

# THE COORDINATOR

August 2004 \* 1150 Osos Street, Suite 202, SLO, CA 93401 \* Phone 805-781-4219 \* Fax 805-781-570

## **2004 Excellence in Transportation Award**

SLOCOG and the California Highway Patrol (CHP) received an award for their participation during the construction of the widening project on Cuesta Grade. Caltrans District 5 Director Gregg Albright presented the award to President Mecham and CHP Captain Vail. The category for the award is "The Rural Highway". Congratulations to all participants!



## **Regional Transportation Plan - Vision 2025**

The 2004 Regional Transportation Plan update is now well underway. At the recent meeting in August, the SLOCOG Board conceptually supported draft policies consisting of core values, goals, and policy objectives that will frame this 20-year planning document's Policy Element. These policies were reviewed and supported by the board's technical and citizen advisory committees in July.

### **Core Values**

- Sound Transportation Choices
- Fiscal Responsibility
- Intergovernmental Coordination
- Livable Communities
- Public Outreach
- Environmental Protection

### **Goals**

- Mobility
- Accessibility
- Safety
- Sustainability
- Efficiency
- Equity
- Livability
- Environmental Protection

If you're an Internet user, your input on these draft policies can be provided to us at <http://www.slocogforums.com/>. The 2004 update is a concerted effort to simplify the information presented in the 2001 plan, which identifies major improvements along the north-south corridor of Highway 101 and the east-west corridors of Highways 46, and 166. Alternative modes of transportation will remain a focus in the plan to help improve our air quality and the livability to our region. Funding projections in the 2001 plan will be updated to reflect a realistic financial scenario. For more information, contact Richard Murphy at 781-5754.

## **Rail Coalition Rolls Into Town**

At the August 4<sup>th</sup> SLOCOG Board meeting, Linda Culp, from the **Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN)** Joint Powers Authority, provided an update to the Board on LOSSAN's current activities. Since the early 1970's over \$4 billion has been invested in the *SURFLINER* corridor. It is Amtrak's second business corridor in the nation, ranked behind the Northeast Corridor that stretches from Boston to Washington D.C. The number of *SURFLINER* trains serving San Luis Obispo and Grover Beach is expected to double in late October when a new mid-day arrival/departure is added.

LOSSAN has been a strong supporter of Amtrak during its struggle for funding through Congress and on behalf of Caltrans as it seeks to incrementally upgrade the corridor. LOSSAN supports reduced running time and interference from other trains and increased productivity, safety, and accessibility. The SLOCOG Board directed a letter of support be sent to our federal legislators supporting Amtrak's budget request. For more information, contact Peter Rodgers on SLOCOG staff at 781-5712.

## ***Ride-On Transportation Strategic Plan***

Mark Shaffer, Executive Director of Ride-On presented to the Board the Strategic Plan for the non-profit agency. Ride-On has three divisions: a) Consolidated Transportation Services Agency; b) Transportation Management Association for commuters in coordination with Regional Rideshare; and c) Dial-A-Ride Contract Operations for the general public. Mr. Shaffer reviewed Ride-On's history and successes in offering quality service at a reasonable cost (due to shared functions and fleet among the divisions). He also identified Ride-On's strengths, opportunities, and challenges for the next 5 years.

The action plan recommends increasing collaboration with general public transit under the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) and other local transit providers. Ride-On is making presentations to local policy makers and employers on existing programs to increase awareness by target groups; those include the regional Senior Shuttle and Vanpools. Opportunities for Ride-On development include a Senior Mobility Management (one-on-one training on how to use transit) and a Car Sharing Pilot project in tandem with Regional Rideshare.

## ***Call Box Annual Report***

Staff presented an annual update on the progress of the Call Box Program at the August meeting. According to the Implementation Plan, the system is deemed to be "complete". Key issues discussed included:

- **System Operations:**

1. **Call box usage rates:** In fiscal years 2002/03 and 2003/04, call box volume averaged 184 calls per month. This suggests cell phone usage is reaching a saturation level, and call volume could remain at its current level in the foreseeable future.
2. **Knockdown rates:** For the past four years the number of boxes damaged has remained constant at approximately five per year.
3. **Current budget:** The program budget is approximately \$260,000 per year; \$150,000 for system operations, \$75,000 for Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) projects, and the remaining \$35,000 will accumulate with the \$250,000 in reserve for a system upgrade.

- **Upcoming issues:**

1. **Digital conversion:** The planned system-wide upgrade from analog to digital is scheduled for mid-2006. The upgrade will cost approximately \$101,000. There is no difference in monthly maintenance costs between digital and analog call boxes.
2. **ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) upgrade:** In March 2003, the SLOCOG Board approved six digital TTY call boxes to be installed on Cuesta Grade as a 'pilot program'. Since the installation of these boxes, the CHP has not received any calls utilizing the TTY feature. Next year the Board will be asked to make a decision on the system-wide ADA upgrade issue (it could be done with the digital conversion for cost saving purposes).
3. **ITS and other call box opportunities:** Beginning in FY 2004/05, \$75,000 per year will be used to implement ITS projects in the County, such as Phase I of the Highway 101 and Changeable Message Signs at various locations on State Highways. Recent legislative changes allow rural counties (such as San Luis Obispo) to place call boxes on rural arterials such as Los Osos Valley Rd., Price Canyon Rd., and Hwy 227, especially at locations where cellular phone service signals are weak. Staff is evaluating this option.

For more information on the Call Box Program, call Philip Chu at 781-4223.

## ***Route 41 Transportation Concept Report***

The SLOCOG Board, at its August 5, 2004 meeting, endorsed the Caltran's State Route 41 (SR 41) Transportation Concept Report (TCR). Caltran's planning staff recently completed the TCR for SR 41 between its origin at Highway 1 in Morro Bay to the Kern County line. The TCR serves as the long-range planning document intended to: (1) evaluate current and projected conditions along the route; (2) establish a twenty-year planning vision or concept; and (3) recommend long-term improvements to achieve the concept.

SLOCOG staff have reviewed and sent comments responding to the report. The TCR did have a section of highway within the Atascadero City limits that is rural in character and marked by steep slopes and riparian habitat adjacent to the facility. SLOCOG and Atascadero City staff worked with Caltrans to determine the best vision for future development for residents and through traffic motorists, as well as cyclists and transit users.

Originally, Caltran's staff was seeking a 5-lane vision through the steep terrain of this section due to increasing volumes and time-spent-following,

both of which would deteriorate the level of service. SLOCOG/ Atascadero felt a 2-lane facility with operational improvements should outline the 20-year vision. Caltran's staff, in the end, heard the concerns of local planners and residents and incorporated the desired 2-lane facility into their long-range planning document. Caltran's staff also demonstrated responsiveness to the concerns of some Board members regarding having the highway serving as the main street through the community of Shandon. That section of highway is now being considered for realignment out of the downtown, westward to McMillan Canyon for access to State Route 46. Once again, patience and open communication proved critical to providing enhancements to our local transportation system highlighted by interagency cooperation. A copy of the TCR for State Route 41 is available at our website ([www.slocog.org](http://www.slocog.org)).

### ***Transportation Performance Indicators Report Updated***

At the August meeting, staff presented the first annual update of the Transportation Performance Indicators Report (TPIR). The 2003 report was developed in response to State and Federal mandates to monitor the performance of the region's transportation system. This report was prepared in coordination with the update of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) to help in defining and measuring appropriate performance indicators. This update incorporates new or updated data from the various sources.

#### **Selected Major Findings:**

- **Journey to Work** – As of the year 2000, over 13.5% of commuters in San Luis Obispo County carpooled versus 9.4% nationally, and 5.6% worked at home compared to 2.8% nationally.
- **Travel Time to Work** - Between 1990 and 2000 the average time in the San Luis Obispo region increased by about three minutes to 21.1 minutes, versus 25.5 minutes nationally. Only 8.8% of local trips are 45 minutes or more versus 15.4% nationally.
- **Transit Service** - Between 1990 and 2000 transit service increased significantly with service expanded to include San Miguel, Hearst Castle, and Santa Maria, and the number of daily round trips provided increased from 18 to 37 per day, a 105% increase.
- **Passenger Rail Ridership** – Between 1990 and 2000 the Coast Starlight had 45,000 to 50,000 boardings per year, and the Pacific Surfliner had around 40,000 each year.
- **Bike Facilities** – Between 1990 and 2000 an extensive network of over 92 miles of Class II bike lanes were developed, 6.5 miles of Class I bike paths were constructed, and over 44 miles of Class III lanes with 8 foot shoulders were produced on Highway 1 north of the city of San Luis Obispo.

The draft report will be available for review or to download on the SLOCOG website next week, however because additional data on transit services will not be available until August, the final report will not be available until September. If you have any questions, please call Mike Harmon at 781-5724.

### ***Base Year Regional Traffic Model Completed***

At the August 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, SLOCOG staff presented an update on Phase 1 of the regional Traffic Model. The work was to build a "base year" model of the land use and traffic in the region for the year 2000. Completed tasks included:

- Compilation of land uses, zoning, special generators and critical intersections;

- Development and coding of the Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ) system and roadway network;
- Generation of trip productions and distribution, mode choices, and trip assignments;
- Calibration and validation of model accuracy based for base year 2000.

The "base year" model will be used to develop a "build out" year model based on estimated growth throughout the region by the year 2030. Work tasks to be done in this phase will include:

- ✓ Identifying future land uses and road network coding;
- ✓ Generating estimated trip generation, distribution, and assignment;
- ✓ Conducting an analysis of model projection reasonableness; and
- ✓ Staff training on model operation.

The Board approved the staff recommendation to approve a contract for Phase 2 of the Model with Fehr & Peers. Work will begin in mid-September following final calibration of the Base Year model.

For more information on this issue call Mike Harmon at 781-5724.

## SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS MEMBERSHIP

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 6, 2004, at 8:30 a.m. The Board will conduct a public hearing on the draft 2004 Regional Transportation Plan and will receive updates from the consultants on the Long Range Transit Plan and North County Transit Study. The Annual Report will be presented for approval, and current legislation 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.*

***New President – Frank Mecham, Mayor, Paso Robles***  
***Vice President – Shirley Bianchi, District 2 Supervisor***  
*Arroyo Grande – Tony Ferrara, Mayor*  
*Atascadero – Wendy Scalise, Council member*  
*Grover Beach – John Shoals, Mayor Pro Tem*  
*Morro Bay – Dave Elliott, Council member*  
*Pismo Beach – Rudy Natoli, Council member*  
*San Luis Obispo – Ken Schwartz, Council member*  
*District 1 Supervisor – Harry Ovitt*  
*District 3 Supervisor – Peg Pinard*  
*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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