

TRANSPORTATION AGENCY FOR MONTEREY COUNTY

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HIGHLIGHTS

January 28, 2009 Meeting

TRANSPORTATION EXCELLENCE CELEBRATED

The Transportation Agency for Monterey honored outstanding Monterey County individuals, projects, and programs in the field of transportation at the seventh annual Transportation Agency for Monterey County Excellence Awards Ceremony. Those receiving awards have shown exceptional hard work and dedication in improving transportation in Monterey County.

Individuals

- **Jim and Mary Lou Vossen: Program Director, Your Town Show, KNRV AM 1240:** Mr. and Ms. Vossen have been an important asset to transportation in Monterey County by broadcasting the “Your Town” Radio and Television Show, which has facilitated the sharing of important transportation topics to Monterey County residents for the past few years.
- **Ron Pasquinelli and Sam Teel, Monterey Peninsula Taxpayers Association:** Mr. Pasquinelli and Mr. Teel were the knowledgeable “men on the street” about the Transportation Investment Plan, with no other agenda than to improve the transportation system. Their independent points of view made them very persuasive to audiences and gained many new supporters for local transportation funding. Their efforts were an important factor in raising the approval of the plan from 57% in 2006 to nearly 63% in November 2008.

Projects

- **Mustard Seed Biodiesel Research, Monterey-Salinas Transit:** Their innovative research with biofuel made from locally grown mustard seed will reduce MST’s reliance on oil and will provide a fully sustainable alternative to diesel that will lessen environmental impacts.
- **Holman Highway 68 – Community Hospital Project: City of Monterey, TAMC, Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, URS Corporation, Granite Construction, Bestor Engineers, Caltrans:** The Holman Highway 68 CHOMP Project has resulted in a more functionally efficient intersection with improved traffic conditions and safety through the intersection. The project has dramatically improved access to and from the Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, while preserving the scenic forested area around the project.

- **Basin Complex Fire – Highway 1 Winter Preparation Project: Caltrans – District 5, Granite Construction, AIS Construction, and Hi Tech Rockfall Construction:** This very important project will prevent or minimize highway closures associated with rockslides and debris flows resulting from increased runoff and will significantly increase Caltrans' ability to maintain Highway 1 in Big Sur during the winter months.
- **Elkhorn Slough Early Mitigation Partnership: Caltrans – District 5, Elkhorn Slough Foundation:** This partnership promotes environmental streamlining by developing partnerships, funding strategies and conservation agreements to provide timely, coordinated, regional-scale compensatory mitigation for multiple transportation projects. Early mitigation planning and partnering reduces project and process delays by developing sustainable mitigation measures early in project development.

See the attached list for a full description of the awards recipients. The full awards list may also be accessed at:

http://www.tamcmonterey.org/programs/excelaward/08_honorees.html.

CALL FOR FEDERAL STUMULUS PROJECTS

The Transportation Agency Board authorized a call for projects to program the potential federal infrastructure stimulus funds allocated to Transportation Agency for Monterey County. The timing and dollar amount of a potential federal infrastructure stimulus package is currently unknown. A ballpark estimate of Transportation Agency for Monterey County's share of a stimulus package could range from \$8 million to \$20 million. The final stimulus package is expected to be signed into law by February 16, 2009. There is considerable urgency to be ready to proceed when a federal infrastructure stimulus package is finalized. The clock for short-term deadlines to start construction on projects such as 90 days or 150 days will start as soon as funds are allocated to the state.

Transportation Agency staff will work with the Technical Advisory Committee to develop a project application process that quickly and equitably selects projects to distribute stimulus package funds based on Transportation Agency for Monterey County's current Regional Surface Transportation Program project selection process.

The key criteria for selecting stimulus package projects include:

- Jurisdiction has approved Disadvantage Business Enterprise Program, Federal Master Agreement, and Quality Assurance Plan in accordance with Caltrans requirements;
- Ready to obligate within the 90 days, 120 days, 150 days, or by July 1, 2010 time limits set in the stimulus package,
- ability to meet federal and state project delivery requirements,
- geographic equity,

- multimodal benefits of the proposed project,
- regional benefits of the proposed project,
- job creation

A proposed priority list of projects to receive stimulus package funds will be brought to the Transportation Agency for Monterey County Board of Directors for approval prior to funds being allocated.

SAN JUAN ROAD AND HWY 101 INTERCHANGE PROJECT **PUBLIC HEARING**

Safety on Highway 101 is the primary concern behind plans for a new interchange near the intersection of San Juan Road and Highway 101. With over 85 accidents occurring at this intersection over the past five years (one fatal) plans for this intersection will make entering and exiting the highway safer and congestion free. The project has progressed to the point that preliminary engineering is complete and the draft environmental document (Mitigated Negative Declaration / Environmental Assessment) is targeted for release for public review and comment on January 15, 2009.

A public hearing is scheduled for the project and the environmental document at the Aromas School Gymnasium on February 5, 2009.

Caltrans has reduced the number of viable alternatives for a new interchange in this area down to two. Both of these two alternatives fall partly across the county line in San Benito County and best address the traffic concerns and avoid project impacts. These options would also help with local circulation at Cole Road and may prove to be less expensive than the original alternatives. Funding for this \$90.6 million project will come from several sources including regional, interregional, and trade corridor bond funds.

SIGNIFICANT SAVINGS IN FREIGHT RAIL **FOR MONTEREY COUNTY**

This August, the Board approved an agreement with the Grower-Shipper Association of Central California to study the feasibility and industry interest in utilizing rail carriers for transport of agricultural products in addition to the current direct ship by truck to market. The analysis finds “that the rail initiative provides a significant and positive impact to the County of Monterey and its surrounding areas, as well as to the shipper-growers in the area, in terms of financial economic consequences as well as other externalities including the environment. The analysis indicates significant savings to the shipper-growers, providing a higher level of profit margin and reduces the variability in revenues over

time.” The author recommends that “a follow-up analysis should be done, specifically, looking at the cost-benefit analysis of this investment ...[and] the various strategic options or pathways that the project can be developed.”

TRANSIT FUNDING NEEDED

The Transportation Agency Board approved the allocation of \$1,660,304 in State Transit Assistance funds for MST RIDES operations through June of 2009 in order to maintain existing services. The Agency also supported a Proposition 1b capital transit bond application by the City of Soledad for a bus replacement up to \$100,000. Other Proposition 1b recommendations this year are \$80,000 for a City of Greenfield replacement bus and \$1.8 million for MST’s bus replacement loan payoff. The Agency will reserve State Transit Assistance funds equal to the Soledad and Greenfield bus costs until the applicants receive bond funds.

Also, due to the Governor’s proposal to permanently eliminate the State Transit Assistance program beginning in the 2009-10 fiscal year the Transportation Agency Board of Directors approved a short-term, zero-interest loan to Monterey-Salinas Transit to reduce their long term debt payment costs and preserve funding for public transit operations. This action is part of a package of measures intended to mitigate the impact of the State Transit Assistance cuts.

MONTEREY-SALINAS TRANSIT TO RECEIVE LOCAL TRANSPORTION FUNDS FOR SOUTH COUNTY TRANSIT SERVICE

The Transportation Agency awarded Monterey Salinas Transit \$74,387 in Local Transportation Funds to maintain operation of the Line 23 Express (Line 23x) service between King City and Salinas, which has been funded to date through private contributions and federal transit grants for rural intercity services. Beginning in February 2009, Monterey Salinas Transit will no longer receive the federal grant funds budgeted for this service due to recent changes to federal grant eligibility criteria.

TRANSPORTATION AGENCY AWARDS TRANSPORTATION FUNDS TO CITY OF SEASIDE

The Transportation Agency awarded \$284,487 in Regional Surface Transportation Program funds to the City of Seaside for Pavement Management System Implementation

and to reallocate \$60,000 of fair share funds to the Fremont/Trinity Lighted Crosswalk project.

The types of transportation projects that are eligible for Regional Surface Transportation Program funding include local street and roadway rehabilitation, local match for federal transportation funds, bike lanes, pedestrian facilities, public transit capital, and signal coordination. The Transportation Agency distributes the “fair share” component to the cities and County based on population and is available at the discretion of the local jurisdiction for transportation projects.