

AGENDA: April 2, 2020

TO: Regional Transportation Commission
FROM: Guy Preston, Executive Director
RE: Director's Report

THIS ITEM FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Update on Emergency Rail Line Bridge Repair Project

At the March 19th TPW meeting, staff provided information regarding damage to a timber trestle bridge located on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail line at MP4.57. In order to prevent a potential critical failure to the bridge, the Commission authorized me to enter into emergency contracts to provide environmental services, engineering designs, construction management, and construction. Over the past two weeks, I have entered into the following two (2) contracts:

- A sole source contract with RailPros, Inc. for an amount not-to-exceed \$20,801.33 to prepare engineering to replace Bent 3, armoring around Bents 3, 7, 8, 10, a drainage ditch, and review of Contractor falsework plans; and,
- A sole source contract with RSE, Inc. for an amount not-to-exceed \$46,525.00 for construction management.

RTC staff is negotiating a contract for environmental services, but a contract has not yet been executed.

Prior to entering into the new contract with RailPros, staff directed RailPros to commence work using RTC's existing contract with them for bridge inspections. Added work included the emergency inspection and development of preliminary plans needed for the repair. This work was tracked on this existing contract, and staff intends to return to the Commission next month to amend that contract to replenish its budget. An amendment to the original contract with RailPros will be needed to ensure that there are sufficient funds in that contract to complete the work anticipated in the original scope.

Last week, RTC engineer Sarah Christensen performed a pre-construction bid meeting on site with one contractor present and another contractor on Skype. The contractor who attended in person is local and is available to mobilize immediately. Their expertise is at-grade rail infrastructure, including earthwork. The other Contractor is based in Wisconsin and stated that they were willing to re-prioritize their work to quickly mobilize from Seattle. The Wisconsin contractor has considerable timber trestle bridge experience with material available to be used on the RTC project.

I was considering the possibility of executing two contractors to take advantage of contractors' complementary services. Since then, the Wisconsin contractor has decided not

to pursue the work, due to concerns associated with the COVID-19 situation. RSE, who will be managing construction work, has been in contact with additional contractors to gauge interest. Our biggest concern has been providing enough detail to quantify the extent of work needed, especially with respect to earthwork and grading. Bid documents were released to contractors on April 1st. If we cannot get bids with a reasonable level of confidence, it may be in the best interest of RTC to enter into one or more construction contracts with qualified contractor(s) on a time and materials basis. My goal is to get a contractor mobilized as quickly as possible, in a manner that will minimize risk and control cost. I will provide additional updates at the next RTC meeting.

Impact of COVID-19 on TDA Funded Transportation Services

Santa Cruz METRO

Santa Cruz METRO is operating their weekend schedule all seven days of the week until further notice. This means fewer buses running less frequently with later start times and earlier end times. All School Term Service (ST) is suspended until further notice.

ParaCruz is providing service to and from essential services such as doctor's appointments and dialysis. In compliance with the shelter-in-place order, travel in Santa Cruz County is prohibited except for essential activities and passengers must maintain six feet of physical distance at all times, both on the bus and off the bus.

Community Bridges

Lift Line expanded its service to provide essential trips to grocery stores, pharmacies and other locations. Lift Line has temporarily removed the need for an application to schedule rides, in order to remove barriers and access to rides until the end of the shelter in place order.

The Meals on Wheels of Santa Cruz County congregate dining centers are closed until further notice. Participants who need food delivered are being added to home-delivered meals routes. Shelf stable meals are being made available to homeless seniors and distributed through local hotspots and shelter coordination.

Elderday has been reduced to serving 2 clients, but due to the lack of financial support to provide these services at home, Elderday is planning to shut down today, April 2nd.

Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County

The Volunteer Center had to cancel 118 rides for seniors using their transportation program services. To meet the needs of their most vulnerable seniors in the community, the Volunteer Center developed the Grocery Shopper Program as a fully vetted volunteer program to provide food, grocery and medication pickup services to the most at-risk group of the COVID-19 virus.

The Volunteer Center is also working to screen, recruit and train volunteers. They will receive grocery requests from participants and will attempt to purchase and deliver (using approved physical-distancing guidelines) those grocery items and pharmacy medications to

the individual. The goal is to serve low-income seniors age 60+ that are health compromised. First priority will be to serve those who do not have access to a computer to purchase groceries and those who do not currently have the support of family or friends. AmeriCorps tech support will be available by phone for seniors who have computers and need help navigating the various online shopping platforms. The Volunteer Center has already begun to support their 135 clients with the new Grocery Shopper Program, and on April 1st, they began to offer support to participants of the senior service provider network.

Update on Transit Economic Stimulus Legislation

The \$2 trillion COVID-19 emergency stabilization package agreed upon by Congress and the White House was signed into law last week. The legislation includes \$25 billion for public transportation relief, with \$3.7 billion for California operators. Funds are expected to flow quickly to Federal Transit Agency (FTA) designated recipients via formula, and have broad eligibility to fund operating expenses, including reimbursements for lost revenue, operating costs, and other operating expenses related to COVID-19 response.

Per the funding package, transit agencies may also use the funds to purchase personal protective equipment and to pay the administrative leave of operations personnel due to reductions in service. Highlights include the following:

- Funding would be apportioned no later than 7 days after the passage of the funding package.
- Funding would not be subject to obligation limitations.
- Operating expenses would not need to be included in a TIP/STIP or RTP.
- Emergency assistance does not require matching funds (100% federal share)

In mid-March, the transit advocacy group TransitCenter estimated that transit agencies will experience losses this year anywhere between \$26 and \$38 billion, which is higher than the transit stimulus funding. Transit agencies will need more operating funds to guarantee that they can run enough trains and buses to avoid overcrowding and maintain physical distancing.

Update on TDA and Measure D Allocation Estimates to Local Jurisdictions

Each year, the RTC provides allocation estimates to Transportation Development Act (TDA) and Measure D recipient agencies. This year's estimates are based on the proposed budget, which is part of today's agenda.

Although traditional TDA funding will be impacted by the effects of COVID-19 on economic activity, RTC will do everything possible to meet the TDA allocation estimates. The aforementioned stimulus funding is expected to assist with that effort. RTC is also prepared to use TDA reserves, which have been set aside for emergencies. RTC staff will continue to monitor TDA revenues and update the Commission and recipient agencies as soon as more information becomes available.

RTC has notified Direct Allocation recipients of Measure D, who receive formula funding, that Measure D revenue is expected to be less than forecast due to the National Emergency. Unlike TDA, local sales taxes did not receive any funding from the recently passed stimulus

bill, and Measure D does not have a reserve fund. Recipients of direct allocation formula funds were reminded that revenue distributions will be based on actual revenues received, not on the estimates provided.

RTC and Direct Recipients have been on a cycle of approving annual 5-Year Program of Project updates in the spring, prior to commencement of the new fiscal year, and oftentimes as part of their Capital Improvement Program or agency budgets. Due to the uncertainty of revenue forecasts, RTC plans to delay the approval of this year's 5-Year Program of Projects for Regional programs until new forecasts can be developed. While many agencies prepare their Direct allocation 5-year plan updates as part of development of their annual budget or Capital Improvement Program, some agencies may want to wait to use more conservative estimates this spring. RTC is providing that option. More information will be provided as it is developed. In the interim, the most recent 5-Year Program of Projects will be used and can be amended, depending on a project's immediate needs.

Update on North Coast Rail Trail (Segment 5) Funding and Schedule

FHWA has notified RTC by the attached letter that due to cost over-runs on their other projects, they are changing the construction programming year to mid-Federal Fiscal Year 2024. This would correspond to a summer 2024 construction start date.

RTC staff met with the Central Federal Lands (CFL) team on March 26th to discuss the status of their design work and to come up with a game plan. We agreed that we should continue to press forward with all pre-construction work on the current schedule. CFL has committed the resources to complete the design, and we are making good progress on resolving the right-of-way issues. With this effort, the full project should be shovel ready by the middle of 2021, as planned. CFL has already identified this project as a candidate for a potential stimulus package. Therefore, continuing to work on our existing schedule is very important to get the project construction ready for this or other potential opportunities. We are also planning to apply for Phase 2 of the next planned FLAP grant, which is expected to issue a call for projects in the Fall of 2020, but that funding isn't expected to be available until 2025.

Update on Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Projects

At their March meeting, the California Transportation Commission approved funding for the Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities projects, which included three projects in Santa Cruz County. Community Bridges secured \$195,537 to replace three paratransit vehicles and operations equipment. UCSC secured \$168,000 to replace three paratransit mini vans that serve students, staff, faculty and campus visitors living with permanent or temporary disabilities who are unable to use the campus shuttle. The Seniors Council secured \$261,786 for a two-year period to provide mileage reimbursements and/or transit fare reimbursements for low income individuals volunteering with the Senior Council's Foster Grandparents and Senior's Companion Programs.

Update on Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis

The Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis (TCAA) team has drafted its results of the initial screening and a short list of alternatives (Milestone 2). Input will be solicited from the public and stakeholders on Milestone 2 for a four (4) week period by means of an online format.

This item is expected to be brought to the June 4, 2020 RTC meeting in order to seek approval of the screening analysis results and the short list of alternatives. The approximate timeline is as follows:

April 13 – approximate start of public/stakeholder input through online activities

May 11 – end of online activities

May 25 – Final staff report due

June 4 – seek approval from RTC on screening analysis and the short list of alternatives



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Central Federal Lands Highway Division

March 20, 2020

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Re: Project – CA FLAP SCR T5(1) Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST)
California Federal Lands Access Program

Dear Mr. Preston:

The California Program Decisions Committee (PDC) would like to inform you that due to construction cost increases experienced by the California Federal Lands Access Program, the PDC has revised the Program of Projects. These cost increases are a reflection of market conditions witnessed in the last 12 to 18 months in California, and other states. We now anticipate construction funding for this project to be available in mid Federal Fiscal Year 2024. This marks the earliest when advertisement for bids could begin. Physical construction is anticipated to start later that year.

This is contingent on if Program funding is available. The Federal Lands Access Program is currently authorized under the FAST Act, which is set to expire on September 30, 2020. The FLAP Program, or a similar program where this project can be grandfathered into, would need to be extended, renewed, or created through additional federal legislation. We are optimistic this will occur.

The Federal Highway Administration, Central Federal Lands Highway Division (CFLHD), has reviewed this project's cost estimate to take into the recent market conditions and escalated at 3% from today's dollars to the new construction program year. The total project cost, including engineering and construction, is now estimated to remain at the original PDC approved amount of \$12,500,000. The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission has previously committed a cash match of \$3,655,000 using non-federal funds. These funds continue to satisfy the required match. The Federal Lands Access Program contribution has been revised to be \$8,845,000. The Project Manager will soon be contacting you to modify the existing Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to reflect the new program year.

We understand the importance of this project. If market conditions change, which may happen in light of current events, and/or new legislation increases the available funding, we will re-evaluate the Program of Projects to determine if projects could be advanced.

We appreciate your interest in the Federal Lands Access Program and look forward to continuing to work with you on this project.

Best Regards,

James Herlyck, P.E.
Federal Lands Access Program Manager &
Federal PDC Representative
FHWA-CFLHD

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