

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: South Coast Highway 101 Widening: Phase 2

MEETING DATE: July 17, 2008

AGENDA ITEM: 10

STAFF CONTACT: Fred Luna

RECOMMENDATION: Receive a status report from Caltrans District 7 (Los Angeles) on the widening of Highway 101 from Mussel Shoals (Ventura County) to Carpinteria.

SUMMARY:

Work is progressing rapidly on Phase II of the widening of Highway 101 from four to six lanes on the South Coast. Phase II extends from Mussel Shoals in Ventura County to Carpinteria Creek in Carpinteria, a distance of 6.2 miles.

A project team consisting of SBCAG, Ventura County Transportation Commission, Caltrans District 5, and Caltrans District 7 as lead agency, has been meeting regularly for nearly a year to prepare preliminary engineering and a draft environmental document. The team is nearing release of the environmental document to the public in August.

The project is fully funded with \$131 million from the Proposition 1B Corridor Mobility Improvement Account program and \$20 million in interregional STIP funds. The funding is sufficient to cover all phases of the project from environmental through construction. The Prop 1B CMIA program guidelines require that projects receiving funding be under construction by December 31, 2012. Projects that do not stay on track to meet that deadline will come under the scrutiny of the California Transportation Commission and potentially lose project funding. Funds were secured by the project team from the CTC through an intense statewide competition that was concluded in February 2007. One of the selling points of the project that helped it secure funding was a commitment by the team that the new lanes would be High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes, also known as carpool or diamond lanes.

The preliminary project design for this segment calls for widening the highway into the median, similar to the median widening that is occurring on Highway 101 in Santa Maria which will reduce the need for significant right of way acquisitions which could put the project behind schedule and jeopardize project funding. The project will also improve pedestrian access under Highway 101 in the community of La Conchita to allow residents to access beach areas. The project is currently scheduled to be put out to construction bidding in the fall of 2010.

Caltrans District 7 will provide a presentation to the SBCAG board on the status of the project, discuss some of the issues that have been identified during environmental scoping, and provide a summary of remaining steps to reach construction

DISCUSSION:

Background

In 2006, the SBCAG board adopted the *101 in Motion* plan which identified widening the four lane corridor of Highway 101 on the South Coast as a priority for improving mobility and addressing congestion levels over the next 30 years. This corridor includes the most heavily traveled segments of Highway 101 between Ventura County and the South San Francisco Bay Area.

In 2006, an opportunity was presented to widen part of the corridor when Proposition 1B was approved by the voters of California and applications by the California Transportation Commission were solicited to fund projects that would improve mobility on key corridors. SBCAG staff worked closely and successfully with Caltrans District 5, District 7 and VCTC to submit an application to widen 6.2 miles from Mussel Shoals to Carpinteria, and \$131 million in CMIA funds and \$20 million in interregional STIP funds were awarded to the project. A key feature of the project that helped it secure CMIA funding was that the additional lanes would be High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes.

Highway 101 Widening Strategy

The CMIA funded project is now identified as Phase 2 of SBCAG's comprehensive strategy to widen Highway 101 in order to relieve congestion and improve safety and operations. The projects that comprise this strategy are described below and shown graphically on the attachment.

Phase 1 - Highway 101 Milpas to Cabrillo\Hot Springs: This project includes widening and operational improvements over approximately 2 miles at the north end of the corridor. Construction begins this month and is anticipated to continue through the summer 2012.

Phase 2 – 101 Widening from Mussel Shoals and Carpinteria: This project will add a third lane (HOV lane) in each direction and is the subject of this staff report. The total length of widening is approximately 6.2 miles. The widening will be constructed in the existing median (areas between the northbound and southbound lanes) and new center concrete barriers will be constructed. The existing median is sparsely landscaped. Additional improvements are described later in the report.

Phase 3 - Linden Avenue and Casitas Pass Interchanges: This project will reconstruct the bridges over Highway 101 at both Linden Avenue and Casitas Pass to meet state standards for vertical clearance and to accommodate 6 lanes at state standards. The interchange on and off ramps and their surface street intersections will also be modified and improved. The Linden and Casitas bridge decks will also be widened to accommodate additional wider surface streets for through and turn lanes. The Highway 101 bridge over Carpinteria Creek will be widened to accommodate 6 highway lanes. SBCAG and Caltrans have committed over \$65 million in STIP funds to this phase for development, right-of-way and construction. Preliminary engineering is underway and public circulation of the environmental document will occur by the end of this calendar year.

Phase 4 – South Coast Highway 101 HOV: This project is a 10-mile widening of Highway 101 from Carpinteria to Santa Barbara. Over \$20 million in STIP funding has been committed by SBCAG for engineering, construction plans and environmental document preparation. Construction is to be funded with \$140 million from Measure A, \$135 million in regional STIP funds, and \$150 million in interregional STIP funds leveraged from the CTC. The current

schedule for breaking ground on Phase 4 is 2014, assuming that Measure A passes. If Measure A fails, Phase 4 will be delayed at least 10 years.

Current Status of Phase II Widening and Schedule to Complete

In the summer of 2007, work began on Phase II to widen between Mussel Shoals and Carpinteria. The project team members agreed that Caltrans District 7, in Los Angeles, was in the best position to commit the staff resources needed to meet the very aggressive schedule required to break ground in 2011. Caltrans District 7 has worked diligently to develop work products to the point where a draft environmental document is scheduled to be released in August 2008.

The current schedule for certifying the environmental, completing final design and beginning construction is shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1
Project Schedule**

| Milestone | Date |
|---|-----------------------|
| Draft Environmental Document to Public | August 2008 |
| Public Meeting | September 2008 |
| PA&ED (Environmental Approval) | October 2008 |
| Complete Final Design | May 2010 |
| Final QA/QC and Advertise for Construction | September 2010 |
| Bid Opening | November 2010 |
| Begin Construction | February 2011 |
| Complete Construction | 2014 |

At the SBCAG board meeting, Mr. Ravi Ghate, project manager, and Mr. Carlos Montez, project environmental planner, will provide an overview of project progress.

Project Scope and Alternatives

The limits of Phase II extend from the Mussel Shoals area in Ventura County (southern limit) to just south of Carpinteria Creek in the City of Carpinteria. The total length of the project is approximately 6.2 miles, with 3.8 miles located in Ventura County and the remainder in Santa Barbara County. The northern limit, which stops just south of Carpinteria Creek, was established during the CMIA application process to eliminate any impacts to the bridge and creek bed which would have made it difficult to complete the project under the schedule constraints of the Prop 1B CMIA program. The scope includes the following components:

- 1) Adding a third lane in each direction (HOV) in the median
- 2) Adding a pedestrian undercrossing in La Conchita
- 3) Closing 3 existing median openings on 101 in La Conchita and Mussel Shoals areas

The project team has identified two “build” alternatives that include each of the components above. The environmental document, as required per CEQA, also includes a “no-build” alternative. Each of the build alternatives also have design variations for the existing bicycle

traffic through the project area and the location of the pedestrian undercrossing in the community of La Conchita.

HOV Lane Options

One of the studies being completed as part of the environmental document will address how the HOV lane will operate. Options for the HOV lane include:

- 1) Limited-access with HOV usage 24 hrs. day\7 days week(full-time)
- 2) Continuous access with part-time HOV usage (limited to carpoolers and buses during peak hour)

Caltrans has conducted traffic counts along this corridor which include mainline counts, ramps counts and bike and pedestrian counts to help assess where traffic is entering and exiting the freeway in the corridor, how an HOV lane would affect corridor operations, and where access points should be for the limited access HOV lane option. A vehicle occupancy survey was also recently completed to determine the number of cars using the corridor with two or more occupants. This information will be used in the development of an HOV report by Caltrans which will determine whether part-time HOV lane (preferred by key stakeholders) would be sufficient to meet the mobility requirements for operation of the highway. The report will also recommend whether the HOV lane would be limited to vehicles carrying two or more or three or more occupants.

Local Agency Involvement

Apart from the fact that this project spans two Caltrans Districts, and involves the two regional agencies SBCAG and VCTC, a number of local agencies are involved in the project. The project is within the jurisdiction of the County of Ventura, the County of Santa Barbara, and the City of Carpinteria. Representatives from each of these agencies have been involved throughout the project. Since this project is also within the coastal zone, each of the aforementioned agencies will be requested to issue a Coastal Development Permit (CDP) for the project. Caltrans District 7 has begun discussions with each of the local agencies about the process involved and the length of time each takes to complete the permitting process. Permit applications are scheduled to be submitted early in 2009 once environmental approval is achieved and final design begins.

Community Outreach

Though this project is located primarily in unincorporated areas of Ventura and Santa Barbara counties, they are a number of stakeholders that have been contacted regarding the project and the proposed improvements. In the community of La Conchita, a number of meetings have been held with local representatives and the community. They have also participated in some of the project team meetings since the pedestrian undercrossing is a feature that has long been sought by the community. La Conchita pedestrians currently use a drainage tunnel to pass under Highway 101. Caltrans has also had meetings and discussions with residents of the Mussel Shoals community, a presentation to the city council of Carpinteria and with the bicycle coalitions of both counties.

The goal of the project team is to balance the interests of the stakeholders in the development of the alternatives while adhering to the schedule and budget of the project. The team is scheduled to select a preferred project alternative after a public hearing on the environmental document in September 2008.

Current Issues

The issues that have arisen during the development of the project are:

1. Determination of HOV lane usage (two vs. three person carpools) and hours of operation
2. Determination of location for pedestrian undercrossing in La Conchita
3. Safe and efficient bicycle and pedestrian movements in the La Conchita area and along southbound Highway 101, which allows shoulder parking for beach access.
4. Maintenance agreement with community of La Conchita for the new undercrossing

Next Steps

By August 2008, Caltrans will complete the Draft Environmental Document and release it to the public. A 45-day comment period will ensue and a public meeting is scheduled for September 9, 2008 in the city of Carpinteria. Caltrans will advertise the meeting location and coordinate with local agencies. A preferred alternative will be selected shortly thereafter by the Project Development Team and this alternative will then move into the final design phase. In early 2009, Caltrans will initiate the coastal permit process with the local agencies.

RECOMMENDATION:

This is an information item to receive a report on the status of the project. Not board action is required.

COMMITTEE REVIEW:

None

Route 101 Corridor Projects

Mussel Shoals to the City of Santa Barbara

Santa Barbara County

Ventura County

PHASE 1 Milpas to Hot Springs Operational Improvements (2.0 miles)

Add lanes on Route 101, north and southbound between Cabrillo Road and Milpas Street in Santa Barbara. Includes local road improvements and bicycle /pedestrian enhancements.

Status: Begin construction Summer 2008
 Estimated Construction Cost: \$53 million
 Construction Schedule: 2008 - 2012
 Funded by Measure D and RIP

PHASE 4 South Coast Highway 101 High Occupany Vehicle Lanes (10.3 miles)

Add median HOV lanes on Route 101, north and southbound

Status: Public circulation of draft environmental document - Spring 2011
 Estimated Construction Cost: \$425 million
 Construction Schedule: 2014 - 2020
 Funded by RIP, IIP and \$140 million in Measure A

PHASE 3 Linden and Casitas Pass Interchanges (1.1 miles)

Reconstruct interchanges, replace Carpinteria Creek Bridge, and provide new Via Real connection south to Bailard Avenue

Status: Public circulation of draft environmental document - Fall 2008
 Estimated Construction Cost: \$70 million
 Construction Schedule: 2012 - 2015
 Funded by State Gas Tax funds

PHASE 2 Santa Barbara County/Ventura County High Occupany Vehicle Lanes (6.0 miles)

Add median HOV lanes on Route 101, north and southbound

Status: Public circulation of draft environmental document - Summer 2008
 Estimated Construction Cost: \$132 million
 Construction Schedule: 2011 - 2013
 Funded by Proposition 1B funds

Santa Barbara

Montecito

Summerland

Carpinteria

La Conchita

Mussel Shoals

