

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Freeway Service Patrol

MEETING DATE: November 20, 2008

AGENDA ITEM: 6B

STAFF CONTACT: Brittany Odermann

RECOMMENDATION:

Authorize the Executive Director to extend the service contract with Bob Holzer Towing from February 28, 2009 to June 30, 2009 to coincide with the State fiscal year.

SUMMARY:

The Santa Barbara County Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) began operation in March 2006. FSP vehicles are assigned to Highway 101 during the peak commute period on the most congested segments between the Ventura County Line and Turnpike Road. The service is a cooperative effort between SBCAG and the California Highway Patrol (CHP). While the program is beneficial to individual motorists, its primary purpose is to relieve traffic congestion by reducing incident response times.

Bob Holzer Automotive is the FSP contractor currently working for SBCAG to operate two service vehicles in the corridor during morning and evening commute hours. Holzer's three year contract expires on February 28, 2009. Staff is recommending that the service contract be extended for four months to align with the end of the 2008/09 fiscal year. Aside from the administrative and budgeting benefits of this alignment, the extension also ensures that the Milpas-Cabrillo\Hot Springs construction area is adequately serviced during the academic year when daily commute volumes tend to be higher because UCSB, SBCC, and other schools are in regular session. Without an extension, SBCAG would have to issue a request for proposal now to start a new contract in March of next year. Starting a (potentially) new contractor on July 1, rather than March 1, would ensure that they can become oriented to working in the corridor and the Milpas construction zone and partnering with the CHP during the summer months when peak period traffic volumes are lower. If the board approves the extension, a request for proposal would be issued early next year to solicit proposals from tow contractors interested in providing service beyond June 30, 2009.

Therefore, staff is recommending that the contact be extended four months. Based on the hourly rates paid to Bob Holzer Automotive in the current contract, the estimated cost of the contract extension is \$80,000, which would be funded from SAFE call box revenues and State grant funds. Sufficient funding exists from both sources to extend the contract through the end of the fiscal year.

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

Member Agencies

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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

While the FSP program provides benefits to individual motorists, its primary objectives are to provide 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 current Milpas-Hot Springs project

The FSP program was identified as a potential congestion relief project in the South Coast 101 Corridor Deficiency Plan and an “early action” item supported by 101 in Motion. A Freeway Service Patrol, and other projects like Intelligent Transportation System improvements, are low cost, relatively easy to implement projects that can have a near term impact by reducing congestion before major widening projects can commence construction. Other goals of the program include reducing traffic delays 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 Measure D funded Highway 101 operational improvement project from Milpas Street to Cabrillo/Hot Springs began construction in the summer of 2008. The project is scheduled to take four years to complete. In the project area concrete barriers are used to separate workers from traffic, reducing the width of shoulders or eliminating them entirely. Vehicles that are involved in an accident or break down in the construction zone have few options but to stop in the travel lane and cause major congestion problems. Continuing operation of the Freeway Service Patrol helps mitigate traffic congestion during the project.

Staff actively manages the program through regular communication with the tow contractor, monitoring program statistics, and facilitating quarterly meetings between the contractor and CHP. Program partners meet quarterly to address issues and receive updates about the program.

The FSP program is funded jointly through a state 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 motorist aid programs including the call box and FSP programs. The fees are sufficient to pay the costs of the call box program and leave 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.

Four Month Contract Extension

Bob Holzer Automotive of Santa Barbara was selected as the FSP contractor from a competitive, Request for Proposals (RFP) process in fall of 2005. The company has twenty-seven years of experience in the towing business, sixteen years of experience as a part of the CHP Rotation Tow program, and twenty-seven years of experience in the AAA towing program. Their proposal had the lowest cost of the three proposals received. The contract was initially approved by the board for a one year term with an option to amend the agreement to extend the term at the same cost for up to two additional years. In 2007, the board approved the additional two-year option.

The current contract is scheduled to end on February 28, 2009. Funding for the FSP program is released by the State on a fiscal year schedule that operates July 1 – June 30. Extending the contract four months (March – June 2009) will align the service contract with the fiscal year. A contract extension will also allow ample transition time to a new contractor, if needed, in the summer months when daily commute volumes tend to be lighter because UCSB, SBCC, and other schools are not in regular session. This is especially important on the South Coast with the on-going Highway 101 Milpas-Cabrillo/Hot Springs operational improvements project. Operating FSP service in the construction zone requires familiarity with the physical constraints of the construction area, CHP protocol for response to incidents in the construction zone, and established relationships with the first responder team. The four-month extension will allow for a transition period, if needed, that will get a new contractor ready for the challenges associated with operating in an area with little to no shoulder.

Recommendation

SBCAG staff and CHP partners agree that over the last three years Bob Holzer Automotive has demonstrated their ability to operate a professional and efficient FSP Program in Santa Barbara County. Based on the cost effectiveness of the program and the quality service being provided by the tow contractor, SBCAG staff recommends that the FSP program be continued for an additional four months to close out the 2008/09 fiscal year and provide uninterrupted, experienced service through the 2008/09 academic year.

Approval of this recommendation would authorize the Chair to sign a four-month extension of the contract with Bob Holzer Automotive, Inc. Based on the hourly rates included in the contract, the estimated cost of the extension is \$80,000 which would be funded from SAFE call box revenues and State grant funds. Sufficient funding exists from both sources to extend the contract through the end of the fiscal year.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Contract amendment with Bob Holzer Automotive, Inc.

AMENDMENT NO. 3

**TO THE CONTRACT DATED
DECEMBER 15, 2005**

It is mutually agreed that the Contract for the Freeway Service Patrol between the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) and the CONSULTANT (Bob Holzer Automotive, Inc.) is hereby amended as stated below:

➤ **Amend Article 3.3 to read:**

The term of this Contract shall be from March 6, 2006 to ~~February 27, 2009~~ **June 30, 2009**, unless earlier terminated as provided herein. CONTRACTOR shall complete the Services within the term of this Contract, and shall meet any other established schedules and deadlines. All applicable indemnification provisions of this Contract shall remain in effect following the termination of this Contract.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have executed this agreement on the day and year below written, but effective as of the day and year first set forth above.

Bob Holzer Automotive, Inc.

By: _____
Name: Sharon Holzer
Title: President
Date: _____

SBCAG

By: _____
Name: Brooks Firestone
Title: Chair, SBCAG
Date: _____

Attest:

By: _____
Name: Jim Kemp
Title: Executive Director
Date: _____

Approved as to Form and Procedure:

Stephen Shane Stark
County Counsel

By: _____
Kevin Ready
Deputy County Counsel,
Counsel for SBCAG