

AGENDA: February 2, 2017

TO: Regional Transportation Commission
FROM: George Dondero, Executive Director
RE: Director's Report

THIS ITEM FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Scott Creek Lagoon Restoration

The Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County (RCD), in partnership with Caltrans, RTC, Cal Poly-Swanton Pacific Ranch (CalPoly) and the California State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) as well as numerous resource agencies has been working on a project to restore Scotts Creek Lagoon and Marsh and possibly replace the existing Hwy 1 bridge over Scotts Creek. The goal is to develop a bridge and lagoon system that will improve the habitat and natural functions of the Scott Creek Lagoon and surrounding environs, while providing for sustainable (long-term and low maintenance) transportation infrastructure. A consulting firm, ESA, has been hired by RCD to develop marsh and lagoon restoration designs and criteria to provide to Caltrans engineers for determining feasibility and engineering for a new bridge.

Scott Creek Lagoon is widely recognized as providing important ecological functions to specific life stages of sensitive fish species – specifically the critically endangered Coho salmon and the threatened central California coast steelhead. Scott Creek supports the largest remaining population of Coho salmon south of San Francisco Bay, and is deemed a high priority in terms of recovery and restoration actions. Other sensitive species such as tidewater gobies, California red-legged frogs, and snowy plovers are also known to utilize habitats within and adjacent to Scott Creek Lagoon, and there is potential habitat for western pond turtles and tri-colored blackbirds.

Golden Gate RR Museum

The RTC ad-hoc committee on the agreement with Golden Gate Railroad Museum met with a representative of the Museum on January 5, 2017 to discuss terms of an agreement for the Museum to locate on the RTC's rail line. On January 6 Golden Gate representatives notified RTC staff that they regrettably could not meet our terms and that they would locate on the Northwestern Pacific Railroad in Marin County.

Tegan Speiser retires

Last month the Commission received a report from RTC planner Amy Naranjo on the Cruz511 program. Assisting Amy was long-time Senior Planner Tegan Speiser. Tegan led the effort to build Cruz 511 into the successful website that exists today. Tegan was the Project Manager on our Commute Solutions rideshare program, the complete re-construction of the RTC website, led the effort when RTC became autonomous from the County in 2006, assisted neighbors to adjust travel patterns when the La Fonda bridge was out of service during construction of the Soquel-Morrissey Auxiliary lanes project, and led numerous marketing and outreach efforts to support other RTC projects over the years. Tegan will be leaving the RTC late this month or early March, ending 15 years with the agency. Her special talents and skills that help connect people, technology and transportation have helped our community in so many ways. We wish her good health and happiness in the years ahead.

President Remarks on Infrastructure

For his part, Mr. Trump is reportedly unhappy that House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) did not include infrastructure in his priorities for the “first 200 days” of the 115th Congress. At a GOP congressional retreat this week, Trump mentioned that he wants to fix existing infrastructure first before diving into new projects:

“Our infrastructure is in serious trouble. We will build new roads and highways and tunnels and airports and railways across the nation. We will fix our existing product before we build anything brand new, however. We have to fix what we have. It's a mess. So we're going to fix it first. The thing I do best in life is build. We will fix it first 'cause we have a lot of things that are in bad shape.”

Senate Panel Approves DOT Nominee

Meanwhile, the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee approved the nomination of Transportation Secretary-nominee Elaine Chao this week by voice vote. The full Senate is expected to vote on the nomination of Chao on January 31, and she should be approved easily, if not unanimously. Chao will be central to Trump's infrastructure plans.

TPW Meetings Ahead

We request that Commissioners give priority to future transportation Policy Workshop meetings – usually scheduled for the third Thursday of each month. With many of the setup tasks and new processes needed to implement Measure D, we expect that most of the TPW dates scheduled now through June will be needed.

Measure D Major Implementation Tasks – Work in Progress (Jan 2017)

2017

January - February

- ✓ RTC: Set up agreements with state to collect and distribute new local tax revenues
- ✓ RTC: Collect Best Practices and resources already available
- RTC: Set up accounting and fiscal systems
- RTC: Develop policies and procedures for distribution of funds (Agreements & Guidelines)
- RTC: Develop multi-year revenue and expenditure estimates
- RTC: Develop communications/public outreach plan
- Develop Oversight Committee guidelines

Spring

- Fund Recipients: Develop Five-Year Plans with public input and hearing (*cities, County, METRO, Lift Line*)
- RTC: Develop Five-Year Plans for regional projects with public input and hearing
- RTC: Develop 30-year Implementation Plan - revenue projections, project costs, project schedules, matching fund projections, bonding options
- State: Measure D revenue collection begins April 1
- RTC: Board considers 30-year Implementation Plan, communications plan, Oversight Committee membership, guidelines and agreements with recipients

Summer

- Fund Recipients: Final (adopted) Five-Year Plans due to RTC
- State: First disbursement of new Measure D revenue
- RTC: Required payments to Board of Equalization and County Elections
- RTC: Disburse revenues to direct fund recipients, following required repayments (see above)
- Fund recipients: Begin project implementation

Fall

- Fund Recipients: Regular payments anticipated
- RTC: Recruit and select Oversight Committee members
- RTC: Adopt another major funding source, State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) projects to maximize Measure D \$

2018

- RTC: Retain auditing services
- Fund Recipients: Submit Updated Five Year Plans including annual expenditure report for FY17/18, with progress on improving transportation system, maintenance of effort, and matching funds secured information
- Auditor: Examine Annual Expenditure Reports
- Oversight Committee: Review Annual Expenditure Reports; report to RTC
- RTC and Recipients: Annual Report outreach