

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: South Coast Highway 101 HOV Lanes Widening Project

MEETING DATE: July 8, 2009 **AGENDA ITEM:** 6

STAFF CONTACT: Gregg Hart

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive a report on the public information meetings of July 7 and 8 for the HOV lanes project.

SUMMARY:

On July 7 and 8, the public is invited to attend meetings to be held in Carpinteria and Montecito, respectively, to receive information about and provide comments on the environmental studies being initiated on the 101 HOV lane project. At the subregional meeting, staff will update the committee on the public comments received in Carpinteria the night before, on July 7th.

DISCUSSION:

The South Coast 101 HOV Lanes Project is the fourth and final phase of the 101 freeway widening in south Santa Barbara County. The first phase of the 101 widening, from Milpas St. to Hot Springs/Cabrillo is fully funded with Measure D Regional funds and State Proposition 1B funds and is currently under construction. In June, the project will pass its first year of construction with completion scheduled for 2012. The second phase, from Mussel Shoals in Ventura County to Carpinteria is also fully funded with State Proposition 1B funds and is scheduled to begin construction in 2011. Phase 3, reconstruction of the Casitas Pass and Linden Ave. Interchanges, is required to meet Caltrans' design standards when the widening is extended through Carpinteria. The draft environmental document for the project has completed public circulation, and the final document is being prepared by Caltrans. Full funding has not yet been secured for this project, but \$66.5 million of the estimated \$107 million needed for environmental studies, design and construction have been programmed to the project by SBCAG and Caltrans from STIP funds. Construction could begin as early as 2013, depending on the availability of STIP funding, which will be determined as part of the Measure A Strategic Plan.

The final phase of the 101 widening, the ten mile gap from Hot Springs/Cabrillo to Carpinteria, is described as the South Coast 101 HOV Lanes Project. Caltrans District 5 is the lead agency for environmental preparation for this estimated \$425 million project. SBCAG is the primary project sponsor. Project partners include the City of Santa Barbara, County of Santa Barbara, City of Carpinteria, SBCAG and Caltrans. The Measure A Investment Plan dedicated \$140 million for construction of this project, but the remaining funding has not yet been identified.

The South Coast HOV Lanes project is intended to reduce congestion and delay, provide capacity for future travel demand, encourage modal shift to transit and carpooling, and improve travel time on U.S. 101 within the project limits. This project will facilitate the flow of goods and services through the corridor and minimize diversion of freeway trips onto the local road system. This project was initiated to implement one of the key elements from the *101 In Motion* consensus recommended package of projects; namely, an HOV lane on Route 101 from Milpas south to the county line. This proposed project is one of six elements that are being implemented through *101 In Motion*. Together this package will implement a multi-modal strategy to accommodate future travel demand while facilitating a modal shift to carpooling, transit, and passenger rail. Other consensus recommended *101 In Motion* elements include:

- New commuter friendly passenger rail service
- Facilitation of transit and carpool use
- Demand management strategies
- Improved operations and transportation communications, and
- Phased improvements north of Milpas Street

Traffic volume is overwhelming the existing capacity of the U.S. 101 during weekday and weekend peak periods. Route 101 within the project limits typically operates with congested flow (Level of Service F) conditions during weekday and weekend peak periods. These conditions typically occur for one to four hours daily in each direction and result in significant travel delay.

Without capacity improvements, LOS F conditions are forecast to exceed ten hours a day in each direction by 2030. The expected rise in traffic volumes, congestion, and delay is a result of several factors, including increased long distance commuting from Ventura County, internal population growth, and interregional traffic growth, including goods movement.

A multi-agency project design team has been meeting since February 2008 to coordinate the preparation of environmental and traffic technical studies that are the foundation of the draft environmental document. The team has been guided by the following project principles:

- Project design is to be compatible with existing community character while addressing user and maintenance worker safety.
- Visual and coastal resources are to be preserved and/or mitigated to the greatest extent feasible.
- Adverse impacts to historical and cultural resources are to be avoided or mitigated to the greatest extent feasible.
- Acquisition of private property is to be minimized.
- Financial viability is a key constraint; alternatives under consideration should be feasible within the anticipated long-term funding stream for the project.
- Opportunities for stakeholder and public input and involvement will be provided throughout the project development process.

The South Coast 101 HOV Lanes Project will be the most expensive and complicated transportation project ever undertaken in Santa Barbara County. A preliminary project schedule showing major milestones for preliminary design, environmental review and permitting are attached for your review.

Public meetings will be held on July 7 and 8 in Carpinteria and Montecito, respectively, to receive public input on the scope of the projects and environmental issues that should be studied. The meeting announcements are published in local newspapers and mailed to over 3,000 households in the project vicinity are attached.

Attachments: Public Meeting Flyer, South Coast 101 Schedule



Preliminary Design, Environmental Review & Permitting Schedule

Phase I: Pre-Scoping (Fall 2008 – Spring 2009)

- Engage local stakeholders regarding the project guiding principles and history
- Explain the project's context in the larger corridor and relation to other projects
- Introduce the integrated technical and stakeholder involvement approach
- Conduct an initial issues scan among key stakeholders to support a more efficient and streamlined environmental scoping process
- Identify stakeholders not yet aware of or involved in the project

Phase II: Environmental Scoping (Summer 2009 – Spring 2011)

- Meet CEQA/NEPA environmental scoping requirements for public involvement
- Receive local design input
- Present project information at concept review meetings for each of the local permitting agencies.
- Refine and/or confirm project scope
- Assess visual and aesthetic impacts and identify visual mitigation strategies

Phase III: Draft Environmental Review and Final EIR (Spring 2011 – Winter 2012)

- Meet CEQA and NEPA legal requirements for draft environmental document review and public involvement
- Select preferred alternative

Phase IV: Permitting and Design (Spring 2012 – Spring 2013)

- Engage Coastal Development Permitting (CDP) agencies in CDP application process
- Attend public hearings and present project information as needed
- Secure coastal development and other local permits



Public Notice



Announcement Of Public Information Meeting/Open House

South Coast HOV Project on U.S. Highway 101

WHEN AND WHERE? (2 dates)

Carpinteria

Date: **Tuesday, July 7, 2009**
Time: **5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.**
(Brief Presentation at 6:30 p.m.)

Place: **Canalino Elementary School**
1480 Linden Avenue,
Carpinteria, California

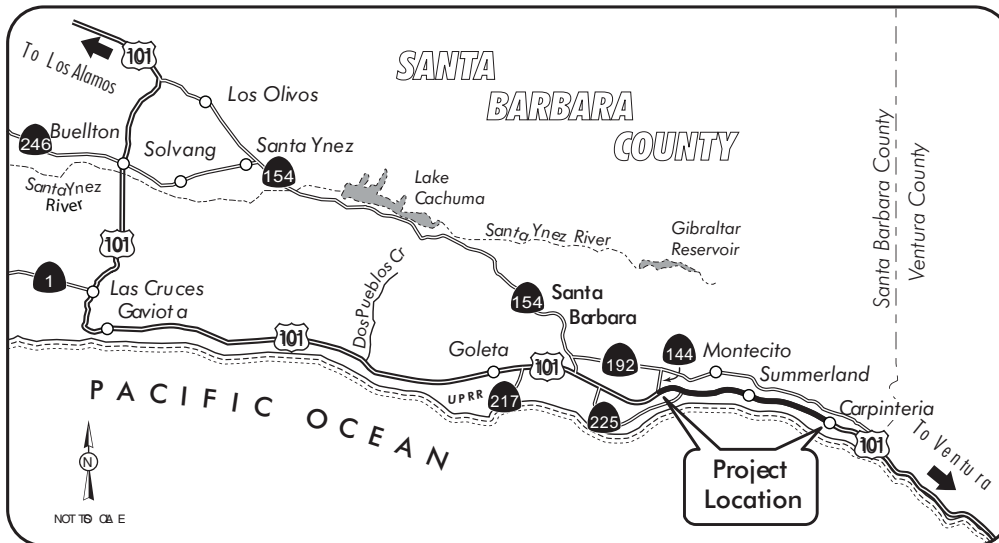
1

Montecito

Date: **Wednesday, July 8, 2009**
Time: **5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.**
(Brief Presentation at 6:30 p.m.)

Place: **Montecito Country Club**
920 Summit Rd,
Santa Barbara, California

2



WHAT IS BEING PLANNED?

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has initiated environmental studies associated with a project that would add one high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane in each direction on US 101 from 0.44 mile south of Carpinteria Creek in the City of Carpinteria to Sycamore Creek in the City of Santa Barbara. The project is 10.3 miles in length.

The proposed project would result in a six-lane freeway within the project limits. A no-build alternative and three build alternatives are currently proposed for evaluation. The added lanes are expected to be part-time HOV lanes, meaning that the lanes would be restricted to high occupancy vehicles (eg., carpools and buses) during weekday peak periods and open to all traffic during other periods. It is anticipated that the project generally will be built within the existing public (state highway and local street) right-of-way.

WHY THIS PUBLIC NOTICE?

The public notice serves as an announcement that Caltrans will hold a meeting to:

- Discuss the project need and alternatives considered to provide an HOV lane on US 101 within the project limits.
- Provide a forum where you can hear more information about the project and express your verbal and written comments/concerns to Caltrans staff about the project and its relationship to your local community.
- Provide the public an opportunity to meet the project team.

Staff will be available to answer specific questions about the project.

WHERE DO YOU COME IN?

We encourage you to review the informational displays and listen to the staff presentations about the project purpose and need. During and at the conclusion of the meeting we encourage you to make comments either in written form (by way of comment cards), or verbally. Written comments will also be accepted via letters or email through August 9, 2009.

CONTACT

Please provide your comments at the public meeting or in a letter to Matt Fowler, Environmental Analysis Branch Chief, Caltrans, 50 Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401, or by email to matt_c_fowler@dot.ca.gov. For more project information, contact the Project Manager, Scott Eades, Caltrans, at (805) 549-3144. For all other State Highway matters, please contact Caltrans District 5 Public Affairs at (805) 549-3318.

PRSR STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #4
Pismo Beach, CA

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Individuals who require special accommodation (e.g., American Sign Language interpreter, accessible seating, documentation in alternate forms, etc.) are required to contact District 5 Public Affairs Office at (805) 549-3318 at least 14 days prior to scheduled informational meeting date. Telecommunication Devices for the deaf (TDD) users may contact the California Relay Service TDD at 1-800-735-2929 or Voice Line at 1-800-735-2922.