

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

December 18, 2014, 3:00 P.M.

FINAL MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chair Gomez, Director Boch, Director Botelho, and Director Muenzer
Ex Officio: Aileen Loe, Caltrans District 5

STAFF PRESENT:

Deputy County Counsel, Shirley Murphy; Interim Executive Director, Mary Gilbert; Secretary, Monica Gomez

OTHERS PRESENT:

Heather Adamson, Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG)

CALL TO ORDER:

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 Muenzer, and seconded by Director Botelho, the Directors acknowledged the Certificate of Posting. Vote: 4/0 motion passes.

C. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

D. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Gilbert

Ms. Gilbert reported that the County Express dispatch office is experiencing difficulties with the phone lines. Staff is referring riders to an alternate phone number while they repair the phone line over the next few days.

Ms. Gilbert reported that she attended the CALCOG Directors meeting in Sacramento last week as well as a meeting of the Aspiring Counties in California, which are counties that are looking at potential for sales tax and it is an information sharing opportunity.

Ms. Gilbert stated that she plans to return to issuing COG Meeting Highlights in the coming year, since they were put on hold over the summer.

Lastly, Ms. Gilbert wished everyone a Happy Holiday season and reminded the Board that the COG office will be closed during the holidays from December 24th through January 2nd. The COG office will re-open on Monday, January 5, 2015.

E. CALTRANS DISTRICT 5 REPORT: Gubbins

Aileen Loe also wished everyone a Happy Holiday Season.

Ms. Loe thanked everyone for their patience with regard to the San Juan Road Interchange Project which is mostly open. She stated that they continue work to complete access to all of the ramps and also work on the median.

Also, Caltrans is updating their statewide Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan, which will be out early next year for publication by June. Ms. Loe stated that there are several routes through this County that are key interregional routes therefore Caltrans looks forward to the participation from San Benito County.

Ms. Loe announced that as of December 24th, the Deputy District Director of Maintenance and Operations, Steve Price, is retiring. She stated that he has been with the department for 35 years. Ms. Loe stated that Mr. Price has been a great source of information, integrity, and innovation within Caltrans and will be greatly missed. In his absence, Sarah von Schwind will be the Interim Deputy. She is currently the Deputy for Planning and Programming and will step in to this role for a period of time until the recruitment is finished.

F. BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORTS:

Chair Gomez stated that he had a couple of Caltrans related issues to discuss. First, was the synchronization of lights on the Highway 25 Bypass. He asked if Caltrans could provide a report sometime in the future on the possibility of peak hour synchronization.

Ms. Loe stated that she recalled that it was one of the elements of the original construction that was out of synch. She stated that she would have to obtain some information and report back to the Board at a future meeting.

Chair Gomez stated that the second item was in regard to Flynn Road and Highway 25. He stated that he has observed these issues over a couple of years of commuting on Highway 25. He stated that a perhaps deceleration and acceleration lanes are needed on northbound Highway 25 at Flynn. He's noticed problems with drivers trying to enter Highway 25 off of Flynn Road and enter Flynn Road off of Highway 25 going northbound. He asked Ms. Gilbert to look into what options are possible for that area. He recalled that there were some operational improvements for Highway 25 monies that were potentially allocated under our constrained list of projects.

Ms. Gilbert stated that she would look into it and report back at a future meeting.

Director Botelho stated that he wanted to bring an item to the attention of Caltrans. He stated that this was brought to his attention by an employee from a business located off of San Juan Road and Mission Vineyard. The concern is that due to the curvature of the road turning left from 156, employees find it difficult to maneuver as the curb is hard to see at night and in foggy conditions. Director Botelho asked it would be possible for Caltrans to put in some type of striping or an analysis of what could be done at that location. He stated that both he and Amycel Mushroom would appreciate a response. He noted that he would forward the email and pictures to Caltrans.

Ms. Loe stated that she would look into the matter.

CONSENT AGENDA:

- 1. APPROVE** Council of Governments Draft Meeting Minutes Dated November 20, 2014 – Gomez
- 2. RECEIVE** Construction Projects Report – Caltrans District 5

3. **ADOPT** Resolution 14-16 Amending the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Bylaws to Appoint a Staff Representative from the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) as a TAC Member – Lezama
4. **SET** Two Public Hearings on Unmet Transit Needs for February 17 and 19, 2015 in Hollister and One Public Meeting on February 18, 2015 in San Juan Bautista – Lezama

There was no public comment.

Upon a motion duly made by Director Botelho and seconded by Director Muenzer, the Directors unanimously approved Items 1-4 from the Consent Agenda. Vote: 4/0 motion passes.

REGULAR AGENDA

TRANSPORTATION ITEMS:

5. **RECEIVE** Council of Governments FY 2013/14 Basic Financial Statements – Postigo

Ms. Gilbert introduced Joe Arch with JJACPA, Inc. He provided a brief presentation on the FY 2013/14 Basic Financial Statements.

Mr. Arch pointed out that there was one informational comment that was with regards to GASB Statement No. 68, “Accounting and Financial Reporting for Pensions – An Amendment of GASB Statement No. 27”. The primary objective of this Statement is to improve accounting and financial reporting by state and local governments for pensions. The reason he included it in the Communication letter is because it will be a big liability that will show up in the financial statements next year and it could potentially delay the audit a bit because of the actuarial information that will need to be gathered ahead of time.

Mr. Arch reported that there were no findings by the auditors and the financial statements were presented in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. Mr. Arch stated that the audit report is standard and the audit opinion is unmodified.

There was no further discussion on this item or public comment.

Upon a motion duly made by Director Muenzer, and seconded by Director Boch, the Directors unanimously accepted Item 5: 4/0 Motion passes.

6. **DISCUSS** Request from the City of San Juan Bautista City Council Requesting Highway Improvement Feasibility and Cost Analysis Studies for Traffic Calming and Speed Reduction Solutions at the Intersection of State Highway 156 and Monterey Street – Gilbert

Ms. Gilbert reported that she had the opportunity to talk a little about the request with some people from San Juan Bautista and that overall the goal is to ensure safety at the intersection with the Alameda. A comment that has been heard throughout development of the Highway 156 project. Ms. Gilbert stated that she spoke with Caltrans staff and discussed the opportunity to pursue a smaller scale feasibility study in the area before moving forward with a lengthier and costly Project Initiation Document (PID).

Ms. Gilbert mentioned that staff has also reviewed the request with COG’s Technical Advisory Committee, which generally supported the project initiation.

Ms. Loe stated that Caltrans was well aware of the desire for improvements in the area from San Juan Bautista as they have had conversations about this over the years with representatives from the City of San Juan Bautista and the former COG Executive Director. Ms. Loe stated that Caltrans would recommend taking a broader look at a feasibility study or a planning study with some engineering features to look at some options that would take in a longer stretch from Monterey Street and include the

Alameda, rather than jump into a Project Initiation Document (PID). Ms. Loe stated that this would allow you to look at what type of options could potentially work to meet the interest of San Juan Bautista for through movements as well as crossing movement from across Highway 156 for pedestrians and bicycle traffic movement.

Chair Gomez stated that he was a little concerned with seeing the term “traffic calming and speed reduction solutions” on a state highway. He asked if they would be looking more at operational enhancements because the goal should be to move traffic and not create congestion in the area. He stated that the COG Board approved a new Highway between Hollister and San Juan Bautista to try to address congestion issues and was this going to create a speed bump before the \$70 million project.

Ms. Loe stated that the purpose and need would be defined by the City of San Juan Bautista. She added that the traffic calming that is currently out there as an expressway is more of a misnomer. Ms. Loe stated that the City’s request seems to be more related to the signal at that location.

Chair Gomez agreed with Director Boch’s comment, stating that a deceleration lane into the Alameda would make sense. Chair Gomez asked if the City of San Juan Bautista would be looking at a partnership or if they were looking at COG to carry the cost of the study.

Director Boch stated that the City’s concern is with the congestion with the southwest corner of the Alameda and Highway 156 to get into the new fuel station. In terms of speed, Caltrans has stated that they do not want to reduce the speed although, there are other similar areas in the state where it has been done. Director Boch stated that a major concern for them is with the crosswalk in that area. He stated that it is frightening to watch the children who are trying to get across the street from the grade school. He stated that they are hoping that they can slow the traffic down at Monterey and Highway 156 to possibly alleviate this concern. He mentioned that they have had discussion about putting in flashing yellow beacon as trucks are approaching to signal them to slow down.

Director Boch stated that in terms of cost, the City has commitment from the developer of the fuel station to pay \$200,000 towards a deceleration lane. He stated that they also have to move the stop light back towards the south to provide a turn lane, which was estimated to cost approximately \$400,000. He stated that they do not have any commitment money for the study at Highway 156. He stated that he spoke with Ms. Gilbert about the possibility of using RSTP funds to help pay for the study to get some information on what can be done to make it a safer intersection for people in cars, trucks, and school children. Director Boch also mentioned that when the intersection was built there were no acceleration or deceleration lanes going eastbound. There is a deceleration lane westbound turning into the Alameda but there is no acceleration lane coming out of the Alameda westbound on Highway 156. He stated that he was curious about why only one out of four lanes was built and wondered if this is something Caltrans could build.

Chair Gomez inquired about the cost of going with the scaled back approach.

Ms. Gilbert stated that staff did not have a cost estimate for the scaled back approach however, it would be less than what was provided on the staff report. Ms. Gilbert stated that as Director mentioned, possible funding sources include Regional Surface Transportation Program funds, which COG allocates annually to the local agencies for roadway improvements or specific projects.

Chair Gomez stated that Director Boch brought up some very valid issues and he would support moving forward with the scaled back approach.

Director Botelho stated that Director Boch put it very clear. He stated that there is a long history of issues and concern. He stated that he was glad that Caltrans wrote a letter to the City identifying the potential hazard in the area. He stated that moving forward with the Resolution, the City hopes that it will address the issues and concerns brought forward.

Ms. Loe stated that Caltrans definitely recognizes the City's interest in making some changes in the area. She stated that Caltrans has encouraged the City of San Juan Bautista or COG to apply for grant programs that are available. Ms. Loe stated that the way that the funding scenarios work rely on the local lead effort, which is what Ms. Gilbert recommended and Caltrans would partner with COG in overseeing and participating in the process.

With regards to a cost estimate, Ms. Loe stated that when discussing a scaled down project they are talking about less engineering detail than you might get out of a PID, but she could not guarantee that it would be less costly than what is listed on the staff report. She suggested working together to get the right kind of study done and moving forward from there.

Director Muenzer stated that he would be interested to see staff come back at a future meeting with a more detailed scope of work and cost estimates.

Director Muenzer stated that perhaps by looking at both intersections and completing the study to establish what needs to be done to make the intersection safer may be the component to bring San Juan Bautista and the west part of the county together into a sales tax measure to widen Highway 25.

Chair Gomez and Director Boch stated that Director Muenzer made an excellent point noting that it may be the way to get everyone to support a sales tax measure.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

John Freeman

Strategic Planning Committee of SJB

Mr. Freeman stated that to his knowledge the congestion on Highway 156 comes after the Alameda going towards Hollister and there is very little congestion from the Alameda heading towards Salinas. He stated that they are looking for traffic calming ideas or suggestions. He stated that there is a tremendous amount of noise 365 days a year for residents in San Juan Bautista especially at Franklin Circle and 6th Street. Slowing the speed down to 50mph would ease the noise volume. Mr. Freeman stated that from personal experience for his family who are avid bicyclists, having to deal with crossing Highway 156 is nearly impossible. He stated that there simply is not enough time to get across. He suggested increasing the crossing time by about 10 seconds as an easy and cost effective solution.

Jolene Cosio

San Juan Bautista

Ms. Cosio stated that the deceleration lane should have been put in when the highway was widened in the 80's on the southwest corner of the intersection and acceleration lanes would've been nice as well. She stated that they are really interested in some short term solutions such as better signage, verbal signage saying "pedestrians ahead" and slowing the traffic at the intersection to 45mph. She stated that these would be less expensive solutions that would make the intersection much safer.

Valerie Eglund

San Juan Bautista

Ms. Eglund stated that she liked that idea from Director Muenzer of adding San Juan Bautista into the funding for Highway 25. She stated that it would be huge in keeping our cities and county focused on being together and the idea may bring compliance with the community on more funding. Ms. Eglund stated that she agreed with the comments from those who had already spoken to reduce the speed and add signage and flashing lights. She stated that reducing the speed limit all the way from Highway 101 would increase safety in the area because the entry into Rancho Larios is also an accident prone area.

There was consensus from the COG Board to direct staff to look into some short-term potential improvements. These included upgrading the pedestrian crosswalk to include a timer that is triggered by the pedestrian and updating the flashing beacons at the approach of the Alameda and HWY 156 intersection.

Ms. Gilbert stated that staff would follow up with the short-term improvements as they were more operational in nature and would not be required to be a part of the study.

Chair Gomez stated that staff may want to keep in contact with the San Juan Bautista Strategic Planning Committee to discuss the short-term improvements.

Director Botelho mentioned that the Impact Fees are another funding component and hoped that the City of San Juan Bautista incorporates Impact Fees to generate some funding.

The COG Board directed staff to include the following potential improvements to the study:

- Decreasing highway noise
- Slowing traffic at the approach to the Alameda
- Improvements to intersection crossing safety at the Alameda
- Gateway feature improvements at the Monterey Street intersection

Ms. Gilbert stated that staff will bring back a detailed scope of work and cost estimates for a feasibility study at the next COG Board meeting.

7. RECEIVE UPDATE on State Route 25 Widening Project Development – Gilbert

Ms. Gilbert reported that as directed at the September Board meeting, staff has continued the work plan objectives for the project. The following items were accomplished:

- Coordination with Caltrans on the federal Environmental Impact Statement for the project: Caltrans has begun work on environmental studies and will schedule a Project Development Team meeting in the next 2-3 months.
- Stakeholder Involvement: Staff has continued communication with project stakeholders with the anticipation of holding a second meeting in January.
- Regional Coordination: Staff continued coordination discussions with AMBAG and Caltrans regarding the project.
- Local Coordination and Outreach: The Interim Executive Director attended meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee and updated attendees on the status of the project and the work plan reviewed by COG. Staff also provided an update on the project at the San Benito County Business Council meeting. The County Administrative Officer has requested an update on the project at a Board of Supervisors meeting on December 16.
- Traffic Impact Mitigation Fee Program Update: the Council of Governments awarded a contract to PMC in November to update the Traffic Impact Mitigation Fee program. The update will kick off in late December and work will continue for approximately ten months. The Board will receive updates on the program's progress throughout its development. At this time PMC is obtaining a Model Use Agreement for the AMBAG model and scheduling a kickoff meeting with COG and other local agency staff.

Ms. Gilbert stated that staff has identified January 29th as a target date for the next Stakeholder meeting. Items to be covered at the meeting will include establishing the group's goals for the effort and an overview of the project with Caltrans, including more information regarding current project design.

Ms. Gilbert noted that the Caltrans project manager will attend the January 15th COG Board meeting and make a presentation to the board on the project as it is currently designed.

Staff will continue to update the Board on this project and progress on the work plan on a monthly basis.

There was no further discussion on this item or public comment.

Upon a motion duly made by Director Muenzer, and seconded by Director Boch, the Directors unanimously adjourned the COG meeting at 4:09 p.m. Vote:4/0 motion passes.

ADJOURN TO COG MEETING JANUARY 15, 2015.