

THE COORDINATOR

August 2003 * 1150 Osos Street, Suite 202, SLO, CA 93401 * Phone 805-781-4219 * Fax 805-781-5703



SLOCOG sponsored a public dedication event in Old San Simeon on Friday August 8th, 2003, to commemorate the designation of Highway 1 as this country's 23rd "All-American Road." Elected officials, including Congresswoman Lois Capps, were present to acknowledge community leaders and recognize the achievement and meaning of this national honor. The absolutely perfect weather and setting of Old San Simeon provided a magnificent backdrop to a wonderful day.

To receive an All-American Road designation, a road must possess multiple intrinsic qualities (archeological, natural, scenic, historic, recreational, cultural) that are nationally significant and have one-of-a-kind features that do not exist elsewhere. The road or highway must also be considered a "destination unto itself." That is, the road must provide an exceptional traveling experience so recognized by travelers that they would make a drive along the highway a primary reason for their trip. This national honor presented to the SLOCOG Board by George Schoener, Deputy Assistant Secretary, US Department of Transportation, is not confined to any one select group of people, but honors all individuals and groups that have worked so hard to preserve the outstanding qualities this corridor possesses.



Lois Capps,
U.S. Congresswoman, with
Shirley Bianchi,
County Supervisor



Peg Pinard, County Supervisor and
SLOCOG President with
George Schoener,
US Department of Transportation

The SLO North Coast Byway is now a part of a distinct collection of American roads. As we evaluate the many issues impacting the north coast of San Luis Obispo County, we look forward to the challenges ahead, treasuring and learning from our past, building upon our present achievements, and proactively approaching the future. The partnerships that have been built over the years will sustain and ensure our continued successes.

The National Scenic Byways Program, established by Congress in 1991 and administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), was created to preserve and protect the nation's scenic byways and, at the same time, promote tourism and economic development. Participation in the program is voluntary and may encompass any public road or highway. The National Scenic Byways Program emphasizes local involvement.

If you have any questions regarding this program, contact Darren Brown at 781.5764 or review the National Byway's Resource Center at www.byway.org. To review the public dedication event, please go to www.slocog.org/bywayevent.html.

Programming Policies

The SLOCOG Board endorsed the programming policies for federal and state funding. Less funding is anticipated, and the approved recommendations were:

1. Review projects with reserved funding for adequate progress;
2. Focus Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) funding on major, regionally significant projects, and seek an adequate level of Caltrans and local funding;
3. Program one year of Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Transportation Enhancement (TE) funding with an emphasis on existing project cash shortfalls;
4. Maintain the rating criteria utilized in prior funding cycles, report back in October regarding projects recommended to receive continued funding, further refine program process and timeline, and generate a fund estimate of available revenues.

Operational Improvements on US 101 in the Works

Three projects are in various stages to construct improvements to US 101 from San Luis Obispo City through the Five Cities area. These projects will maximize the efficiency of the route to better serve the needs of local commuter traffic and improve traffic flow and safety for the interregional movement of people and goods.

The first phase of improvements consists of three auxiliary lanes, one climbing lane, and one intersection/ramp modification. During the August SLOCOG Board meeting, approval was given to incorporate traffic monitoring devices (loop detectors) into the project. Construction for this phase is expected to begin in 2007. The second phase consists of two auxiliary lanes, one Park & Ride lot, one climbing lane, one frontage road extension, one pair of accel/decel lanes and possibly a ramp realignment. For the second phase, a Project Study Report is underway, and completion is expected during Fall 2003. The focus of the third phase centers on the SR 1/101 interchanges in San Luis Obispo City with ramp reconfigurations, auxiliary lanes, and local traffic circulation improvements in the series of on/off ramps, northbound and southbound. The Project Study Report for the third phase is underway, and completion is targeted for Fall 2004.

GET OUT YOUR CRYSTAL BALL - WHERE DO YOU SEE BUSES GOING IN 2025?

Two transit studies will begin this year that will help determine how public transit may look in 2025. The 1996 Long Range Transit Plan for the region will be updated, and new opportunities in the North County with its new \$550K/year will be examined. The SLOCOG Board adopted a "Scope of Work" for each of these studies. Both studies will include public involvement activities; the Long Range Transit Plan will forecast the possibilities for "Rapid Bus Transit" and "Express Bus Stops" along freeways. Among other issues, the North County Transit Study will look at ways to improve the coordination of local transit services between Santa Margarita up to Paso Robles - while maintaining local decision-making authority. Specific dates for public outreach meetings will be posted on www.slocog.org, or call Eliane Guillot at 781-5711 for further information.

Regional Traffic Model Consultant Selection

At its August 6th meeting, the SLOCOG Board approved the selection of Fehr & Peers Transportation Consultants as the Regional Traffic Model (RTM) consultant. Six firms responded to the SLOCOG request for proposals issued in June 2003 for development of the Model. The selection process was done with the participation of a Model Development Team (MDT) composed of representatives from Caltrans, the Public Works and Community Development Directors of the seven cities in the region, and the County. This project was included in the adopted FY 03-04 Overall Work Program (OWP) with \$75,000 budgeted for consultant work and 100 days of staff time allocated for support activities. Consultant work is expected to begin in September 2003. Any questions regarding the Regional Traffic Model should be directed to Mike Harmon at 781-5724 or Philip Chu 781-4223.

SLOCOG Tightens its Belt

Because Planning, Programming, and Monitoring (PPM) funding in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is in jeopardy, SLOCOG staff recommended budget cuts. The Board approved cost savings measures on August 6th, which include not filling a vacant position and postponing and shifting tasks. The \$300,000 PPM funding will be replaced with \$228,000 Regional State Highway Account (RSHA) funds.

STIP Rideshare funding (\$223,000) will also be replaced with RSHA funds totaling \$150,000.

Cuesta Grade Transportation Demand Management Fund Expiration

The Cuesta Grade Transportation Demand Management (TDM) funds will expire on September 30, 2003, due to the anticipated completion of construction previously projected to November 30, 2003. This results in a net loss of about \$130,000 to RTA Route 9 and vanpool services from October to November 2003. Regional Rideshare already shifted the campaign to another funding source, and SLORTA is considering alternate funding.

Since August 1999, Caltrans provided TDM funding as mitigation during construction for increased transit, vanpools, and Regional Rideshare.

The Latest on State Legislation

At its August 6th meeting, the SLOCOG Board received a status report on state legislation. Of the 32 bills reviewed in April, 2 have been enacted into law. The 2 bills are

AB 427 (Longville) and SB 491 (Ducheny):

- **AB 427** deletes the 20-year limit on the duration of the local transportation sales tax programs and provides that the tax shall stay in effect for the period specified in the tax ordinance.
- **SB 491** extends the deadline for local agencies to complete the third or fourth updates of their housing elements. This was seen as needed to provide the agencies with time to develop more effective plans.

Of the remaining bills, some have until the end of September to be enacted into law because they passed in their house of origin. Other bills have until the end of the 2004 session because they did not pass in their house of origin.

In addition to updating the Board on previously identified bills, staff brought forward an additional 29 bills of interest to the region with recommended positions.

SLOCOG staff is continuing coordination with our local legislators, other regional agencies (the League of California Cities, the California State Association of Counties [CSAC], and the California Association of Councils of Government [CALCOG]), to implement the adopted SLOCOG positions on these bills. For more information on legislation, call Mike Harmon at 781-5724.

Performance Audits Contract Award

In August 2003, the Board awarded a \$34,000 contract to Transit Resource Center/Lawler and Associates for the FY 03/04 Transportation Development Act (TDA) triennial audits. The state TDA rules require that SLOCOG contract out for an independent audit of each TDA transit fund recipient; the audit performed every three years covers efficiency, effectiveness, and functional review. Also addressed is progress made by the agency in implementing the prior audit recommendations. Operators to be audited are: City of Morro Bay Dial-A-Ride (DAR), Atascadero Transit, and Cambria Trolley. The audit findings and recommendations will be presented to the Board in June 2004.

SLO Transit Audit Follow Up

The City of San Luis Obispo made progress in carrying out all recommendations from the fall 2002 triennial audit. The City now keeps the Mass Transportation Committee (MTC) (advisory transit body) aware of monthly trends in ridership. The MTC worked closely with City staff and the consultant on the Short Range Transit Plan update and held special work sessions over the past 18 months. SLO Transit also gathered extensive public input on the draft alternatives in May 2003. Near-term impacts of major service changes (with three evening routes) are designed to increase ridership, while fare increases are warranted by the Transportation Development Act farebox recovery ratio. SLOCOG will closely monitor the plan implementation and its impact on the overall system performance.

Santa Maria Reverse Commute Program Extension

In August 2003, the Board approved amending the Federal Job Access and Reverse Commute pilot project. The Regional Transit Authority (RTA), who began reverse commute runs to Santa Maria, achieved a \$25K savings by using an active coach (instead of leasing in the first year). In addition, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) awarded \$25K in supplemental funds toward the project. As a result of the net gain of \$50K, the reverse commute service will be extended until August 2005, and supplemental funds will be set aside for Regional Rideshare marketing support. Over the past 11 months, the RTA Route 10 ridership grew 25 percent over the prior year, while farebox ratio exceeds 15 percent (i.e. above the 10 % goal).

New Bus Fleet for South County Area Transit

On August 1, 2003, elected officials on the South County Area Transit (SCAT) Board attended the ribbon cutting for the new transit fleet at the Ramona Garden

Park. The four new coaches with new logo and paint scheme replace all buses for local service in the Five Cities. Besides improved passenger and driver comfort, the new fleet complies with the California Air Resources Board emission standards for Nitrogen Oxides and meets future standards for Particulate Matters. The fleet purchase was funded by two grants (State Rural Transit Program and California Public Transit Account) with local match at less than 10 percent of total prices. Another highlight was the award of a life time golden pass (free rides on SCAT and Regional Transit Authority lines countywide) to a long time rider; all seniors over 80 years old can claim the free golden passes. Regional Rideshare will ensure that seniors in the Five Cities know about this opportunity for 7 days-a-week free rides.

SOUTH BAY DIAL-A-RIDE UPDATE

The Board received the draft scope of work for the preparation of a Transit Service Plan for South Bay Dial-A-Ride (SBDAR). The purpose is to analyze public transit options, conduct public outreach and education, and prepare a recommendation for new transit services for the community of Los Osos. The Transit Service Plan will be subject to two new occurrences: the County is researching the possibility of contracting with the San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority to handle the administration for SBDAR, and the transit manager for SBDAR recently transferred to another position.

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS MEMBERSHIP (1/8/2003)

Down the Road...The next scheduled meeting of the SLOCOG Board will be held in the San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors' Chambers Wednesday, October 8, 2003. The Board will receive an update on the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), a status and assessment of programmed projects, and a presentation on the State Route 46 Corridor Improvement Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Report. Proposed legislation and additional chapters from the Regional Profile will be reviewed. If you would like to see the Board meetings, they are broadcast live and replayed on Channel 21 (Charter Communications Cable TV).

The San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) is an area wide planning and programming agency for issues of area wide concern. SLOCOG is also the state-designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA), the Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways (SAFE), and the Census Data Affiliate (CDA) for the San Luis Obispo region. Member Agencies are listed below with designated representatives.

President – Peg Pinard, Supervisor District 3

Vice President – Frank Mecham, Mayor, Paso Robles

Arroyo Grande – Tony Ferrara, Council member

Atascadero – Wendy Scalise, Council member

Morro Bay – Dave Elliott, Council member

Grover Beach – Dave Ekbohm, Council member

Pismo Beach – Rudy Natoli, Mayor

San Luis Obispo – Ken Schwartz, Council member

District 1 Supervisor – Harry Ovitt

District 2 Supervisor – Shirley Bianchi

District 4 Supervisor – Katcho Achadjian

District 5 Supervisor – Mike Ryan

Ex-Officio, Gregg Albright – Director, Caltrans District 5

Ronald De Carli, Executive Director

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



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<http://www.slocog.org/>