

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Traffic Solutions FY 07-08 Annual Report

MEETING DATE: October 16, 2008

AGENDA ITEM: 11

STAFF CONTACT: Kent Epperson

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive annual report from SBCAG Traffic Solutions on FY07-08 accomplishments.

SUMMARY:

SBCAG's Traffic Solutions division operates programs and provides services to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality by reducing reliance on single occupant vehicle use. In response to board member requests, a Traffic Solutions annual report has been prepared for the last several years to provide information on the scope of services, revenues and expenditures and program performance measures. The following is a summary of Traffic Solution FY 2007-08 accomplishments.

DISCUSSION:

Traffic Solutions, a division of SBCAG, is responsible for implementing the Ridesharing and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs throughout Santa Barbara County. The primary goal of the Traffic Solutions program is to provide transportation services, information, assistance and referrals in an effort to reduce the reliance on single-occupant vehicle use for commuting during peak hours.

Soaring fuel prices, construction on Highway 101 and the financial challenges facing many commuters in FY 07-08 have greatly increased the demand for Traffic Solutions programs and services. In addition to maintaining the vanpool program, FlexWork SB program, bicycle program and management of the Clean Air Express and VISTA Coastal Express, Traffic Solutions went live with Traffic Solutions Online, a one-stop shop web resource for commuters and employers, and launched *Curb Your Commute*, a traffic mitigation program for the Highway 101 Milpas to Hot Springs construction project.

Significant increases in VISTA Coastal Express and Clean Air Express ridership over the past three years have caused overcrowding on both transit services. To address the overcrowding, fourteen new trips were added to the VISTA Coastal Express and one new round trip was added to the Clean Air Express. In January 2008, SBCAG raised the Clean Air Express fares and entered into a new operating contract with American Star. In May 2008, SBCAG purchased

two used Clean Air Express buses to replace twenty year old spare buses that no longer comply with the California Air Resources Board fleet emissions regulations.

FY 07-08 EXPENDITURES AND REVENUE

Traffic Solutions Division expenditures totaled \$2,478,136 in FY 07-08, including \$528,836 for two used spare buses for the Clean Air Express, \$1,234,598 in Clean Air Express operating expenditures, \$234,192 for SBCAG's portion of the VISTA Coastal Express and \$480,510 for Rideshare programs. There were several funding sources for the Traffic Solutions Division in FY 2007-08. The primary sources of funding included Santa Barbara County Measure D (\$1,075,572), Clean Air Express fares (\$980,462), and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality - CMAQ (\$422,102).

Measure A Funding: For several years, Measure D and CMAQ have been the two primary sources of funding for the Clean Air Express, Coastal Express and Traffic Solutions. Both of these funding sources dry up in FY 08-09 and FY 09-10. The future of the Clean Air Express, the Coastal Express and County-wide rideshare programs depend on the passage of Measure A, a proposed transportation measure which will provide more than \$1 billion of estimated local sales tax revenues for transportation projects in Santa Barbara County over 30 years. Santa Barbara County voters will be given an opportunity to vote for Measure A at the November 4, 2008 general election. The Measure A Investment Plan includes \$9 million for continuation of the Traffic Solutions program and \$48 million for interregional transit services like the Clean Air Express and Coastal Express.

FY 07-08 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Traffic Solutions evaluates its performance using standardized measures commonly used in the rideshare industry. Many of the TDM programs, such as individualized marketing, general outreach and employer consulting cannot be measured using these quantitative performance measures, however four major Traffic Solutions programs can be measured using these indicators; the Vanpool and Carpool Program, the Coastal Express program, the Clean Air Express program and special promotions and events. The Traffic Solutions saw a 30 percent to 43 percent increase in all performance measures in FY07-08 over the previous fiscal year.

In FY 07-08, Traffic Solutions programs resulted in the following reductions:

- 690,069 fewer automobile trips,
- 24.3 million fewer vehicle miles traveled,
- 964,102 fewer gallons of gasoline consumed,
- \$10.2 million in commuter cost savings, and
- 79,678 metric tons of pollutants avoided.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Traffic Solutions Online: Traffic Solutions Online was launched in July 2007 and replaced the carpool matching system developed in-house in 2004. The new system offers commuter matching services (carpool, vanpool and commuter bus services), commuter savings calculator, Emergency Ride Home, commute calendar and employer tools for administering employee commuter benefits and promotions. Traffic Solutions Online is being used to administer commuter benefits programs by most of the largest employers in Santa Barbara County including the County of Santa Barbara, City of Santa Barbara, Cottage Health System, CenCal Health, Valle Verde Retirement Community and Marian Medical Center. Over 110 employers

are currently enrolled in Traffic Solutions Online with over 7,300 commuters registered in the system (a 5,500 increase since July 2007).

Clean Air Express: The Clean Air Express is a commuter bus service, serving residents of northern Santa Barbara County who commute to jobs in Goleta and Santa Barbara. There are currently 12 Clean Air Express roundtrips per weekday. The following are some of the Clean Air Express accomplishments in FY 07-08:

- 10% growth in ridership (204,296 annual boardings),
- 17% increase in farebox revenue (\$980,462 in annual fares),
- farebox recovery ratio of 80%,
- monthly fares were increased from \$135 to \$140, 10-Ride pass from \$45 to \$50 and single rides from \$6.00 to \$7.00.
- new operator contract with American Star,
- added one round trip between Lompoc and Goleta, and
- installed wireless internet on most buses.

Ridership has grown to such a point that passengers are regularly being left at the curb due to bus overcrowding on several routes. To address the overcrowding, SBCAG added an additional round trip from Lompoc to Goleta. The additional bus was made available after MTD consolidated their Valley Express service from four routes to three routes. SBCAG contracts directly with MTD to operate the new route. In May 2008 two used buses were purchased, enabling SBCAG to retire two twenty year old spare buses that were no longer in compliance with California Air Resources Board fleet emissions regulations. Wireless internet was also installed on most buses to enable passengers to work while they commute. In November 2007, after releasing a Request for Proposals (RFP), the SBCAG Board executed an 18 month contract with American Star to operate the Clean Air Express effective on January 19, 2008. Prior to this new contract, the Clean Air Express was operated by Santa Barbara Airbus. In December 2008, SBCAG approved a two step fare increase. The first fare increase was effective on February 1, 2008 and raised fares from \$135 to \$140 for a month pass, from \$45 to \$50 for a 10-Ride pass and from \$6.00 to \$7.00 for a single ride. Monthly fares will increase to \$150 effective January 1, 2009. To add to passenger convenience, in February 2008 fareboxes were installed on all Clean Air Express buses enabling passengers to pay a single ride cash fare on the bus. Month and 10-ride passes must be purchased at the COLT office in Lompoc, the SMAT office in Santa Maria, and the MTD Transit Center and SBCAG office in Santa Barbara.

VISTA Coastal Express: The VISTA Coastal Express is an intercommunity bus service between Oxnard, Ventura, Carpinteria, Santa Barbara and Goleta. The VISTA Coastal Express provides 45 daily trips on weekdays, 20 daily trips on Saturdays and 18 trips on Sundays. The VISTA Coastal Express is jointly funded and administered by SBCAG and the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC). Several service enhancements were made to the Coastal Express. As part of *Curb Your Commute*, wireless internet was installed on all Coastal Express buses. This service is sponsored by GoToMyPC. To address overcrowding on the peak period buses, six additional one way trips were added in April 2008 and another eight trips were added in August 2008. The following are some VISTA Coastal Express accomplishments in FY 2007-08:

- 14 additional one way weekday trips to address overcrowding,
- service extended to Oxnard,
- 17% increase in ridership (209,654 annual boardings),
- 18% increase in farebox revenue (\$341,147 in annual fares), and
- farebox recovery ratio of 65%

Vanpool Program: Traffic Solutions offers various support services for vanpools operating in Santa Barbara County. These services include referrals to vanpools through the use of Traffic Solutions Online, the *New Rider Rebate* program, which provides a \$100 rebate to new vanpool subscribers, and the *Vanpool Quick Start* program which provides new vanpools with a 50 percent subsidy the first month and a 25 percent subsidy the second month. As part of *Curb Your Commute*, a new Premium Vanpool program was launched in August 2008. New vanpools that travel between Ventura and Santa Barbara/Goleta are eligible for two free months of vanpooling and free gasoline on the third month. The vanpool vehicles will also be equipped with free wireless internet service to enable passengers to capture lost time spent commuting. The following are some of the vanpool accomplishments in FY 07-08:

- 25 new rider rebates awarded to new vanpool riders
- 36 vanpools currently operate in Santa Barbara County
- Seven new vanpools formed between Santa Maria and Lompoc

Rideshare Week: Traffic Solutions held a Rideshare Week promotion from October 15 - 19 2007. The event was coordinated with San Luis Obispo's Regional Rideshare organization. The goal for the event was to introduce commuters to the suite of Traffic Solutions Online tools. Participants were asked to make a pledge to walk, bike, carpool, vanpool, telecommute or take transit during the week. Participants logged their commute trips using the Traffic Solutions Online Commute Calendar. More than 548 commuters logged 1,813 trips and 55,391 miles during the week. Several prizes were raffled at the end of the week.

Individualized Marketing and Outreach: One of Traffic Solutions' primary functions is to inform the public about commute options through the distribution of information. In FY 07-08, Traffic Solutions distributed more than 23,000 pieces of information including employer packets, brochures, bike maps, transit maps, email flyers, bus schedules, commuter surveys and e-newsletters. Traffic Solutions also serves the public through the 963-SAVE commuter hotline, receiving thousands of calls each year from commuters and members of the general public. These calls serve as an opportunity to engage in individualized marketing, helping to resolve the transportation needs of commuters and others. In addition to distributing information, Traffic Solutions attended more than 18 stand-alone events throughout the county. These events are attended by large number of residents and present an excellent opportunity to educate the public regarding alternatives to driving alone.

Employer Support: Traffic Solutions provides commuter support services for employers, including commuter surveys, the Emergency Ride Home program and commuter benefit consulting services. These services not only reduce traffic, but they are valued by employers who are increasingly challenged to recruit and retain qualified staff. In FY 2007-08, Traffic Solutions provided support to the following 22 employers:

AGIA, Bacara Resort and Spa, BEGA-US, Business First Bank, Cencal Health, Citrix Online, Clipper Windpower, Community West Bank, Cottage Health System, City of Santa Barbara, Maps.com, Marian Medical Center, Mentor Corporation, Pacific Capital Bancorp, Penfield & Smith, Price, Postal & Parma, RENCO Encoders, Santa Barbara County, Santa Barbara Zoo, Sonos, Valle Verde Retirement Community and Yardi System.

This year was a particularly productive year helping employers implement new Commuter Benefits. Traffic Solutions was instrumental in crafting and implementing comprehensive

commuter benefits, such as transit, carpool or vanpool incentives for 15 employers. Traffic Solutions is currently aware of 34 employers that offer commuter benefits. Nationally these programs have not only proven to decrease single occupant vehicle commuting by employees by 10 percent to 15 percent, but also have proven to be effective strategies to decrease turnover and improve recruitment.

Green Business Program, Santa Barbara County: In 2007, the Green Awards program that had been in place for over 15 years was replaced by the Green Business Program, Santa Barbara County. The Green Business program is a multi-jurisdictional pollution prevention effort that will educate businesses on how to incorporate resource conservation in their practices, make the public aware about businesses that are environmentally stewards, and foster a positive relationship among governmental agencies, the business community and the general public. Businesses that implement a wide range of environmental practices will be certified as a Green Business and receive community recognition and consumer marketing. To become certified, businesses must offer commuter benefits to their employees as a means to reduce air pollution and traffic congestion. SBCAG Traffic Solutions is a member of the Green Business Program Steering Committee.

Curb Your Commute: In FY 07-08, Traffic Solutions launched the *Curb Your Commute* Program in anticipation of the 101 Milpas to Hot Springs Operational Improvement Project. The program is a package of traffic mitigation strategies that will result in decreased peak period commuting and increased carpooling, vanpooling and telecommuting during the four year construction project and is a required element of the project's Traffic Management Plan. Strategies include extensive employer outreach, enhancements to the Coastal Express, telecommuting and flexible schedule consulting, cash incentives and a general awareness campaign.

Breakfast Symposium and Employer Outreach Events: On February 28, 2008, 150 CEO's and HR professionals attended a breakfast symposium at the Biltmore Hotel to launch the *Curb Your Commute* program. The effort was spearheaded by First District Supervisor Carbajal, Santa Barbara Mayor Blum and Steve Cushman, Santa Barbara Chamber CEO. The breakfast program featured testimonials from several large employers touting the importance of private sector participation in reducing traffic congestion on Highway 101 during the four year 101 Milpas to Hot Springs project. More than 75 individuals took the pledge to curb their commute by participating in several Traffic Solutions programs.

In addition to the breakfast symposium, two other *Curb Your Commute* employer outreach events were held. On March 11, 2008, a breakfast event was held by the Carpinteria Chamber of Commerce and on May 22, 2008, a breakfast event was held by the Coastal Housing Partnership.

FlexWork SB Phase II: A key component of *Curb Your Commute* is facilitating more FlexWork (telecommuting and off-peak period commuting) by commuters traveling through the construction zone. Traffic Solutions has contracted with Telecommuting Advantage Group (TAG) to provide employers with assistance in planning and implementation FlexWork programs. Since November 2007, TAG has recruited several private sector FlexWork participants including Ogilvy-Hill Insurance in Santa Barbara, Channel Technologies, Citrix Online, Yardi Systems and CenCal Health in Goleta, and Plan Member Financial Services and Clipper Windpower in Carpinteria. In July 2008, the SBCAG Board approved a one year extension of the FlexWork SB flexible schedule and telecommuting consulting services contract with Telecommuting Advantage Group (TAG). The contract extension will enable Traffic Solutions to assist these companies to fully implement flexwork programs over the next 12

months and recruit additional employers for the program. These programs will result in significant peak period trip reductions on Highway 101 helping to offset traffic impacts resulting from the 101 Milpas to Hot Springs construction project.

Wifi on the Coastal Express: *Curb Your Commute* includes several enhancements to the VISTA Coastal Express. In addition to adding capacity and extending service to Oxnard, Traffic Solutions installed free wireless internet service for Coastal Express passengers as a means to attract additional riders. Wireless internet on buses provides a unique opportunity for passengers to regain the lost time spent commuting either by working while they commute or catching up on personal emails. The wireless routers use Sprint cellular service to provide an internet connection. The wireless internet service on the Coastal Express is sponsored by GoToMyPC (a Citrix Online product). The wireless internet service enables Coastal Express passengers to use GoToMyPC, a web commuting service, to access their work desktop computers so they may work while they commute.

Trip Rewards: The Trip Rewards program was designed to stimulate employer provided cash incentives for commuters traveling through the 101 Milpas to Hot Springs construction zone. Participating employers agree to offer employees daily cash incentives for alternative transportation. Traffic Solutions provides \$100 in matching incentives for commuters that travel through the 101 Milpas to Hot Springs construction zone. CenCal Health and Maps.com are currently enrolled in the trip rewards program.

Commute Challenge:

In August and September 2008, as part of *Curb Your Commute*, Traffic Solutions held the first annual Commute Challenge. The Commute Challenge was a team-based commuter competition designed to stimulate more carpooling, vanpooling, biking, walking, telecommuting and transit use. The competition targeted drive alone commuters by tapping into social networks and using friendly peer pressure to curb drive alone commuting. The following are some of the accomplishments from the 2008 Commute Challenge:

- 1,572 commuters formed 360 teams
- 43,145 trips and 1.37 million miles were logged
- 65,214 gallons of gas were saved
- \$740,899 in commuting costs were saved
- 574 tons of pollutants were avoided

Traffic Solutions awarded prizes to the top ranked teams as well as the top ranked employers. The two tied top ranked teams were the *Renewable Riders* AKA "*Super Squirrels*" and *Pay Junction*. The winning employers were Ryerson, Masters and Associates, Inc., Community Environmental Council, Cancer Center of Santa Barbara, Yardi Systems and the City of Santa Barbara.

COMMITTEE REVIEW: None