

**SAN BENITO COUNTY
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
REGULAR MEETING**

August 15, 2013, 3:00 P.M.

FINAL MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Vice-Chair Gomez, Director Boch, Director De La Cruz, and Director Scattini

STAFF PRESENT:

Deputy County Counsel, Shirley Murphy; Executive Director, Lisa Rheinheimer; Transportation Planning Manager, Mary Gilbert; Transportation Planner, Veronica Lezama; Secretary, Monica Gomez

OTHERS PRESENT:

Colin Jones, Mark McCumsey, Caltrans District 5; Heather Adamson, AMBAG

CALL TO ORDER:

Vice Chair Gomez called the meeting to order at 3:01 P.M.

A. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

B. CERTIFICATE OF POSTING

Upon a motion duly made by Director De La Cruz, and seconded by Director Boch, the Directors unanimously acknowledged the Certificate of Posting.

C. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Vice-Chair Gomez stated for the record that the COG Board received Joe Thompson's public comment correspondence dated June 19, 2013 through June 20, 2013. The correspondence was entered into the public record.

D. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Rheinheimer

Ms. Rheinheimer announced that COG was awarded a \$70,000 grant from Caltrans. It includes staff and consultant time for a project that is being called "Accessible Connections Promoting Active Transportation a Bus Stop Improvement Plan." Staff will conduct an assessment and inventory of the existing County Express bus stops for walk-ability and accessibility. The information will be used to develop an investment strategy for bus stop improvements.

Ms. Rheinheimer announced that the Highway 156 Improvement project reached a settlement agreement between the San Juan Valley litigants and Caltrans. The project can now move forward into the next phase of work of Final Design and Right of Way. Staff will provide a report on this subject at the September COG meeting.

Staff will prepare the Regional Housing Needs Assessment Planning requirement. Staff began discussion

with the California Housing and Community Development Department and Planning staff. Staff will provide more information at the September meeting.

Ms. Rheinheimer stated that she provided a letter of support to the San Benito County Public Works Department for the Cienega Road Bridge Project in San Benito County. They're trying to ensure that the project is eligible for Federal funds to be able to replace the bridge.

Lastly, Ms. Rheinheimer reported that a picture was posted on the Hollister Neighborhood Watch Facebook page this morning suggesting that a County Express vehicle took more than the allowable number of students to school. Ms. Rheinheimer stated that the Local Transportation Authority staff is working with MV Transportation to look into this situation and correct any wrong doing should it exist.

Director De La Cruz inquired about the Bus Stop Improvement Plan and whether or not there will be a priority list for bus stops.

Ms. Rheinheimer stated that staff would be able to work with the Board on developing a priority list for bus stops.

Director De La Cruz and Director Scattini inquired about the large rocks that were placed near the Bridge on San Juan Road. They directed staff to look into who authorized placing the rocks in the area.

Director Boch asked if the San Juan Valley individuals will be invited to participate in the Highway 156 Improvement Project discussions.

Ms. Rheinheimer stated that she plans to invite the San Juan Valley individuals to be in attendance at the September COG meeting.

E. CALTRANS DISTRICT 5 REPORT: Jones

Colin Jones stated the he will be filling in as acting Senior Planner for the region for the next 4 months until Brandy Rider returns in December.

Mr. Jones announced that Caltrans awarded a grant to the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments for a US 101 Study, pertaining to freight mobility and transportation operations for the entire District 5 area.

Mr. Jones provided an update on the San Juan Road Interchange Project. Caltrans has worked with the contractor to come up with some design changes on the retaining walls. The changes will save about \$250,000 on the project and bump up the schedule about 2 months. The estimated completion date is scheduled for the winter of 2014.

Mr. Jones reported that there has been a lot of progress at the Crazy Horse Canyon Interchange and it may be open to traffic within the next two months. Caltrans staff will be working with the Transportation Agency of Monterey County to put together an event to commemorate the Interchange. The San Benito Council of Governments staff will be invited to participate in this event.

Lastly, Mr. Jones mentioned that there is a new web based tool on the Caltrans homepage at www.dot.ca.gov to help with trip planning. Caltrans' QuickMap link allows you to access real time traffic information, traffic congestion and incidents, lane closures, changeable message signs and traffic speeds on freeways and local roads statewide. In addition, he mentioned that anyone can submit a maintenance service request through the Caltrans website for any local concerns.

Vice-Chair Gomez voiced his continued safety concern with pedestrians walking or biking along the section of Highway 25 between Sunset Road and Union Road.

Mr. Jones stated that he would look into Vice-Chair Gomez' concern. He suggested contacting the California Highway Patrol and making them aware of the issue as well.

Director De La Cruz requested that Caltrans look into a light that is out at the intersection of Highway 156 and Buena Vista Road.

Mr. Jones stated that he would contact the maintenance department.

F. BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORTS:

Director De La Cruz reported on the San Benito Health Foundation Week event which he attended along with fellow Director Scattini. He stated that the COG Board and staff were acknowledged for their work on moving forward with installing a bus stop shelter at their location.

Director Scattini requested that staff look into an issue with the traffic light at Westside Blvd. and 4th Street. He stated that when going south on Westside Blvd. the left turn signal does not change. There have been times where drivers turn on the red light because they get tired of waiting.

Ms. Rheinheimer stated that staff will look into the issue.

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. **APPROVE** Council of Governments Draft Meeting Minutes Dated July 18, 2013 – Gomez
2. **RECEIVE** Construction Projects Report – Caltrans District 5
3. **APPROVE** Cost Sharing Agreement for Preparation of the Environmental Impact Report for the 2014 Regional Transportation Plan and 2014 Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy for an Amount not to Exceed \$20,000 – Gilbert
4. **APPROVE** Draft Monterey Bay Area Complete Streets Guidebook for Inclusion in the 2014 Regional Transportation Plan – Gilbert
5. **APPOINT** Valerie J. England, Adam Goldstone, and John J. Telha to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) – Lezama

Ms. Rheinheimer asked to pull Item 3 from the Consent agenda and continue the item to a date uncertain.

There was no public comment on the Consent agenda.

Upon a motion duly made by Director Gomez, and seconded by Director De La Cruz, the Directors unanimously approved Items 1, 2, 4, and 5 from the Consent Agenda and continued Item 3 to a date uncertain.

REGULAR AGENDA

TRANSPORTATION ITEMS:

6. **DISCUSS and PROVIDE INPUT** on the Hybrid Scenarios Developed by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments for the Sustainable Communities Strategy – Gilbert

Ms. Gilbert introduced Heather Adamson from the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments. Ms. Adamson provided a Power-Point presentation and update on the evaluation of the initial scenarios, outreach activities, and AMBAG staff recommendations for the hybrid scenarios for the 2014 Metropolitan Transportation Plan and its Sustainable Communities Strategy.

Ms. Adamson provided an overview of Hybrid Scenario A and Hybrid Scenario B.

Hybrid Scenario A has a greater emphasis on active transportation facilities and transit service that is compatible with a complete streets type of approach to land use. This hybrid incorporates a land use

pattern that converts commercial corridors near high quality transit into mixed use environments. Examples of projects in this scenario include bus rapid transit projects and investments in bicycle lanes.

Hybrid Scenario B assumes the baseline land use pattern as developed in coordination with local jurisdictions and has a slightly greater emphasis on maintenance and previously established regional priority transportation projects. Examples of projects in this scenario include heavier investment in rail as well as local streets and roads.

There was discussion from the COG Board about the vital need to repair our aging local streets and roads.

After some discussion there was consensus from the COG Board on Hybrid Scenario B, recommending that AMBAG include more projects which repair the aging infrastructure in San Benito.

Ms. Adamson stated that the AMBAG Board of Directors will be asked to select a preferred scenario in September 2013 that will become the basis of the 2014 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)/Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) and its Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The Draft 2014 MTP/SCS and EIR is expected to be released in February 2014 for a public review period. The Final 2014 MTP/SCS EIR is scheduled to be adopted in June 2014.

There was no public comment on this item.

7. DISCUSS Request by Local Non-Profit Organizations, San Benito Food Bank and Veteran Service Office, to Donate Vanpool Vehicle – Lezama

Ms. Lezama reported that the Council of Governments received interest from two local non-profits (San Benito County American Legion and San Benito County Community Food Bank) interested in obtaining a van currently used under the Vanpool Program.

Ms. Lezama stated that currently, there are no vanpool vehicles available for donation, unless new vehicle replacements are purchased. The three existing vanpool vehicles were purchased through a grant from the Monterey Bay Area Unified Air Pollution Control District. The Air District has indicated that the Council of Governments may consider donating the vans to local non-profits with the condition of continuing the Vanpool Program for useful life of the project.

Ms. Rheinheimer noted that the Air District would allow COG to retire the three vehicles with high mileage as long as they are replaced with new vehicles. This would allow the Vanpool Program and its users to continue with this service.

Ms. Rheinheimer stated that COG has an obligation under the Air District grant to have the Vanpool Program operate for 10 years, which would be until the year 2017.

There was discussion about whether or not the COG Board would be able to use the Vanpool Program budget revenue of \$78,000 towards the repair of local streets and roads.

Ms. Lezama stated that there are no restrictions on the Vanpool funds because they are local funds.

County Counsel, Shirley Murphy, cautioned the Board about spending the Vanpool fund balance. She stated that if the fund balance is exhausted and something happened to any of the vehicles that they are committed to have available until 2017, they would have to come up with funds from somewhere else to find replacements vehicles.

Director Boch asked if it would be feasible to purchase one vehicle and donate one of the spare vehicles to the organizations to share between the two of them.

Vice-Chair Gomez opened Public Comment.

**Shari Stevenson, San Benito Co. & Monterey Co.
Veterans Service Representative**

Ms. Stevenson stated that her department has been working in partnership with the American Legion to obtain a vehicle to service San Benito veterans and their families. The local posts consist of the American Legion, Ladies Auxiliary, Sons of the American Legion, and Legion Riders, who are all dedicated to serving local veterans and their families.

Ms. Stevenson stated that the donation of the van would serve as a vital role of transportation for veterans and family in need of medical, mental, and homeless assistance. The Department of Veterans Affairs has medical clinics located in Monterey, San Jose, and Palo Alto. Homeless assistance is located in Marina and Santa Cruz. The constituents that would most benefit from this service are sick, disabled, elderly, low income, homeless, or anyone else who lacks transportation. San Benito County lacks public transportation to these facilities in Hollister and San Juan Bautista.

Ms. Stevenson mentioned that the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) has a very limited service and there is a deep need for this service. Ms. Stevenson stated that Monterey County has a donation based van-ride program that is very successful. It transports veterans to Palo Alto and Monterey, 2 vans a day. The Monterey County Department will assist the American Legion in a training program that they implemented.

Ms. Stevenson noted that the COG's support and contribution would have life altering benefits for veterans and their families.

Board members asked if the American Legion would be able to share the van with the other organization.

Ms. Stevenson stated that the sharing of the van would be complicated because they would be gone all day transporting out of town. There would also be a question about who would be insuring and fueling the van. They were assuming that the American Legion would be fleetling the van with their insurance and their gas resources.

Ms. Stevenson stated that currently, they have a very limited service that runs about 7:30 a.m. once or twice a week to the Monterey Clinic. They have to call three days in advance to reserve the service. This service does not provide transportation to San Jose, Palo Alto, or Santa Cruz.

Ms. Rheinheimer mentioned that Jovenes de Antaño provides out of county medical service to San Jose for seniors and people with disabilities. She also mentioned that in the past the COG Board has donated the vehicles "as is" and release any liability with the vehicle. The group who obtains the vehicle is responsible for fuel and maintenance of the vehicle.

**Joe Love, Commander
American Legion Post**

Mr. Love stated that the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) are also partnering up with the American Legion. They've asked for volunteers to help operate the vans. He stated that it is a known fact that Veterans are missing appointments because they're unable to get to them. He mentioned that there are many World War II and Vietnam veterans in the community who are older and/or suffering from Agent Orange.

Mr. Love mentioned that the County just lost one of its Veterans, Mr. Scott, who contributed a great deal to this community. He mentioned that Mr. Scott was very fortunate to have family that could transport him to appointments. However, he stated that there are many who are ill and do not have transportation.

It is difficult for these individuals to get up and go at 7:30 a.m. to an appointment in Palo Alto and have to sit and wait all day for the bus to come back and transport them back home.

Mr. Love stated that the American Legion would really benefit from the donation of a van so that they may offer a service to our veterans, who have served our country well. They would like to follow the program that is set-up and currently running in Monterey County. He added that this would be a great service for the veterans and the community as a whole.

Maryanne Hughes
Community Food Bank

Ms. Hughes stated that the Community Food Bank currently has three vehicles in use. They have a flat bed for picking up the large loads in and out of town and a truck and van for picking up loads and deliveries. They deliver to about 15 locations from Panoche Inn, to Bitterwater, to Aromas, to San Juan Bautista. They deliver directly to an average of 55 households and approximately 1,038 families in San Benito County. They would easily be able to increase the numbers they serve with an additional vehicle. Currently, if a vehicle breaks down they have to rent a vehicle for 1-3 days or the time it takes to get that vehicle back in working condition.

Ms. Hughes requested that the COG Board please keep them in mind should they decide to donate these vehicles. She stated that they did not want to compete with the American Legion as they are very much in need as well. She noted that it would be wonderful if the COG Board could help both entities.

Director Boch asked if they pick up and deliver everyday.

Ms. Hughes stated that they close Sunday/Monday, pick up food on Tuesdays, and provide distributions from Wednesday through Saturday. They would require a vehicle 4 days a week. An additional van would provide a safety net for them if one of the current vehicles broke down. It would also allow them to increase the number of deliveries they can make.

Jack Bachofer
Community Food Bank Director &
Middle School Teacher

Mr. Bachofer stated that this is not a competition. He stated that the American Legion should have a van because they provide important services to the community and its veterans. However, the Community Food Bank of San Benito County also provides an important service to the community. The Food Bank feeds approximately 1,800 children monthly.

Mr. Bachofer stated that if the COG Board has an unrestricted fund balance of \$70,000, he would recommend purchasing 2 vans leaving a fund balance of approximately \$10,000. In the meantime, they could get rid of the 2 old vans with over 140,000 miles by donating one to the American Legion and one to the Community Food Bank which are both very important organizations in the community.

Mr. Boch thanked the American Legion for the important services they provide to the Community.

The COG Board thanked the American Legion and the Community Food Bank representatives for the great services they provide to our community.

After some discussion, the COG Board directed staff to prepare some options for donating vehicles used under the Vanpool Program to local non-profits. They asked that staff include any financial considerations in the options that they provide and report back at the September meeting.

8. RECEIVE Update on the Highway 25 Bypass Route Transfer and Relinquishment – Gilbert

Ms. Gilbert provided an update on the Highway 25 Bypass Route Transfer and Relinquishment. Ms. Gilbert stated that with regards to the relinquishment of the Highway 25 existing Route on San Felipe, San Benito, Nash, and Tres Pinos, the City of Hollister and Caltrans will enter into a Transfer Agreement that outlines the details associated with the transfer of the existing route into local control. Legislation Senate Bill 788, Section 6, which would allow the California Transportation Commission to relinquish existing Route 25 to the City of Hollister prior to accepting the new Highway 25 Bypass into the State system, is moving forward through Congress.

Ms. Rheinheimer stated that once the Bill becomes law on January 1, 2014, the relinquishment can be approved by California Transportation Commission, in January or February 2014.

Regarding the Highway 25 transfer, Ms. Gilbert stated that the Council of Governments hired MNS Engineers to complete revisions to right-of-way record maps and preparation of a state highway map. This work is anticipated to be complete by December of this year. Staff is also working with BKF Engineers to ensure that all of Caltrans' comments are included on the as-built project plans for submittal.

Additionally, Caltrans approved a Project Study Report for the curve correction project on the Bypass in June and obtained California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance in July. Staff is coordinating a Project Development Team meeting with staff at the City of Hollister, San Benito County, and Caltrans to go over all final needs to ensure that the transfer will be completed as quickly as possible. It is anticipated that the California Transportation Commission will approve the transfer in May of 2014.

Vice-Chair Gomez asked staff to look into an issue that he has noticed as he's approaching the intersections on the Bypass at Hillcrest, Santa Ana Road and Meridian Road. He stated that the loops are very easily triggered to turn the lights red on the Bypass triggering the green light on the cross traffic. Also, due to this the lights are inconsistent when traveling north/south. He asked that staff look into possibly having the lights synched and possibly desensitizing the loops on the roadways that are crossing the Bypass.

Ms. Rheinheimer stated that staff would follow up on the issue.

Upon a motion duly made by Director De La Cruz, and seconded by Director Scattini, the Directors unanimously adjourned the COG meeting in Memory of Mr. Charles Scott.

ADJOURN TO COG MEETING SEPTEMBER 19, 2013.