

THE COORDINATOR

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SLOCOG Analyzes Major Projects

County-wide

Staff has recently completed an update of all major projects in the region. This update included the latest project information, costs and construction needs. Staff also noted a preliminary list of projects which will likely be competing for regional funding during the 2006 STIP/STP funding cycle to occur early next year.



Projects were summarized based on existing and needed funds at the present time. In June, South County projects were assessed, in September North County, and in October the Central and North Coast Regions were reviewed. A total of nearly 50 projects are at varying stages of project development throughout the county. Highway 46 East interchange and Hwy 46 corridor widening, along with several mainline and interchange improvements along the US 101 corridor in San Luis Obispo County are in need of funding. The reconstruction of the Hwy 41/US 101 interchange is in need of funding in order to begin construction in the next 18 months.

SLOCOG's website (slocog.org) has each of the three updates along with summary tables for all regions. For more information on specific projects, contact Richard Murphy at 805-781-5754.

Transportation Funding: Looking Beyond the Pavement

SLOCOG is in the process of programming state and federal funding. The recently adopted Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), identifies the regional transportation needs for the next twenty years based on reasonably expected revenue projections. The needs are well defined and range from improvements to the state highway system to bicycle and pedestrian improvements enhancing the character and livability of our county's communities.

SLOCOG staff is in the process of analyzing annual funding estimates provided by the California Transportation Commission as well as outlined in the recently adopted federal transportation bill, Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). SLOCOG staff is meeting with each of its member agencies to review the status and needs of projects in their communities. This information will be used to develop a five-year capital improvement program. The charts below summarize the available funding to implement the early projects and programs listed in the RTP. <<an electronic copy of the RTP can be found at www.slocog.org>>

Some of the challenges facing the SLOCOG Board will be to address funding increases of existing state highway projects with the limited amount of new revenues available. Increases are a result of the volatility in the market place for construction materials. A number of state highway improvement projects are on the shelf waiting for funding making "new starts" an unlikely scenario for this programming cycle.

New federal funding will be available for the SLOCOG Board to program on the local and regional road network. Projects and programs identified in the 2005 RTP are eligible to receive these funds. Funding will likely address cost increases of existing "pipeline" projects and address other high priority needs identified in the 2005 RTP.

Transportation enhancement funding has long been a popular source of revenue to address community livability projects. These funds help to implement the Non Motorized Transportation Program of the RTP. Applications for these funds were received in May 2005. Action was delayed to consider all projects comprehensively together. Final recommendations will be made to the SLOCOG Board in January with action by the Board scheduled in February 2006. For questions on the upcoming programming cycle, please contact Richard Murphy at 781-5754.

More Patrols on 101

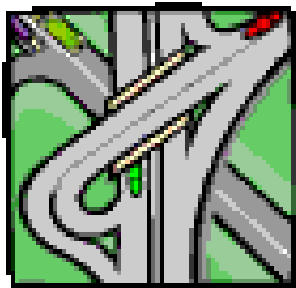
At its October meeting, the SLOCOG Board were informed that the California Highway Patrol, Coastal Division, was recently awarded a grant in the amount of \$175,000 to enhance enforcement on US 101 between Gaviota and the junction with State Route 58 in Santa Margarita. Since 2001, this 82-mile section of highway has experienced a growing number of traffic collisions and incidents involving commercial vehicles.

The project has led to an increased enforcement effort, and has begun a public awareness campaign. A task force was established to develop long-term goals and objectives includes members representing local jurisdictions, Caltrans, CHP, SBCAG, and SLOCOG. Though the funding for the Truck Safety Corridor is not sufficient to address any capital improvements, previous experience has shown the establishment of a Task Force to be instrumental in the identification of existing deficiencies, needs, and projects to address the need.

Progress on Regional Traffic Model

At the October SLOCOG meeting the Board took three important actions that will assist staff in the process of successfully completing development the Regional Travel Model. The first action was to extend the contract with the Transportation Consulting firm of Fehr and Peers to do additional refinement to the model to integrate additional data being generated by staff regarding existing commercial and industrial land use. The second action was to authorize a contract with a consulting firm experienced in socioeconomic forecasting to prepare an estimate of population and employment for the year 2030. The third action was to approve a contract to conduct the third series of counts (at 110 locations) for the Regional Traffic Count Program. These actions will help assure that the regional model is based on the most accurate and comprehensive data available and to assure that development of the “future year” is based on the best practices available.

The process of developing the regional traffic model was originally broken down into two basic phases. The first phase, which was completed in FY 2003/04, was to build the Base Year model, which is essentially a recreation of the region as it was in 2000. The second phase involves development of a future year or “Buildout” model that could be used to determine traffic problems and evaluate possible improvements. SLOCOG staff have been working for the past few weeks in a cooperative project with the County Assessor’s office to compile data for commercial and industrial zoned properties. This new database will allow more accurate measurement of needed economic data and improve the models accuracy. For more information call Mike Harmon.



Park and Ride Inventory & feasibility Update

Staff has completed an update to the 2002 Park and Ride Inventory and Feasibility Study, including:

- New Graphics and Mapping
- North County Lot Inclusion (North County lots were not presented in the 2002 study as they were addressed as part of the Cuesta Grade Widening project)
- Lot Usage/Occupancy rates
- Amenities and Deficiencies
- Preliminary Cost Estimates for upgrading or implementing amenities at existing lots, as well as identifying deficiencies and needed improvements for informal and potential lot locations.

Quick Facts: PNR Existing Lots

There are currently 16 Formal Park and Ride Lots in San Luis Obispo County and many informal lots, totaling over 500 Parking spaces. They are broken down as follows:

- 27 spaces in the North Coast Region
- 349 spaces in the North County
- 27 spaces in the Central County
- 99 spaces in the South County

For more information, or to view the report in its entirety, visit www.slocog.org and click on the “2005 Park and Ride Lot Inventory and Feasibility Study Update” link.



New Social Services Council to Focus on “Unmet Needs”

The SLOCOG Board approved the formation of a new “Social Service Transportation Advisory Council” (SSTAC) on September 7th. The SSTAC replaces the Regional Transit Advisory Committee for the annual “Unmet Transit Needs” hearing process. The Regional Transit Authority will convene a new advisory committee specific to regional transit needs.

“We’re looking forward to some new ideas and a fresh perspective” said Ron De Carli, SLOCOG’s Executive Director. Several new organizations will be represented such as the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, and the YMCA on behalf of transportation for youth. SLOCOG staff is meeting with interested social services agencies (i.e. Low Vision council, Independent Living Resources Center, Latino Outreach Center) to gather input for the upcoming Unmet Transit Needs public hearing scheduled for February 8th, 2005 at the Board of Supervisor Chambers.

Do you have an unmet transit need? Log on to <http://www.slocog.org/forms/unmet-needs.html>

2005 State Legislative Session Reviewed

At its October meeting the SLOCOG Board was presented with a brief summary of the status of transportation related legislation at the end of the 2005 session. Staff noted that of the 60 bills for which the Board had earlier adopted a position, only nine were approved by the Legislature. Of these nine bills, five had been supported by SLOCOG. While the addressed important issues, none were of the significance of protecting Proposition 42 funding or providing additional funding options for local agencies.

None of the bills approved by the Legislature and forwarded to the Governor for his signature or veto this year was among those that had been designed to protect Proposition 42 funds from being taken by the State. These bills were held back in anticipation of the Governor including protection in one of the ballot measures to be placed on the November Special Election Ballot. The Governor included some protection for Proposition 42 in Proposition 76 (The State Spending and School Funding Limits Initiative), which he placed on the November ballot.

As 2005 was the first of a two year Legislative Session most of the bills that were not fully reviewed and acted on by the Legislature will remain active until the end of 2006. If Proposition 76 fails to be approved by the voters this November it is expected that a major effort will be made in the Legislature to secure approval for one of the bills already authored for that purpose. For more information of State Legislation call Michael Harmon.

New Federal Surface Transportation Act Reviewed

At the September 7 meeting the SLOCOG Board was given a brief staff presentation on the major features of the new Federal Surface Transportation Act, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A legacy for users (SAFETEA-LU). This bill authorizes allocation of \$286.5 billion through 2009. Nationally it provides a total of \$63 billion more funding (nearly 30%) over five years than its predecessor, the six-year, \$218 billion Act called TEA-21.

California is expected to receive a total of about \$28.2 billion, which is also about 30% more than received under TEA-21. This increase is largely attributable to growth in vehicle miles traveled (gas consumption) and redirecting transportation derived funding for transportation uses, and not do to new funding sources.

In addition to providing formula and discretionary funding for a number of previously existing purposes, SAFETEA-LU maintains the strong metropolitan planning and programming responsibilities set forth in the previous Act. It continues its focus on addressing the many challenges facing our transportation system improving safety, reducing traffic congestion, improving overall system efficiency, increasing intermodal connectivity, and protecting the environment.

In addition to the funding provided through formula and grant based programs, the SLO region will benefit more directly from SAFETEA-LU as it provides dedicated funding for the following special projects defined as "high priority" by Congress members Thomas and Capps.

- \$240,000 for the Pismo Beach Promenade (Boardwalk) (Congresswoman Capps)
- \$320,000 towards the Bob Jones Bikepath north of Avila Beach (Congresswoman Capps)
- \$2.72m to widen the Santa Maria River Bridge on U.S. 101 (Congresswoman Capps)
- \$33.461m to widen Highway 46, Airport Road to the Shandon Rest Stop (Congressman Thomas)
- \$92m to widen Highway 46 in Kern County, from the SLO County line to Interstate 5 (Thomas).

The SLOCOG region will also benefit from an estimated 30% increase in both formula and discretionary funding over the life of the Act. A majority of "highway funding" coming to California is largely being earmarked by the California Transportation Commission (CTC) for safety, maintenance, and rehabilitation of the state highway system. Little funding is likely to be left for regional agencies (like SLOCOG) to program for new "highway projects". Other direct fund allocations, including Transportation Enhancements (TE), Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Transit funds are expected to increase (to a total of \$4-5+m/yr) but will still remain substantially below documented needs.

SLOCOG staff are working closely with transportation Planning and programming agencies throughout California to assess and develop a clearer picture of the provisions of SAFETEA-LU and monitor actions by the State, Caltrans and the California Transportation Commission (CTC) to implement its policies and procedures. For more information call Mike Harmon.





Down the Road...

The next scheduled meeting of the SLOCOG Board will be held in the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors' Chambers Wednesday, November 2, 2005. The Board will review the Pirce Street extension reimbursement options, and the new "Go California" initiative. The Board meetings are broadcast live and replayed on Channel 21 (Charter communications Cable TV)

Individuals wishing accessibility accommodations at this meeting, under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), may request such accommodations to aid hearing, visual, or mobility impairment by contacting SLOCOG offices at 781-4219. -Please note that 48 hours advance notice will be necessary to honor your request.

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 and their designated representatives are listed below:

President – Shirley Bianchi, District 2 Supervisor
Vice President – Tony Ferrara, Mayor Arroyo Grande

Paso Robles – Frank Mecham, Mayor
Atascadero – George Luna, Council member
Grover Beach – John Shoals, Mayor
Morro Bay – Betty Winholtz, Council member
Pismo Beach – Mary Ann Reiss, Mayor
Ex-Officio, Gregg Albright –Director, Caltrans District 5

San Luis Obispo – Dave Romero, Mayor
District 1 Supervisor – Harry Ovitt
District 3 Supervisor – Jerry Lenthall
District 4 Supervisor – Katcho Achadjian
District 5 Supervisor – James Patterson
Executive Director – Ronald De Carli



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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