



JOINT MEETING OF  
 SANTA CRUZ COUNTY TRAFFIC OPERATIONS SYSTEMS (TOS) OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE  
 AND  
 SAFE ON 17 TASK FORCE

**DRAFT MINUTES**

Wednesday, September 15, 2010  
 10:00-12:00

Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission  
 1523 Pacific Avenue  
 Santa Cruz, CA 95060

**TOS Oversight Committee and Safe on 17 Task Force Meeting Participants**

- Marshall Ballard, Valley Transportation Association
- Ramin Bolourchian, Caltrans District 4 TMC
- Susana Cruz, Caltrans District 5 Public Affairs (videoconference)
- Russell Ellingworth, Caltrans District 5 Maintenance
- Shawn Enjily, Caltrans District 4 Design
- Hugh Holden, Santa Cruz CHP
- Lynda Kiersted, Caltrans District 4 Maintenance
- Deb Larson, Caltrans District 5 Traffic Safety (videoconference)
- Christina Manriquez, Santa Cruz CHP Captain
- Colleen McMahon, Santa Cruz Police Department
- Scott Morris, Caltrans District 5 Scott Morris (videoconference)
- Dave Nelson, Caltrans District 4 Maintenance
- Stefanie Pow, Metropolitan Transportation Commission
- Ernesto Ramez, Caltrans District 4
- Siobhan Saunders, Caltrans District 5 Construction
- Nicole Stewart, CHP Monterey Dispatch
- Pranav Shah, Caltrans District 4 Traffic Systems
- Earl Sherman, Caltrans District 4 Maintenance
- Lazaro Villarreal, Caltrans District 4 Electrical
- Scott Wood, San Jose CHP
- Rachel Zack, Metropolitan Transportation Commission

**Staff Present**

- Ginger Dykaar
- David Garti
- Luis Mendez
- Tegan Speiser

1. **Introductions** –Introductions were made.
2. **Additions or Deletions to the Agenda** – None.



### **3. Reviewed and Accepted Minutes of the March 23, 2010 Joint TOS Oversight Committee and Safe on 17 Meeting**

#### **4. Received Information Items**

Tegan Speiser provided an update on the development of a Monterey Bay Area 511 Traveler Information System Feasibility and Implementation Plan. She informed the committee that RTC staff will be requesting their input on the 511 Feasibility and Implementation Plan. RTC is in the midst of conducting a survey to get input from the public, partner agencies, and stakeholders on what type of traveler information system will be useful for our area.

Ginger Dykaar stated that there were articles that were published in local newspapers that discussed the 511 Traveler Information System that is being considered for the Monterey Bay area and encouraged people to take the survey.

Ginger Dykaar gave an update on the Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) program stating that the program is running smoothly but FSP State funding for FY11/12 could be affected due to the lack of congestion data. Deb Larson, District 5 offered to involve Caltrans staff in the traffic operations unit to help resolve this and ensure that funding is not lost.

Ginger Dykaar reviewed Mr. Roadshow articles that are interesting examples of public's perception of traffic and safety on Highway 17.

#### **5. Received Update California Highway Patrol Safe on 17 Program Statistics and Public Information Efforts**

Lieutenant Wood of the San Jose Area Highway Patrol reported that collisions decreased and citations increased. There was 1 traffic fatality this year on the Santa Clara side of Hwy 17. The number of collisions can be increased by secondary collisions that occur due to the initial collision. This can skew the numbers as sometimes there are 4 to 5 secondary collisions after an initial collision. The cabbage truck that overturned on Hwy 17 on the Santa Clara side took approximately 5 hours to clear. There was a Mr. Roadshow article where people wrote in asking if trucks can be banned on Hwy 17. People complain that trucks go either too fast or too slow. Lt. Wood stated that commerce cannot be shut out from most state routes. Truck collisions are driver error 99% of the time. CHP has not seen any increase of speeds from normal on Hwy 17. Traffic still seems to be a bit lighter than normal due to economic downturn. Lt. Wood suggested adding a blurb in the 511 video about educating drivers to get 511 information prior to driving or hands free on the road.

Ginger Dykaar noted that when there was extra enforcement in fall 2009, there was an average of 10 collisions per month versus the spring of 2009 and 2010 with essentially no extra enforcement shows 15 to 16 collisions per month. This shows that extra enforcement is helping to reduce the number of collisions but wondered what strategy works best to reduce collisions; concentrate hours in wet winter months or hours spread out throughout the year. Lt Wood explained that his professional judgement is that they get the greatest benefit of extra enforcement hours in the fall when the wet weather starts to help people change their behavior from summer driving. Lt. Wood mentioned that we don't know how many collisions would have occurred if there was not extra enforcement in the wet weather. The Santa



Clara County side of Hwy 17 continues to see a reduction in collisions so the strategy seems to be working.

Officer Holden reported that for the Santa Cruz County side there is a slight increase (12.5%) in the number of collisions compared to this time last year. Citations issued are up 2.5 percent over this time last year. It appears that the bulk of the collisions this past year occurred in the rainy months and in July due to increase in tourist traffic. Only 1 traffic fatality occurred on the Santa Cruz side of Hwy 17 this year. Ginger Dykaar mentioned that Santa Cruz CHP has only used \$40,000 worth of funds for the last 2 years instead of the full \$50,000 that is available each year. Funds for Santa Cruz County can be rolled over to the next fiscal year so \$70,000 in funds is available for the current fiscal year for concentrated or distributed enforcement. Captain Manriquez expressed a preference for consistently increased enforcement throughout the year with some extra in the winter due to wet weather and extra in the summer due to increased traffic during tourist season. Captain Manriquez will talk to overtime coordinator to determine how overtime is tracked and then will get back to staff. Santa Cruz CHP will plan to spend \$70,000 that is available for FY 10/11.

David Garti announced that the 2 Safe on 17 signs have been replaced on Hwy 17 in the beginning of August. The signs are a good reminder to the public that Hwy 17 is a safety corridor. Signs are not typically replaced but because of the continued funding of the extra enforcement program, Caltrans provided the new signs.

## **6. Received Major Incident Review**

Officer Holden summarized the incident where the tractor trailer combination truck overturned on Hwy 17 going southbound near Glenwood Drive curve on Sept 2, 2010 at 6:09 am. The driver was going faster than he could handle with the weight of the beer in the truck. He intentionally went into the embankment and bounced back out into the road. SB lanes closed for 4 hrs 15 mins. The majority of the time was spent offloading the beer from the truck. There was a discussion on what information is being conveyed after an incident and how it can be improved. Changeable message signs (CMS) were well utilized. Luis noted that there was no information on exactly where the incident was located so it was difficult to decide on the best alternate route. Colleen McMahon suggested using Nixel Alert (free notification system that agencies can sign up for from computer or cell phone) to identify alternate routes. Suggestion was made to use signs to tell people how long the delay may last. Ramin mentioned that CMS have limited space and it is difficult to pinpoint the exact location of an incident as people do not know minor cross roads.

Other state routes can be suggested for some highways but Hwy 17 does not have other state routes nearby. There are ramifications if people are told to use a county route. Siobhan recommends that we get highway advisory radio (HAR) system operational as HAR does not have the limitations of signs and sigalerts. HAR is not working in Santa Cruz County. There is a licensing issue over the signal which is taking time to resolve and the issue is exacerbated by budget problems.

## **7. Received Review of Operations and Status of TOS**

Ramin extended invitation to staff to tour Dist 4 TMC facility to show process and limitations. Closure of 50% or more of facility for more than 20 minutes, triggers a sigalert. Ramin requested that the TMC at District 4 be informed immediately when a CMS is not working.



#### **8. Received Highway 17 Project Update from Caltrans District 4 – Wet Weather Project**

Shawn Enjily said that due to the furloughs and issues related to water quality requirements, the schedule was extended. Hopefully, once the budget is passed, the schedule will not be affected further. Luis Mendez added that the Wet Weather project will benefit from providing construction information via the CMSs and the HAR. When HAR is discussed at the next meeting, the Wet Weather Project will be part of the consideration in getting the HAR operational. Funds have been set aside for public information about construction project.

#### **9. Received Highway 17 Project Update from Caltrans District 5**

Siobhan Saunders reported that the Caltrans project to update the guardrail and barriers is about 20% complete. The contractor is going bankrupt and therefore the bonding agency will be hiring another contractor to complete the work. The project will start up again in the spring. Another project near Vine Hill Road is not completed due to Caltrans rejecting the pavement. This contractor is also going bankrupt. The project will not be completed until the spring. Another job on SB Hwy 17 to improve guardrails may be delayed due to the budget not being passed and the migratory bird act that only allows trees to be cut at certain times of year.

#### **10. Received New Highway 1 Changeable Message Sign Update**

Siobhan Saunders reported that the Highway 1 CMS will not be installed. It is likely that a place with an adequate sight distance was not available.

#### **11. Received Traffic Operations System Improvements**

Siobhan Saunders reported that installation of detection equipment on Highway 1 including vehicle counting and closed circuit television cameras (CCTV) started Monday (9/13/10). It should take about 3 months to install.

Shawn Enjily asked if there have been any problems with moveable barriers for projects on Hwy 17. Siobhan responded that as far as she knows the moveable barriers have worked quite well.

Ginger Dykaar requested that Caltrans inform RTC if any call boxes are going to be affected by the guardrail project that will start up again in the spring.

Deb Larson reported that priorities for the Santa Cruz area have been to activate the CCTV cameras in the fishhook area where they were installed in 2008 as part of the interchange improvement project. There are 3 cameras: Emeline, Ocean St and Pasatiempo. The Emeline CCTV is online and the Ocean St and Pasatiempo CCTVs should be online by the end of this year. The Laurel curve CCTV still needs a router and there is currently no purchasing allowed at Caltrans except for emergency equipment. Hopefully, once a state budget is approved, there will be maintenance funds to make purchases necessary to get the Laurel Curve CCTV and microwave vehicle detection equipment hooked up to router.

Deb Larson initiated a project on Hwy 17 that will be looking at shoulder widening, concrete guardrails and/or retaining walls at 3 different locations. The project will provide more recovery area and sight distance around the curves. Locations are just north of Laurel Road going NB, NB near Sugarloaf Rd, and near Glenwood Cutoff in the SB direction.



Marshall Ballard is working with Dist 4 to get a full inventory of ITS equipment on Hwy 17. Marshall presented maps for both Santa Cruz and Santa Clara that show all the ITS equipment on Hwy 17. He plans to add to this inventory, what equipment is operational. Marshall stated that they will try to use this information as leverage to get more funding. Luis suggested that it may be possible for VTA to partner with SCCRTC and TAMC to increase the possibility of securing funding.

**12. Received an update of the SB 1418- SAFE Modernization Bill**

Luis Mendez reminded members that SB 1418 is the bill that would allow an increase in a vehicle registration fee from \$1 to \$2 to provide an increase in funds for Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE). Grace Blakeslee from SCCRTC and Rebecca Long from MTC worked very hard to try to move the bill along. Unfortunately, the bill failed in the Assembly Transportation Committee in late June, 2010. It was hoped that this would increase the funding for call boxes, Freeway Service Patrol, extra enforcement for Hwy 17 etc. Staff may try again next year to get the bill passed.

**13. Additional Items**

Caltrans maintenance is concerned about public perception of tree trimming on Highway 17. Tree trimming is subject to daytime and Migratory Bird Act restrictions. It never seems to be the "right time" to do this work. Tree trimming that was started this summer was suspended and it is not known when it will be resumed. Caltrans traffic counts indicate that there was little traffic during time of tree trimming. Public perception may be biased by radio station hosts who may be looking for entertainment value of message rather than presenting accurate information. Caltrans Public Information Officers work with radio stations but it is still a problem. Gary Richards and Ramona Turner do a good job presenting well informed and accurate information.

Luis Mendez mentioned it took over 4 hours to open the highway after the beer truck overturned on Hwy 17. This is a long time from the motorists' perspective. Are there ways to move the cargo quicker? Lt. Wood emphasized that moving the cargo is what takes the majority of the time. Captain Manriquez said that the cargo needs to be saved unless there is agreement with the company who owns the goods.

**14. Approved Next Meeting Date: Joint Safe on 17 Task Force & TOS Oversight Committee meeting – March 23, 2011**

Respectively submitted by   
Ginger Dykaar

**It was moved (Christina Manriquez/Luis Mendez) to place on agenda for March 23, 2011 meeting to have a representative from District 4 talk about what is being done to make the highway advisory radio operational for both Santa Cruz County and Santa Clara County and how it can best be used to inform travelers of incidents, congestion and alternate routes.**

**Action Item:** Staff was directed by Chair of Committee to set up tour of District 4 TMC facility and inform members of committee of date to tour District 4 TMC.