



January 11, 2010

Ms. Bimla Rhinehart
Executive Director
California Transportation Commission
Mail Station 52, Room 2222
1120 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Funding of U.S. 101 Santa Maria River Bridge with Proposition 1B CMIA Cost Savings

Dear Ms. Rhinehart,

The Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) joins with the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) and Caltrans to request that Proposition 1B Corridor Mobility Improvement Account cost savings be programmed to the Highway 101 Santa Maria River Bridge project. The project partners are seeking \$32 million in CMIA cost savings to fully fund the project and to begin construction immediately. Because of recent funding commitments by SBCAG and SLOCOG and a significant reduction in costs, the amount of CMIA funding needed to close the project construction shortfall is 55% of the amount requested in our 2007 project nomination.

This project is eligible for cost savings under the CMIA & SR 99 Accountability Implementation Plan Supplement 2 adopted December 9-10, 2009 because it was nominated and recommended for funding, but not programmed, as part of the 2007 CMIA Adopted Program of Projects. It was the highest scoring unfunded project during that process.

The project will eliminate a bottleneck where a six-lane section of U.S. 101 ends at the south end of the bridge connecting Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties. It will complete the second phase of the widening from 4 to 6 lanes in north Santa Barbara County and south San Luis Obispo County. Phase I widened U.S. 101 for 7.5 miles through the city of Santa Maria to the southern end of the bridge. Phase II will continue the widening across the Santa Maria River, which at this location is nearly .75 miles in width. The existing twin bridges, built in 1962, no longer provide sufficient capacity for current volumes of interregional traffic passing between L.A. and the Bay Area, the Central Valley and Central Coast, and local traffic.

The project will improve safety by reducing rear-end and weaving collisions caused by traffic merging from adjacent interchange ramps. The accident rate on the bridge is twice the statewide average for a similar type facility with comparable traffic volumes. Shoulders will be added for emergency vehicles. It will provide a better link between State Route 135 serving Vandenberg Air Force Base and State Route 166 East to the Central Valley. Finally, a multi-purpose path will be added to provide access for bicycles and pedestrians where none currently exists.

U.S. 101 is one of two north-south interregional highways between Los Angeles and San Francisco. When Interstate 5 is closed because of accidents, fires, snow, or other inclement weather, all north-south traffic in California is diverted to the 101 freeway. It is the primary artery along the Central Coast and is vital to statewide commerce; this is reflected by its designation as a state Focus Route and High Emphasis Route. The corridor is a principal arterial on the National Highway System. It serves as a Strategic Highway Network Route, as well as a State Highway Extra Legal Load Route and is part of the National Truck Network. The corridor provides access from California's Central Coast agricultural operations to markets around the

country. A truck accident on the Santa Maria River Bridge could completely stop all north-south traffic for hours. If the accident were to occur at the same time Interstate 5 was closed, north-south truck traffic in the state would be paralyzed.

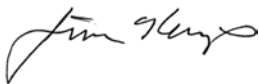
SBCAG and SLOCOG have committed approximately \$13 million in local funding, or approximately 30% of the project's \$45 million estimated construction cost. Santa Barbara County alone is contributing \$10 million in Measure A transportation sales tax funding.

The project is shovel ready. Environmental studies for the bridge widening project have been completed and environmental certification was obtained in December 2006. This project is NEPA and California Environmental Quality (CEQA) compliant. Final design was completed in December 2009 and the project is currently ready to advertise for construction.

The Santa Maria Bridge project provides numerous benefits including increased capacity for interregional goods movement, improved safety and multi-modal access and jobs creation. The bridge improvements will help the economic recovery in the Santa Maria Valley which has one of the State's highest unemployment rates. Because of its high priority, the project enjoys a strong three-way partnership including the Regional Transportation Planning Agencies in San Luis and Santa Barbara counties and Caltrans.

SBCAG respectfully requests that the commission approve this project for CMIA cost savings. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about this important project. I look forward to working with you to deliver this project as soon as cost savings are available. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about the project at 805-961-8900.

Sincerely,



Jim Kemp
Executive Director

cc: Assemblyman Pedro Nava
Senator Tony Strickland
Senator Abel Maldonado
Assemblyman Sam Blakeslee
Randall Iwasaki, Caltrans Director
Rich Krumholz, Caltrans District 5
Ron DeCarli, SLOCOG

Member Agencies

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