



Regional Planning Partnership

February 25, 2009

Action Summary Minutes

1. Attendance

Stephen Bandirola, Caltrans Traffic and Operations	Lupe Jimenez, Caltrans District 3
Jim Brown, SACOG	Matt Jones, YSAQMD
Jose Luis Caceres, SACOG	Aimee Kratovil, FHWA
Traci Canfield, Regional Transit	Rob Nguyen, Caltrans District 3
Scott Carson, FHWA California	Larry Robinson, SMAQMD
Pete Conn, Caltrans	Christine Scherman, SACOG
Jason Crow, SACOG	Stew Sonnenberg, FHWA
Rosa de Leon Park, City of Elk Grove	Lacey Symons, SACOG
John Deeter, ECOS	Sharon Tang, Caltrans District 3
Azadeh Doherty, City of Sacramento	Karen Thomas, Caltrans District 3
Shannon Hatcher, ICF Jones & Stokes	Susan Wilson, Caltrans District 3
Neal Hay, Sutter County Public Works	Olin Woods, SACOG

2. Action Summary of the January 28, 2009 Meeting

The summary was approved by consensus

3. Information Sharing

None

4. PM₁₀ Qualitative Analysis for I-5 and I-80 Interchange Improvement Project

Robert Nguyen (Caltrans) discussed and answered questions about the project he is leading. This is a safety and operations improvement project at the I-80/I-5 interchange that consists of adding safety improvements and HOV connector ramps to the interchange. This project will not add HOV lanes; however, two different projects will add HOV lanes to I-5 and I-80 by the time this project is ready for construction in 2018. The separate HOV construction project for I-80 has already gone through environmental conformity and been approved. The project in question for the RPP will only be adding connectors to the HOV lanes already planned and will be partially funded with STA funds that become available in 2018.

Q: Will everyone get a copy of the environmental documents? Yes, when they are ready. The estimated timeframe for environmental documents is September 2009. There was a comment from the Sacramento Air Quality District that the Caltrans projects will be evaluated in terms of construction emissions and methods of mitigation.

Q: Has the Notice of Preparation been sent out? Yes, the NOP was put out in February 2008.

There was a clarification that this project will not add any new HOV lanes, but that different projects will have constructed HOV lanes on the affected interchange by the time the project is slated for funding in 2018.

The recommendation that the Partnership make the finding that the I-5 and I-80 Interchange Improvement Project does not require a qualitative PM₁₀ hot spot analysis was approved by consensus. However, at the end of the meeting, EPA staff informed the Partnership that EPA would be evaluating the project to see what, if any, environmental considerations need to be addressed.

For more information about this project, please contact the Caltrans Project Manager, Robert Nguyen, at 916-274-0683 (office), 916-825-8409 (cell) or robert_nguyen@dot.ca.gov.

5. American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Update

Jim Brown discussed and answered questions about the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, signed by President Obama on February 17, 2009, as it relates to transit. The SACOG region will receive about \$37.5 million for transit projects from the federal stimulus package. SACOG will get money from the 5307 program (for urbanized areas), the 5309 program (rail modernization), and the 5311 program (rural areas) and distribute that money among the region's transit providers. SACOG issued a call for projects in December 2008 and narrowed that list of projects down with input from the Transit Coordinating Committee (TCC). Originally, SACOG thought that the region would receive upwards of \$45-50 million. The TCC will meet February 26, 2009 to discuss stimulus funds. Once consensus is reached on the projects, the list will be taken through the SACOG committee cycle for Board approval.

Main Issues:

- (1) Stimulus money can only be spent on projects that can be obligated within 120 days. Because of this timeline, SACOG will aim for 90 days. In addition to the stimulus money, annual grant applications still need to be dealt with, which only adds to the time pressures.
- (2) SACOG thought the region would be getting more stimulus money and more bond money, but it appears that this is not so.
- (3) Localities are dealing with budget crises and may not have matching funds for some projects, in which case stimulus funds (which do not require a match) are a good option for ready-to-go projects.
- (4) SACOG handles many pots of money in addition to the stimulus money. Staff has been trying to shift money from different pots to different projects in an effort to maximize the number of projects that can be funded. It is more of an art than a science (because of the restrictions on what types of projects certain types of funds can be used for), and the TCC will be discussing issues of equity to ensure that when shifting money and projects that no geographic area is shortchanged.

Q: Can stimulus funds be used for preventative maintenance? Yes, RT and 2-3 other operators have expressed interest in using money for preventative maintenance. This will be discussed with the TCC and could impact the project list.

Q: Does transit stimulus money have to be used in ways that will stimulate job creation? Funds come with new reporting requirements that include a mechanism for reporting job creation. However, the purpose of the Act has changed from one purely concerned with job creation to one concerned with job creation *and retention*. It is harder to quantify "jobs saved," but accountability is what is driving the reporting requirements.

- Q: How will preventative maintenance stimulate the economy? Preventative maintenance projects are eligible for funding because they will save existing jobs, even if they do not create new ones.
- Q: How much money did California as a whole get for transit? Staff did not have the number at hand, but the funding comes through urbanized areas, so SACOG is concerned only with those urbanized areas in the region. That said, SACOG would be interested in borrowing stimulus money from other regions that are unable to spend all of their money.

Jason Crow and Olin Woods discussed and answered questions about the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act as it relates to road projects. Public outreach started in early January and included a public workshop on January 29, 2009. The SACOG Board acted to program the funds coming directly to the region for road rehab projects. A second batch of funds will become available through the state, either through the STIP or by direct transfer to the region. SACOG expects \$30-40 million for the region, but there are far more projects than can be funded. A short list will be taken to the Transportation Committee, and then the Board for approval.

Main Issues:

- (1) The state has 120 days to obligate ½ of their pot of money. The Board has approved that SACOG use the same timeline on the first batch of money that will come directly to the region. SACOG hopes that by acting quickly, the region may be able to capitalize on other regions that are unable to use all of their money in a timely fashion.
- (2) Funding transit projects with STP funds is permitted; however, this process can take longer depending on whether or not an agency has to have the funds transferred from FHWA to FTA. If a project goes through the transfer process, it might take longer than 120 days. For example, RT has a light rail project which it can obligate directly (without going through the transfer process), so this project would avoid the transfer of funds issue.
- (3) Caltrans has proposed maybe using the region's state stimulus funds (\$30-40 million) to move ahead with the Highway 50 HOV project. The method of repayment to the region is TBD, but SACOG hopes it would be funds with few strings attached, just like stimulus money.
- (4) Mr. Crow presented a handout outlining the screening criteria and evaluation principles for stimulus projects. The overriding principle is to use up all funds available to the region. Projects that are ready to go (120 days), will be completed in 3 years, are air-quality exempt, are NEPA exempt/cleared, are on existing lists (bike/ped, MTIP, etc), and create jobs will be given priority.

- Q: How do jurisdictions make a case for their projects? SACOG has collected projects and hopes to have a public workshop on Friday, February 27, 2009. At this workshop and through continued outreach, SACOG will ensure project deliverability. A final list of projects will be taken to the Board on March 19.
- Q: Will SACOG use the same timeline as the state? Yes, the limit is 120 days, but SACOG will hope to obligate Tier 1 projects within 90 days, and fund any Tier 2 projects (if available funding) on a first come, first served basis until the 120 days are up.
- Q: Does "air quality exempt" (#3 on screening criteria handout) also include projects that are already in MTIP? Yes, it includes projects that will not require a new conformity finding.
- Q: What is the total cost of Tier 1 projects? The original list was over \$700 million, but will be pared down depending on how much funding is available.
- Q: What kinds of restrictions are put on the funds? Are there matching requirements? The 1st batch of funds will be used for road rehab. The 2nd batch of state funds is fairly flexible. About 3% will be Transportation Enhancement (TE) funds. There is no matching requirement.

Q: When will the 120 days start? SACOG thinks FHWA will release the apportionment March 2, which will start the 120 days. SACOG hopes to bring a list to the Transportation Committee on March 5 and to the Board on March 19. Will Kempton (Caltrans) hopes to have state projects obligated within 60 days.

Q: If Caltrans goes ahead with the Hwy 50 project, what happens then? SACOG will still hold a workshop on Friday, February 27 to discuss the proposal with stakeholders and come to a consensus before going to the Board.

Scott Carson noted that for FHWA, the stimulus is the highest priority right now, and any questions regarding programming of funding issues should be directed to Brenda Bryant, Director of Financial Services FHWA-CA, at 916- 498-5028

6. Other Matters

The Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District and the Yolo/Solano Air Quality Management District have received board approval on new SIPs. Staff noted that the EPA has adopted new standards for ozone that that will most likely require another SIP update in the near future.

7. Adjournment

The next meeting is scheduled for March 25, 2009 at 2:00 PM.