

**SAN BENITO COUNTY
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**

SPECIAL MEETING

March 19, 2015 12:00 P.M.

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chair Muenzer, Vice-Chair Boch, Director Botelho, Director Gomez, and Director Velazquez

STAFF PRESENT:

Deputy County Counsel, Shirley Murphy; Interim Executive Director, Mary Gilbert; Administrative Services Specialist, Kathy Postigo; Transportation Planner, Veronica Lezama, Secretary, Monica Gomez

OTHERS PRESENT:

Eileen Goodwin, Apex Strategies; Joe Horwedel, San Benito County Public Works; Sara Fontanos, San Benito County Administrative Office

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Muenzer called the meeting to order at 12:03 P.M.

A. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

B. CERTIFICATE OF POSTING

Upon a motion duly made by Director Gomez, and seconded by Director Botelho, the Directors unanimously approved the Certificate of Posting.

1. Retreat Overview and Introductions – M. Gilbert

Mary Gilbert introduced Eileen Goodwin with Apex Strategies. Ms. Goodwin provided an overview of her work experience and background history. She also provided an overview of items that would be discussed during the retreat.

2. Update on Transportation Systems Planning Efforts – E. Goodwin

Ms. Goodwin provided a brief review of the Task Force effort to date. She mentioned that the group would like to be called the “Transportation Improvement Task Force” instead of the Highway 25 Task Force because they would like to broaden the areas of discussion. They are asking questions about train service, bus service, possibly expanding to the San Jose Diridon Station. There is a big desire to see improvements on local city streets urban areas. The school district superintendant had an idea about if there were an expenditure plan package put together it would be nice to have a set of projects that are street projects that are focused on safe routes to school, safety issues, and school drop-off’s.

After brief discussion about the Task Force efforts the Board provided the following feedback:

- Ensure that they are aware of already planned projects and that they understand the importance of maintaining local streets and roads.
- Consider expanding train/bus service to San Jose/ Mountain View area.
- Transportation tax measure should incorporate road maintenance
- Expenditure plans should include projects that address concerns for everyone (City of Hollister, San Juan Bautista, and San Benito County) or there will not be full support to fund the projects.
- Regarding Highway 25 project - there is consensus to support the project; however the current project is too large and too expensive.
- Voter threshold may be a barrier for passage should support lowering the barrier to 60% threshold not two thirds.

Ms. Goodwin clarified that the stakeholder group is in sync with the Board. They are being very conservative and pragmatic about going out to the voters. They are giving the advice that it will not work with just the Highway 25 project. They agree that the Board would have to incorporate local road maintenance and other projects to get support. They also support raising the developer fee and understand that developers cannot pay for current deficiencies.

The Board also discussed how the County was also exploring a bond for road maintenance and then servicing the bond off of the sales tax. The City of Hollister and COG are also exploring the idea of a tax measure. The Board stated that the County, City of Hollister, City of San Juan Bautista and COG are going to have to decide what is important for each jurisdiction and come to a consensus on who has the best chance of moving it forward effectively.

Ms. Goodwin concurred that they needed to come to a consensus on which one has the best chance of moving forward on the ballot.

There was discussion about the Highway 25 project and the possibility of funding a smaller version of the project.

Ms. Goodwin stated that it would be beneficial for the COG Board to have staff look into hiring a design firm to conduct a feasibility study to scope out a smaller Route 25 project that would be phased out and be able to gain Caltrans support.

The Board asked for an approximate cost to hire a design firm to conduct a feasibility study on a smaller project.

Ms. Gilbert stated that based on some of the other work that had been done previously on the Highway 25 Safety project she estimated the cost to be somewhere around \$100,000 or less. She stated that there are Traffic Impact Fees that could be used for planning efforts and there is money left over in COG's account for the Highway 25 Safety project.

The COG Board took a lunch break at 12:50 and reconvened at 1:05 p.m. Discussion for a feasibility study to scope out a smaller Route 25 project and other upcoming development projects continued. After discussion Ms. Goodwin reviewed and provided the following action items:

- Staff to research funding availability to hire a consultant to present a scope for a feasibility study to scope out a smaller Route 25 project that would be phased and be able to garner Caltrans support. The goal of the study would be to inform the stakeholders and the Board of potential project options and costs for consideration in an expenditure plan. Specific project ideas to be analyzed include the benefits of an additional lane after the light at Highway 156 and Highway 25, where a drag race situation occurs today; the option of just adding two new lanes adjacent to current Route 25 lanes, the concept of a zipper lane/moveable barrier and a three lane Route 25, a project with intermittent not continuous shoulders and the value of grade separations instead of widening Route 25.

- Create list of upcoming development projects and where they would be taking access. Post on website.
- Update website. Website update needed to deal with misinformation about SBCOG projects, their scopes and schedules. Also, articulate the COG's five and ten year vision.
- Look into utilizing Cap and Trade funds for operation funds for a potential rail project.
- Add origin destination question to survey to assess where County commuters go for their jobs. This information would help understand where a potential bus/train to points north would need to go.
- Staff to research the voter threshold for a Vehicle registration fee. To determine if it is a simple majority or a two-thirds requirement.

Ms. Gilbert provided a review of the draft survey. The COG Board provided the following feedback/edits for the survey:

- Question #9 include bullet with: youth, senior, persons with disabilities (universal change)
- Question #10 edit first bullet to : Widening Highway 25 (instead of Highway 25 improvements)
- Question #17 edit 2. Widening Highway 25 (instead of Highway 25)
- Add Question #25: I would rather support money going into the County General Fund for public safety, recreation, infrastructure, road improvements
- Add Origin destination question: Do you commute outside of the City? Where are you going?
- Try to cut down the time of the survey and call around 7pm to try to reach commuters who are just getting home.

Ms. Goodwin presented the work plan for the Task Force to the Board. The Task Force would learn of the results of the poll and discuss funding sources this spring. This summer they will discuss project priorities and in the fall they will develop draft expenditure plans for consideration and discussion. By the end of the calendar year they would have a recommendation for SBCOG consideration. The COG Board would then be in a position to consider either the June or the November 2016 election cycles for a sales tax measure on the ballot.

Ms. Gilbert provided an overview of COG's Work Plan Goals.

Comments regarding Goal 3: Implement and update the 2014 Regional Transportation Plan

Chair Muenzer commented that the County Planning Department's Byron Turner is communicating with AMBAG staff to ensure that there is coordination between the agencies.

Comments regarding Goal 7 & 8:

Goal 7: Ensure that critical highway safety and congestion relief projects are funded and constructed in a timely manner.

Goal 8: Assist the cities and County with funding and delivery of transportation projects on the local and regional transportation system.

Ms. Goodwin stated that it is important that both County and City staff complete the required paperwork and expend grants that are received. By ensuring that these two things occur, it facilitates the process with future grant applications.

Ms. Gilbert reminded the COG Board that COG staff is available to help facilitate the process when needed.

Regarding COG's Work Plan Goals, the COG Board provided the following comments:

They commented that there may be too many goals. Staff should focus on communicating with the public and relaying COG's strategy to ensure that the goals are fulfilled. Staff needs to help paint the picture to succeed by increasing the confidence level in the Agency and elected officials.

There was no further discussion or public comment.

Upon a motion made by Director Velazquez, and seconded by Director Botelho, the Directors unanimously adjourned the Special COG meeting at 2:18 p.m. Vote: 5/0 motion passes.

ADJOURN TO REGULAR COG MEETING MARCH 19, 2015.