.

Response:

- The RTP is updated every three to five years. The update cycle varies as federal and state regulations change. The first page of the Executive Summary of the RTP notes that, according to current regulation, SBCAG must update its RTP at least every five years.
- An overview of the how the 2008 RTP differs from the 2004 MTP is included on p. 1-1. On p. 6-41 there is a short description of how the program of projects differs from the

previous Plan. The 2008 RTP addresses newly important issues such as safety and security—a priority since 9/11—and global warming. It also forecasts costs and revenues in year-of-expenditure dollars, attempting to predict how costs will change and how the value of money will change throughout the life of the Plan.

- The RTP discusses climate change on pages 2-11 – 2-13 and 4-13 (see Figure 4.2). The RTP considers the impact of three different implementation options—No Build, Programmed, and Planned—on on-road mobile source carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions. The Planned scenario—implementing all program and plan projects in the RTP—would result in the lowest emission levels.
- There are restrictions on funds that limit the amount that can be allocated to transit. For example, the California Constitution prohibits gas taxes from being used for maintenance and operations. Also, highway projects are expensive by nature and require more funding.
- The Plan does not account for major shifts from gasoline-powered vehicles to electric vehicles. This shift would be more market-driven. The RTP does, however, address alternative fuels.
- New transit services are planned. A statement about the portion of funds for alternative transportation is included on p. 6-41: “The RTP program of projects shows a transit share similar to the MTP at 27.6%, compared to 29.7% in 2004.”

Carol Herrera:

- Ms. Herrera inquired as to what happens to the Plan if there are major policy changes at the Federal level. Will the Plan be altered to reflect this?

Response:

- Yes, the Plan would be updated to reflect dramatic policy changes or other events such as large earthquakes. Increasing fuel prices have not yet significantly affected driving patterns (SBCAG compared traffic volumes at the on US 101 at the Santa Barbara-Ventura County line and the Santa Barbara-San Luis Obispo County line, and there was little to no change in volume from 2006 and 2007 to 2008), but that could also affect the applicability of the Plan.

Joann Marmolejo:

- Ms. Marmolejo asked about the interchange on Highway 101 at Union Valley Parkway in Santa Maria.

Response:

- The project in a programmed project (C-17) in the RTP which includes an interchange and on- and off-ramps that improve access to the airport. A public hearing on the project will be held August 12th.

**Santa Barbara Workshop**

6:30 PM on Wednesday, August 6, 2008

Board of Supervisors Hearing Room

105 East Anapamu Street

Santa Barbara, CA

**Attendees:** Phillip B. Greene, Marian Medical Center

**Comments:**

- What is the source of funding for the Coastal Express and does oil impact mitigation money provide financial support for this transit service.
- Where is the location of Central Avenue?

**Response:**

- The Coastal Express Intercommunity Transit Service is jointly funding by Ventura County Transportation Commission and SBCAG. There is no oil impact mitigation funds used to support this service. The source of funding from SBCAG is Measure D, and originally, federal Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) funds; from VCTC federal transit funding; and. passenger fares from the bus riders.
- Staff also clarified the location of the Central Ave. project and added that we would provide a notice of UVP Project workshop.

- **Attachment 3: Summary Description of the RTP**

Federal and state statutes require SBCAG, as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and the regional transportation planning agency (RTPA), to develop a long-range transportation plan, referred to as the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). “The purpose of the RTP is to establish regional goals, identify present and future needs, deficiencies, and constraints, analyze potential solutions, estimate available funding and propose investments.”<sup>1</sup>

SBCAG has prepared a *Draft Regional Transportation Plan: VISION 2030* that addresses both federal and state requirements. It covers the period of 2007-2030 and updates the *2004 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)*.

*VISION 2030* differs from the 2004 MTP in that it contains:

- New factors, such as safety and security, examined due to SAFETEA-LU
- New emerging policy issues such as climate change
- Reference to new studies such as the LOSSAN North Strategic Plan, North County Transit Plan, 2007 Transit Needs Assessment, 2007 SBCAG Travel Trends Report, 2007 Traffic Solutions Commuter Survey, etc.
- Updated Program and Plan project lists
- Inclusion of a transportation programs section to complement the list of road, transit, rail, bike, and pedestrian capital projects
- Updated financial information
- Inclusion of 101 In Motion consensus projects and Measure A Renewal projects
- New format
- Accompanying Environmental Impact Report

The chapters of *VISION 2030* include:

1. WHERE WE ARE TODAY
2. EXISTING CHALLENGES
3. GOALS OF VISION 2030—the Policy Element
4. PUTTING THE PLAN IN MOTION—the Action Element
5. EXAMINING OUR RESOURCES—the Financial Element
6. HOW VISION 2030 WILL PERFORM—the Performance Element

Chapter 1 introduces Santa Barbara County and describes its geographic, economic, and demographic characteristics. It explains the purpose of the RTP, the requirements, and the planning process. It also provides an overview of the County’s multimodal transportation system—the roadway, bikeway, transit, rail, aviation, and marine systems. In addition, it summarizes the public input received at the publicly noticed workshops held throughout the County in November 2007.

Chapter 2 describes the challenges the region faces, outlining issues such as population and traffic growth, dependency on automobile travel, integrating land use and transportation planning, air quality, and the emerging policy issues related to climate change. The chapter also describes the challenges of maintaining a safe and secure transportation system in good working order. The chapter emphasizes the importance of managing our transportation system and the incorporation of strategic environmental issues. Challenges related to intermodal connectivity and goods movements are also highlighted, addressing highway, transit, rail, bikeway, and

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<sup>1</sup> 2007 California Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines, p. 15.

airport systems of travel.

Chapter 3 identifies the goals and policies to meet the transportation needs of the region. Based on input from the Technical Transportation Advisory Committee (TTAC) and public workshops, goals and policies have been updated since 2004 to address system safety, local land use coordination, rail, and funding.

Chapter 4 is the Action Element. It describes the progress made in implementing the 2004 MTP and the implementation strategy for the 2008 RTP. It details the many SBCAG transportation programs and then discusses the Capital Improvement Program (the Program and Plan project lists). It contains an improvement strategy that emphasizes completion of the bikeway network, improved transit service, and additions to highway capacity. Appendix D includes the details of the Program, Plan, Illustrative, & Airport Plan projects. The "Illustrative" project list includes those projects for which funding is definitely not available under the revenue assumptions in the financial forecast. Chapter 4 includes the criteria for regional significance used to select projects for the project lists, as well as maps of Program and Plan projects throughout the County.

Chapter 5, the Financial Element, assesses the financial resources available to implement the projects identified in the Action Element. The analysis concludes that the region will likely have sufficient revenues to fund the projects in the first five year period; however, our future (10 to 20 years) capability to fund needed road maintenance is dependent on the continuation of Measure D beyond the sunset date of 2010.

Chapter 6 is the Performance Element. It includes measures to evaluate current and future multimodal system performance for the movement of people and goods. It details how the projects in the Program and Plan lists will impact traffic throughout the County, and forecasts impacts on transit. The chapter also addresses environmental justice.