



SAFE Board of Directors

**Item #15-4-2A
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Capitol Valley Regional Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways (CVR-SAFE): Call Box Removal & Modernization Project Implementation

The Capitol Valley Regional Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways (CVR-SAFE) has developed a plan to reduce the size of the physical call box system and upgrade the remaining system to current technology, which requires Board actions for implementation.

This item is background information for Items 2B, C and D.

For 20 years, in counties that opt for a \$1.00 surcharge on vehicle registrations, the state has required that a motorist aid system of call boxes be provided on state routes to help motorists in trouble. These requirements led to the formation of the Capitol Valley Regional Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways (CVR-SAFE) in 1994. The CVR-SAFE is administered by SACOG and now includes El Dorado, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba Counties. The current CVR-SAFE system maintains a total of 1,109 call boxes across the six participating counties. Both Caltrans and the California Highway Patrol (CHP) have administrative and oversight roles concerning the call box systems across California.

In November 2014, the Board requested that Caltrans and the CHP approve increasing the spacing of our call box system and a pilot project for call box removals on two roadway segments in Sacramento County. Only now that cell phones are becoming more universal have Caltrans and the CHP begun permitting pilot projects to remove stretches of call boxes if they are replaced by other motorist aid service options, such as 511/mobile call box services. The recommended strategy to implement call box removal and modernization efforts in the Capital Valley region is a key element of the broader CVR-SAFE Strategic Plan study that will be coming to the Transportation Committee for review in May.

Following the lead of the Bay Area's Metropolitan Transportation Commission on piloting call box removals, staff developed the scope for the CVR-SAFE removal and modernization project, which will:

- Remove call boxes on the portion of Interstate 5 between State Route 99 and Hood Road, and on SR-160 (South River Road) in Sacramento County;
- Increase spacing on the remaining routes to two miles; and
- Upgrade the remaining call boxes with new cellular technology and ADA improvements.

Moving forward, the reduced system will lower the costs for call box operations, maintenance, and upgrades as technology continues to change. This removal effort is timed to reduce the physical call box system by almost half before the current 2G cellular services used by the call boxes ends in December 2016.

The following are steps needed to implement the call box removal and modernization project:

1. Choose a Cellular Provider

As discussed in Item 6B, choosing a cellular phone provider to provide the cellular network is necessary to the Request for Proposals for a contractor(s) to modernize the call boxes that will remain in the system.

2. Develop Detailed Caltrans/CHP Removal Request

To request final approval from Caltrans and the CHP for the call box removal and modernization effort, the CVR-SAFE staff must develop engineering plans for each individual call box in the system. Staff is currently working with TeleTran Tek to complete this planning and engineering effort. More discussion is in Item 6D.

3. Issue RFP for Implementation Work

The detailed plan developed for the Caltrans and CHP approval requests will also serve as the basis for staff to develop the scope of work for a Request for Proposals for the call box removal and modernization work needed across the region. More discussion on this topic is in Item 6C.

Future Flexibility

Most of the California SAFE agencies have waited as long as possible to start their upgrade plans with the awareness that some of the call boxes that are upgraded may not be needed within the next ten years. Staff will be coming to the Committee in May with a draft Strategic Plan, and a 10-year budget plan that reserves funding for another wave of removals and modernization in the future.

Staff also continues to work on two fronts regarding greater flexibility for CVR-SAFE expenditures. Legislation has been introduced several times aimed at removing or reducing legal requirements for installation of physical call boxes to free the use of SAFE funds for other motorist aid services. These efforts have not met with success to date. While staff continues to monitor these legislative efforts, our current understanding is that the CHP and Caltrans prefer to use their existing discretionary authority to reduce the fixed call boxes required in each system. The CVR-SAFE staff will continue to work with the California SAFE partnership (Cal-SAFE) and the CHP and Caltrans to revise call box guidelines to reduce the emphasis on fixed call boxes as cell phone usage continues to increase.

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