

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: South Coast Passenger\Commuter Rail Update

MEETING DATE: December 2, 2009 **AGENDA ITEM:** 4

STAFF CONTACT: Scott Spaulding

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive an update on:

- A. LOSSAN MOU
- B. Re-timing of AMTRAK rail service to the South Coast
- C. Seacliff Siding Stimulus Application

SUMMARY:

With the adoption of *101 in Motion* by the SBCAG board in July 2006, SBCAG began planning for how to improve passenger rail service in the Highway 101 corridor to provide an alternative to driving. The passage of Measure A in November 2008, which included \$25 million for improving passenger\commuter rail, is an important step in expanding the options available to commuters between Ventura and Santa Barbara counties. Although Union Pacific Railroad owns the rail corridor and must approve any track construction projects or service improvements, SBCAG staff continues to work with UP, Caltrans Division of Rail, the Ventura County Transportation Commission, and local agencies to plan for and fund regional passenger rail system improvements. SBCAG is also a member of the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Agency (LOSSAN), which assists Caltrans in coordinating passenger and commuter rail service in Southern California. Staff is currently pursuing several efforts to improve regional rail service, including participating in the negotiations among LOSSAN members to explore the potential to develop a more regional and consolidated administrative institutional structure for the LOSSAN corridor, requesting Caltrans adjust two state-funded Pacific Surfliner trains to serve peak hour commuters, and identifying and pursuing funding for rail infrastructure improvements to improve rail capacity between Ventura and Santa Barbara counties.

DISCUSSION:

Background

With the adoption of *101 in Motion*, it became SBCAG policy to improve passenger rail service in the Highway 101 corridor in order to reduce congestion and provide an alternative to driving. The focus of SBCAG's rail effort for the next two years was to secure a dedicated funding source for rail improvements. The passage of Measure A in November 2008, which included \$25 million over 30 years to improve commuter and passenger rail, is an important step in expanding the options available to commuters in the 101 corridor. In February 2009, the board approved the creation of an additional Planner position in the Programming and Project Delivery

Member Agencies

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

division and the position was filled with the former Traffic Solutions regional transit coordinator. The new position's responsibilities include overseeing regional transit services, coordinating grant applications for corridor rail infrastructure improvements, interfacing with Caltrans Division of Rail, LOSSAN, UP, and Coastal Rail Coordinating Council staff, and developing Measure A rail program options, among other duties.

Rail Program Update

LOSSAN Strategic Assessment/Integration Study

SBCAG is an active participant in the LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency, comprised of regional government agencies served by the state-supported Amtrak Pacific Surfliner rail service operating in the coastal rail corridor between San Diego and San Luis Obispo. Three passenger/commuter rail services operate in the LOSSAN corridor—the state supported Amtrak Pacific Surfliner, Metrolink commuter rail, serving Ventura, Los Angeles, and Orange counties, and the Coaster rail service operating in San Diego County. The rail tracks, stations, and facilities in the corridor are owned by a wide variety of government agencies and private freight railroads, and the passenger and commuter services are not well integrated, with each agency creating and maintaining their own fare structure and policies, marketing efforts, and schedules. In 2008, LOSSAN initiated a strategic assessment to develop options to better integrate the provision of rail service throughout the corridor. The goal of the study is to develop rail service that appears more cohesive and seamless to current and future rail customers and to more efficiently and effectively use the existing rail equipment and infrastructure. Although the South Coast is only served by one passenger rail service, the state-funded Pacific Surfliner, the SBCAG Executive Director has been heavily involved in agency CEO negotiations to develop an MOU intended to explore the possibility of creating a single corridor-wide administrative agency. The MOU commits the LOSSAN member agencies to taking early actions to better integrate the passenger rail services in the corridor. Of particular significance to our region is an early action to revise the Amtrak Pacific Surfliner schedule to better serve the Ventura—Santa Barbara peak period market. (see attached MOU).

The MOU was approved by the LOSSAN board at its October 28 meeting that was attended by SBCAG's LOSSAN representative Supervisor Carbajal. Although many of the actions identified in the MOU address needs in the more heavily travelled south part of the corridor between San Diego and LA, Supervisor Carbajal has advocated with the LOSSAN board for the capital and service improvement needs in the north corridor.

The MOU will be brought to the SBCAG board in December for conceptual review and final approval in January. The LOSSAN board is expected to approve a cost sharing agreement recommended by agency CEO's at its meeting on December 9th. Funding contributions by member agencies for developing a business plan for integrating service in the LOSSAN corridor will be based on ridership from all three services (Amtrak, Metrolink and Coaster). SBCAG's estimated share is \$20,000 over this fiscal year and next fiscal year, with the bulk of the amount anticipated for FY2010-11 under the Measure A rail program.

Pacific Surfliner Schedule revision

A near term option for improving regional passenger rail service, and one that is identified in the LOSSAN service integration MOU, is to adjust the Pacific Surfliner schedule to better serve commuters traveling from Ventura County to Goleta and Santa Barbara. Currently one northbound Surfliner train arrives in Santa Barbara at 10:12AM (Surfliner No. 799) and one southbound train departs at 4:31PM (Surfliner No. 798). The current schedule does not serve a standard workday, but if the schedule were modified slightly to better serve the commuter

market, there is little doubt train boardings would increase in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties. Caltrans Division of Rail has been reluctant in the past to adjust the schedule earlier because the morning train (#799) originates in Los Angeles, and moving the northbound departure time at L.A. Union Station earlier would likely reduce boardings in Los Angeles County stations. SBCAG staff continues to pursue discussions with the Division of Rail to explore the possibility of adjusting the L.A. Union Station departure time earlier, potentially increasing ridership on #799—which has the lowest ridership of all Pacific Surfliner trains—by offsetting a loss of riders in Los Angeles with gains in Camarillo, Oxnard, and Ventura. Given the state’s dramatic budget deficit, Caltrans is currently evaluating all state-funded rail service for potential ways to increase ridership and efficiency. A revision to the Pacific Surfliner schedule is expected in the summer of 2010, and adjusting trains 798/799 to serve commuters would be an effective way to increase ridership and fare revenue. The City and County of Santa Barbara, the City of Goleta, SBCAG, the Ventura County Transportation Commission, the City of Ventura, and LOSSAN have all publicly endorsed adjusting the Pacific Surfliner schedule to better serve commuters between Ventura and Santa Barbara.

Seacliff Siding Extension and Rail Realignment

Earlier this year the Governor submitted 38 rail infrastructure improvement project applications totaling over \$1.1 billion under the Federal Railroad Administration’s High Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail Program (HSIPR), which was infused with \$8 billion in funding as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Included with California’s application package was a funding request for engineering, design, and environmental clearance to extend the existing Seacliff siding and realign the tracks to reduce curvature and increase train speed. The Seacliff siding extension and track realignment project is identified in the LOSSAN North Strategic Plan and would create the only siding long enough to hold a standard freight train between Santa Barbara and Oxnard. There is also \$19 million in State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funds that are intended to construct rail sidings in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties, and although the state budget crisis has postponed most STIP funding, the Seacliff project is the primary candidate when this rail capacity improvement funding becomes available.

The site of the Seacliff siding extension and rail realignment project is also under consideration by Caltrans District 7 for use as potential parking mitigation that may be required as part of the freeway widening/HOV project between Mussel Shoals and Carpinteria. Some beach access parking will be lost near La Conchita as part of the widening and Caltrans will be presenting options for a Coastal Commission subcommittee to consider at a meeting in San Francisco on December 8. Fortunately, the Seacliff rail siding extension and realignment project and any use of the area for beach access parking are not mutually exclusive. SBCAG staff has been working with Caltrans Division of Rail and Caltrans District 7 staff to coordinate the two projects so that they do not prevent the other from being constructed. Although it is still undetermined whether or not the Coastal Commission will require beach access parking at Seacliff, the freeway-widening project is fully funded and further along in development than the rail siding/realignment project. With sufficient coordination, both projects can be completed successfully.

RECOMMENDATION: Receive a report from staff on activities related to implementing improved passenger/commuter rail service on the South Coast.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BY AND BETWEEN
SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM
SAN DIEGO ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
NATIONAL RAILROAD PASSENGER CORPORATION
NORTH COUNTY TRANSIT DISTRICT
ORANGE COUNTY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA REGIONAL RAIL AUTHORITY
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
LOS ANGELES COUNTY METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
VENTURA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) dated October __, 2009 between (list all parties), (referred to herein individually as a Party and collectively as the “PARTIES” sets forth principles, responsibilities, activities and work, and funding needs required to support the development and implementation of a Business Plan for the LOSSAN corridor to support improved freight, commuter, intercity, and high speed rail operations in the corridor.

Whereas the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor runs through a six-county coastal region in southern and central California from the City of San Diego, to the City of Los Angeles, and terminates in the City of San Luis Obispo;

Whereas the LOSSAN rail corridor is the second busiest intercity rail (Amtrak Pacific Surfliner service) corridor in the United States of America;

Whereas, the LOSSAN Corridor is a federally recognized high speed rail corridor eligible for federal funding (Section 3043(c)(105) of SAFETEA-LU for New Starts funds)

Whereas Metrolink and COASTER commuter rail services and Amtrak’s Pacific Surfliner service carried more than 8.5 million riders in FY 09 along the LOSSAN corridor;

Whereas BNSF Railway and Union Pacific (UP) own portions of and provide freight rail transportation on the LOSSAN rail corridor that supports the movement of goods from the Ports of San Diego, Los Angeles, and Long Beach;

Whereas MTS, NCTD, OCTA, MTA, and VCTC own portions of the LOSSAN corridor railroad right of way;

Whereas, MTA, SCAG, OCTA, NCTD, MTS (formerly MTDB), SANDAG, and Caltrans in 1989 formed the LOSSAN Joint Powers Authority (JPA) to implement Study Group recommendations directed by Senate Bill 1095 (Craven) in 1987;

Whereas, the LOSSAN Joint Powers Authority in 2002 added VCTC, SBCAG, SLOCOG, and SANDAG as voting members and appointed a full complement of directors from member agencies;

Whereas, the LOSSAN JPA is advised by a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) consisting of representatives from its member, ex officio, and advisory member agencies,

Whereas, the LOSSAN Joint Powers Authority in 2007 completed the “LOSSAN North Strategic Business Plan” and the “LOSSAN Corridorwide Strategic Business Plan”;

Whereas, Proposition 1B (2006), the Highway Safety, Traffic Reduction, Air Quality, and Port Security Bond Act of 2006, dedicates \$400 million in state general obligation bonds to the state’s intercity rail program, including projects along the LOSSAN corridor,

Whereas, Proposition 1A (2008), the Safe, Reliable High-Speed Passenger Train Bond Act for the 21st Century, dedicates \$9 billion to the state’s High-Speed Train system, including HST improvements along the segments of the LOSSAN corridor and \$950 million to urban feeder rail services including the Pacific Surfliners, Metrolink, COASTER, and other feeder services along the corridor,

Whereas, President Obama in 2009 signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, providing for \$8 billion for high-speed and intercity passenger rail improvements nationwide;

Whereas, the LOSSAN Joint Powers Authority has expended much time, effort, and public funding on studies and capital projects to support improved and expanded rail operations in the corridor;

Whereas, the LOSSAN Joint Powers Authority recognizes the urgent need to advance efforts to support improved customer information, service(s) coordination, and operations to the following action at its meeting of September 9, 2009 directing the member agency chief executive officers (CEOs) to:

- (1) Draft a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that
 - (a) clearly articulates our shared vision of
 - Short-term roles and responsibilities
 - Corridor-long responsibility and authority

- Corridor-long planning and investment (\$6-8 billion by 2025)
 - Interactive electronic fare collection system
 - Recognition of the diverse nature of the corridor (e.g., North and South of Los Angeles Union Station; discretionary intercity and commuter passengers)
 - Better traveler information distribution including a consolidated timetable and corridor website
 - Focus on local partnerships
- (b) identifies the Business Plan tasks/scope of work required to support implementation of that shared vision,
- (c) identifies the budget, resource requirements, respective responsibilities, and schedule associated with completing the necessary studies, and
- (d) outlines the next steps after completion of Business Plan analysis.
- (2) Move forward with identification of the lead agency acting for LOSSAN to hire a project manager/principal (title to be determined and hereafter referred to as PM) to work independent of any one Party and report directly to the LOSSAN Board of Directors, with input from the Technical Advisory Committee and oversight by a steering committee of member agency chief executive officers or their designee, and lead the development of a Business Plan that will provide the operating plan, ridership forecasts, capital and operating requirements and the public benefits associated with implementing a coordinated and expanded rail operations plan for the LOSSAN rail corridor and develop a draft job description for this position.
- (3) Work collaboratively to (a) build a Business Plan that accounts for the plans associated with intercity rail passenger service, local commuter rail services and freight rail services. The transportation plan will demonstrate the desire and ability to collaborate with member agencies for the success of the LOSSAN corridor and (b) to find an early victory that demonstrates that we can work collaboratively to implement initiatives (e.g., joint timetable).
- (4) Develop an initial work plan of tasks that can be completed in FY 2010 (October 2009 – June 2010)

Whereas, the agency chief executive officers have worked collaboratively to implement the actions of the LOSSAN Joint Powers Authority at its meeting of September 9, 2009;

NOW THEREFORE, the PARTIES hereby set forth their mutual understandings and actions required to support the implementation of the LOSSAN Joint Powers Authority action regarding Agenda Item #6 at its meeting of September 9, 2009;

Section 1 Vision for Corridor

The parties agree to the following actions in order to implement a corridor vision:

- Collectively provide the infrastructure to allow more peak period trains, faster through-express trains and additional service improvements that meet current and future conventional and high-speed intercity, commuter, and freight demands both north and south of Los Angeles Union Station
- Integrate regional fare policy and develop common fare media that are based in part on early implementation lessons in the corridor as appropriate (electronic revenue collection)
- Integrate and/or coordinate operations and develop efficient operating schedules and dispatching for corridor services
- Implement a strategy for seamless rail travel in the corridor
- Collaborate to identify and establish new services for underserved markets
- Integrate and improve traveler information
- Coordinate with Long-Distance Passenger Rail and Motorcoach Services

Section 2 Short-Term Actions

The parties agree to the following short term actions:

- Development of a scope of work for a Business Plan that identifies the required work to support the implementation of the shared vision for the corridor (August 2009; CEOs/TAC to lead).
- Development of job description for the LOSSAN Corridor Program / Project Manager (October 2009; CEOs/TAC to lead)
- Identify the budget, resource requirements and schedule associated with completing the Business Plan that includes ridership and revenue forecasting, operational modeling, operating and capital costs, and an analysis of the benefits of the proposed changes (including infrastructure, rolling stock, stations, fare collection technology, & management). (February 2010; PM to lead)
- Development of a scope of work for the Program/Project Manager to focus on between October 2009 – April 2011 including completion of the Business Plan by September 2010 (October 2009; CEOs/TAC to lead and the Project Manager is to detail this work plan within 30 days of hire)

In an effort to make immediate changes that have a direct, positive experience on the traveling public, the parties agree to direct the PM to focus on the following early action items:

- Implementation of service modifications of both COASTER and Metrolink service with a goal of serving under served markets (January 2011)

- Implementation of a program similar to the Rail 2 Rail Program to include COASTER, Metrolink & Amtrak under one unified program (June 2010)
- Implementation of a limited stop express service between San Diego, Orange County and Los Angeles with continuing service to Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo (January 2011)
- Development of a joint timetable (January 2010)
- Implementation of remaining tasks from the LOSSAN Corridor Quick Improvements Study, July 2008 (August 2010)
- Revise Amtrak schedule to better serve the Ventura-Santa Barbara peak period market (January 2011)
- Review these actions with the Business Plan for consistency (Ongoing)

Section 3 - Long-Term Actions

Based upon the Business Plan, the parties agree to

- decide upon the appropriate institutional and organizational structure for the future success of the LOSSAN corridor
- implement “Coast Daylight” services to close the gap in state-supported intercity rail services connecting downtown Los Angeles and downtown San Francisco along the coast route

Section 4 - Priority of Projects/Funding

The parties agree to develop a prioritized program of projects with the goals of realizing the shared vision of the corridor without regard to operational and jurisdictional boundaries.

Section 5 - Board/Stakeholder Feedback

Each member agency will be responsible for gathering comments and feedback from their respective Boards of Directors as a key input into this process.

The parties also agree to solicit input from the Federal Railroad Administration in the development of the Business Plan and to consult the *Railroad Corridor Transportation Plans Guidance Manual, FRA, July 8, 2005*.

Non-binding Memorandum of Understanding

The parties acknowledge and agree that this Memorandum of Understanding is a non-binding understanding of agreed upon vision, goals, and plans for the LOSSAN Corridor and not a contract. Any definitive agreement reached in connection with the matters described herein shall be subject to the approval of the parties' duly authorized representatives, which approval may be withheld or conditioned in their sole discretion. No joint venture, partnership or other undertaking shall be deemed to exist as a result of this Memorandum of Understanding.