

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

January 15, 2015, 3:00 P.M.

FINAL MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Vice-Chair Muenzer, Director Boch, Director Botelho, and Director Velazquez
Ex Officio: Aileen Loe, Caltrans District 5

STAFF PRESENT:

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

OTHERS PRESENT:

Richard Rosales and John Olejnik, Caltrans District 5; Maura Twomney, Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments

CALL TO ORDER:

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

C. ELECT COG Chairperson for 2015

D. ELECT COG Vice Chairperson for 2015

E. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

1. Associate Member to the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) and an Alternate
2. Delegate and Alternate to the California Association of Councils of Governments (CALCOG)
3. Representative to Speak on Behalf of COG at California Transportation Commission Meetings

Vice-Chair Muenzer continued Items C, D, and E to the next COG meeting.

F. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

G. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Gilbert

Ms. Gilbert reported that she attended the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments meeting. She stated the Executive Director announced the good news that the California Air Resources Board has

approved the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy.

Regarding transit, Ms. Gilbert stated that staff was approached by Monterey Salinas Transit (MST) about an expansion that they are doing to their Line 81 service. They are interested to know if we are interested in possibly expanding our service to Gilroy. Their service stops at the Gilroy Caltrain Station and it goes directly to the San Jose Airport. Ms. Gilbert stated that this would be a great transit connection for San Benito County residents who cannot drive or would prefer not to drive to the San Jose Airport. Ms. Gilbert stated that staff will continue discussions with MST.

Ms. Gilbert reported that Betty LiOwen, the agency's Transit Planner had submitted her letter of resignation. Ms. Gilbert mentioned that Ms. LiOwen had been with the agency for almost 8 years and she has been a great asset to the agency. We are all sad to see her go. Ms. Gilbert presented Ms. LiOwen with a certificate of recognition.

Ms. LiOwen stated that it was her pleasure and honor to serve the County of San Benito. She stated that she learned a lot working with the agency and wished everyone the best.

H. CALTRANS DISTRICT 5 REPORT: Gubbins

Aileen Loe reported that there are some new guidelines being published by the California State Transportation agency in conjunction with Caltrans regarding a new program that will be active under the Cap-and-Trade Program. It is a funding program for Transit and Intercity Rail. The CTC is holding workshops next week and at the CTC meeting of January 22nd. The final guidelines will be published in February and there will be a call for projects on February 9th. Ms. Loe stated that this is an effort to modernize transit and rail systems to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Ms. Loe also reported that as follow up from the last meeting, Caltrans is still looking into several of the questions that the COG Board inquired about. She stated that at some of the specific locations they are conducting an analysis to find out what is going on there. Some of the investigations will be ongoing, however, Caltrans will be following up with some written correspondence for the Board in their next COG packet.

Director Botelho asked if Caltrans could provide any feedback on the concerns that were brought up at the last meeting regarding the intersection at Mission Vineyard and Highway 156.

Ms. Loe stated that she did not have any information to report so far, however, it was one of the locations that requires an evaluation. Caltrans is looking into the matter and it may take several months before they conclude the evaluation.

I. BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORTS:

Director Botelho stated that with this being a new year, he wanted to put high emphasis on maintenance of our local streets and roads. He inquired about available transportation funds that could be allocated to each local jurisdiction to put towards the infrastructure and maintenance of County and City roads. He stated that the COG Board and Public Works department should work jointly to find a solution to address the issue.

Vice-Chair Muenzer directed staff to agendaize the item that Director Botelho mentioned for a future meeting.

Director Boch stated that he read an article in the newspaper regarding a \$17 million restoration of a bridge to nowhere in San Juan Bautista. He stated that this bridge has been closed for approximately 20 years. He inquired if the funds were acquired through a grant and whether or not the funds could be used towards local streets and roads instead.

Ms. Lezama stated that the funds come from the Caltrans Highway Bridge Program and these funds are allocated specifically for bridges. She stated that staff could contact the City and County to find out what their list of projects are.

Ms. Loe stated that the Highway Bridge Program is a Federal Aid program that Caltrans administers for all bridges in the State of California. Caltrans evaluates the bridges, identifies the ones that need work, and the local agencies deliver the projects. She stated that this is not a local discretionary program. It is meant to ensure the integrity of the infrastructure. However, she stated that if it is a road that goes nowhere, Caltrans could investigate what the criteria are that make it eligible for federal funding.

Vice-Chair Muenzer stated that the item should also be agendaized for a future meeting to allow discussion.

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. **APPROVE** Council of Governments Draft Meeting Minutes Dated December 18, 2014 – Gomez
2. **RECEIVE** Construction Projects Report – Caltrans District 5
3. **ADOPT** Resolution 15-01 Approving FTA Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Funding Programming For: San Benito County Local Transportation Authority – Gilbert
4. **Amendment to Fiscal Year 2014/2015 Overall Work Program – Gilbert**
 - a. **APPROVE** Amendment No. 1 to the Fiscal Year 2014/2015 Overall Work Program to Include Federal Transit Administration Section 5304 Funding for a Transit Technology Infrastructure Improvement Plan for the Local Transportation Authority, and
 - b. **AUTHORIZE** the Executive Director to Sign and Amended Overall Work Program Agreement with the California Department of Transportation.

There was no public comment.

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

REGULAR AGENDA

TRANSPORTATION ITEMS:

5. **Highway 25 Widening Project – Gilbert**
 - a. **RECEIVE** Update on COG Staff Work Plan for Highway 25 Development
 - b. **RECEIVE** Update from Caltrans on Finalizing the Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement for the Project.

Ms. Gilbert provided an update on the work plan for Highway 25 development. Ms. Gilbert stated that staff has identified January 29th as the target date for the next Stakeholder meeting. She provided the Board with a handout of the Stakeholders Meeting Agenda. She stated that the 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 introduced Caltrans project manager, Richard Rosales. Mr. Rosales provided a power-point presentation and handout titled "Hollister to Gilroy State Route 25 Route Adoption Project."

Director Botelho inquired if now that the Board is reconsidering this project, was Caltrans considering utilizing the footprint that they have in existence today which extends down to the County line. Instead of using the loop that Alternative 2 demonstrates. He stated that using the existing footprint and simply widening the road to add two more lanes would save a lot of money.

Mr. Rosales stated that Caltrans was not considering that footprint because the direction was to pick up where they left off, not to start over. Mr. Rosales stated that the Alternative 2 phase does not preclude the next project phase, which would look at a buildable section. This is where you are able to look at those sections around Shore Road and Hudner Lane to utilize the existing highway as one of the directions of traffic. He stated that it does preclude using it from Highway 25 and Highway 156 intersection towards Hollister because it is off of the alignment. He stated that this was the preferred alternative that was approved by the COG Board in 2010.

Ms. Rosales noted that COG's Interim Executive Director is looking into what could be done on existing Highway 25, between San Felipe Road and Highway 156 as a separate issue.

Ms. Gilbert stated that the presentation is related to the Environmental study that COG is completing under the Cooperative agreement that COG has with Caltrans to proceed with approval of Route Adoption for preferred Alternative 2. COG at the same time will work on refining the scope of the project to something that is fundable for San Benito County.

Director Velazquez agreed with Director Botelho's comments. He inquired about what can be done in the meantime, using what is available to extend both shoulders of the road by 8-10 feet so that there are two lanes on each side and making the project something that is affordable.

Ms. Loe indicated that when looking at the ultimate concept it is important to complete the phase of where things left off. This way when you look at the ultimate plan of what the project is going to achieve so then you can go to the fundable buildable alternatives. This way you can guarantee that as you make these investments or smaller improvements to the corridor you know it is making progress towards building that picture of what it is going to be in the future.

Mr. Rosales stated that what this route adoption would do is save a plan line of where a future corridor for this 4-lane expressway could be built in the future in fundable segments. He reiterated that the interim improvements are being addressed by COG's Interim Executive Director. She is working with stakeholders to come up with ideas on refining the scope of the project and building fundable solutions.

Ms. Gilbert reminded the Board that staff is doing a concurrent work plan. Staff is looking at the overall big picture of funding, what the project looks like, and closing out the Federal Environmental document that was started years ago and is a process that needs to be completed.

Director Botelho stated that he did not understand why the process should be completed on a route that they cannot afford and that the State is not providing any funds for.

Deputy County Counsel, Shirley Murphy clarified that the reason the process must be completed is so that the COG does not have to give back the Federal funding that has already been spent on the project.

Vice-Chair Muenzer stated that the Environmental process has to be completed, regardless of what is done with Highway 25. He stated that once this process is complete they can move forward and figure out what they would want the project to look like. He stated that Caltrans needs to understand that without their assistance to help fund their final project, we locally would never have the money to pay for it. He stated that we have an issue in the meantime of needing 4 lanes where we only have 2 lanes. We will need Caltrans help with widening the shoulder as a temporary solution to address traffic issues. Vice-Chair Muenzer stated that they need to work together with their Caltrans partner to come up with a project that will meet their needs today.

Director Botelho agreed with Vice-Chair Muenzer's comments. However, he stated that he wanted to hear from Caltrans that they are on board to widen the shoulder from San Felipe to Highway 156 making it 4-lanes.

Mr. Rosales stated that he has seen other counties make improvements on existing plan lines. He stated

that this does not preclude any interim type of improvements that can be done on existing Highway 25 that can be fundable. He stated that the Cooperative agreement does not include them looking at anything like that.

Ms. Loe stated that Caltrans is working with COG one step at a time. She stated that Caltrans will complete the Environmental document and they will work with COG to come up with interim solutions that make sense for the County and for Highway 25. She stated that the COG Board has Caltrans commitment to do right by this county and get the county down a positive progression.

Director Botelho stated that it is important to know this information because of how it could affect the Impact Fee Study, and the community for the next 15-20 years down the road.

Ms. Loe stated that Caltrans is committed to finding buildable solutions that can be built in phases for Highway 25.

Vice-Chair Muenzer asked if COG would have to return the Federal funds if COG decided to do away with Alternative 2 and start over.

Mr. Rosales stated that it was a good question. He stated that if they threw out Alternative 2 they would need funds to essentially start the process over.

Ms. Gilbert stated that at this point for the purposes of this Federal Environmental document that is being completed they would be bound to the plan line set forth Alternative 2.

Mr. Velazquez asked for clarification with regards to being tied down to Alternative 2. He asked if he was correct in stating that this does not mean that we have to complete this project we can choose to widen what we have and would be required to complete a study on that.

Mr. Rosales stated that the only question he would have is that he is not sure how the Traffic Impact Fees are set up and whether the fees that are collected will be tied to the Alternative 2 project or if they will be able to use the fees towards the Highway 25 improvements.

Ms. Gilbert stated that it was a good question that staff would have to confirm the answer with the Traffic Impact Fee consultant.

Ms. Gilbert added that she, along with AMBAG's Executive Director and Planning Director met with Caltrans District 5 Director. They came back from that meeting with the feeling that they have the commitment from Caltrans and the understanding of the limitations that San Benito County has with actually getting a project to come to fruition. She stated that she believes that Caltrans will be a partner as COG goes through the planning effort and as COG looks for its own funding to fund the project.

Vice-Chair Muenzer reiterated Ms. Gilbert's comment, stating that he believes Caltrans is committed to work as a partner with COG.

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.

6. DISCUSS Circulation Planning Study for the State Route 156 Corridor in San Juan Bautista – Gilbert

Ms. Gilbert reported that staff has reviewed the request with Board and received input from Caltrans on an approach to project development in the area. Potential improvements that were cited at the COG Board meeting of December 18th included slowing traffic at the approach to the Alameda, improvements to

intersection crossing safety at the Alameda, and Gateway feature improvements at the Monterey Street intersection.

Based on the Board's direction, staff is developing a scope of work for the proposed planning study, with the focus to be local circulation in the study area. Key components of the scope of work include:

1. Developing a Purpose and Need statement for the project
2. Establishing a working group of local agency and COG representatives
3. Public outreach to the San Juan Bautista community
4. A final report including proposed circulation and safety improvements

Ms. Gilbert stated that staff is working on scheduling a kick-off meeting in February with COG staff, staff from the City of San Juan Bautista, and Caltrans staff. Staff will provide a more developed scope of work to the Board at its March meeting. Staff will have a better sense of a financial plan and what the cost would be to prepare the report of circulation improvements.

Ms. Gilbert stated that at the last meeting COG discussed some interim issues and concerns in the area, one of them being the traffic signal at the Alameda and pedestrian crossing. Staff asked that Caltrans look into these issues.

Ms. Loe stated that Caltrans staff looked into these concerns. She stated that the existing pedestrian clearance time exceeds the minimum requirements and the minimum green time also meets the current standards for bicycles to clear the intersection. She mentioned that a countdown device is being considered for this location.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Valerie Eglan

San Juan Bautista

Ms. Eglan congratulated the Board for moving forward with the discussion from the last Board meeting concerning the City of San Juan Bautista.

There was no further discussion on this item.

Vice-Chair Muenzer moved to the LTA, MEA, SAFE, and ALUC meetings at 4:00 p.m.

Upon a motion duly made by Director Boch and seconded by Director Velazquez, the Directors unanimously voted to continue Item 7 to the end of the LTA, MEA, SAFE, and ALUC meetings. Vote: 4/0 motion passes.

The COG Board convened to Closed session at 4:05 p.m.

7. Public Employee Performance Evaluation

Title: COG Interim Executive Director

The COG Board reconvened from Closed session at 4:31 p.m.

Deputy County Counsel, Shirley Murphy stated that there was no reportable action taken under Item 7.

Upon a motion duly made by Director Boch, and seconded by Director Velazquez, the Directors unanimously adjourned the COG meeting at 4:31 p.m. Vote:4/0 motion passes.

ADJOURN TO COG MEETING FEBRUARY 19, 2015.