

TRANSPORTATION AGENCY FOR MONTEREY COUNTY

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HIGHLIGHTS

September 23, 2009 Meeting

LIGHT RAIL OR BUS RAPID TRANSIT DECISION POSTPONED TO OCTOBER

Taking a slight pause in bringing new transit service to the Monterey Peninsula, the Transportation Agency decided to postpone its decision on whether to run light rail or rapid buses on the Monterey Branch Line corridor between Portola Plaza and Marina until its October 28 board meeting. The decision was made at the request of former Monterey Mayor Dan Albert, who asked that the City of Monterey be given extra time to vote on its preferred alternative if it so desired. Although several presentations had been made to each of the peninsula cities along which the branch line runs, only the City of Marina took a vote on the issue, delegating its decision on a preference for light rail or bus rapid transit in the corridor to its Transportation Agency representative, Mayor Bruce Delgado. The Transportation Agency specifically did not ask cities to take a position on their preferred technology so that its Board of Directors could reach consensus among the various communities.

The Monterey Branch Line runs between Monterey and Castroville on the publicly owned tracks adjacent to Highway 1. For the past few years Transportation Board members have been discussing and reviewing the benefits to bus rapid transit or light rail transit for the planned corridor. Each alternative has its advantages; however light rail was recommended by the Rail Policy Committee and agency staff based on its ability to provide superior transportation in the long-term while best meeting the vision and future plans for each of the peninsula cities. For instance, light rail vehicles hold more riders than bus rapid transit vehicles and, unlike bus rapid transit, have the ability to add train cars at a nominal operating cost. Staff argued that this capability to respond to long term growth is a key advantage of light rail technology. Another stated advantage is that intercity rail to San Jose and San Francisco can run on the same light rail tracks that provide local transit service.

The first phase of the project will run between Monterey and north Marina with key stations in Monterey, Seaside, Sand City, Marina/CSUMB, and connecting service to Salinas and Castroville. Later phases will extend service to the planned commuter rail station in Castroville. The total capital cost for phase 1 of the project is \$ 114 million (bus rapid transit) to \$ 128.5 million (light rail).

The next step for the project is to complete the federal and state environmental review in preparation for requesting federal transit funds for construction. Start of service is planned for early 2015.

AGENCY PLANS PROJECTS FOR NEXT 25 YEARS

The Transportation Agency approved a draft project list for the 2010 Regional Transportation Plan. This plan updates the last list made in 2005 by removing a number of projects which cannot be funded or completed within the 25-year life of the plan, given that no new local sales tax revenues are being assumed.

Some projects removed or to be added to the "unfunded list" includes:

- State Route 1 Carmel Corridor Widening: Capacity increases and improvements between Carmel River Bridge and State Route 68.
- State Route 1 Moss Landing Corridor: Widen to four lanes between Castroville and Salinas Road.
- State Route 68 Bypass: Construct 4-lane bypass along Fort Ord Right of Way or widen existing alignment between Toro Park and State Route 1.
- State Route 68 (East)/ SR 1 Interchange: Reconstruction to existing State Route 1 and State Route 68 interchange.

MONTEREY COUNTY RECIEVES FUNDS FOR 511 TRAVELER INFORMATION SYSTEM

The Transportation Agency recently received \$260,000 in state funds, which will go toward a 511 Traveler Information System for the Monterey Bay Area, in coordination with the Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission and the California Department of Transportation. Much like the 511 Traveler Information System in the San Francisco Bay Area the system has two components -- a voice recognition-based phone system and a website component. Both components are dedicated to provide a wide range of travel information, from vehicle travel times on major Highways such as Highway 101 or 1, to transit schedules, rideshare and carpooling information and weather and tourism information. By making travel information easy to access, it is expected that people can make more informed choices about when to travel, what type of transportation to use, and what route to take.

A Monterey Bay Area 511 System will be an effective strategy for simultaneously addressing numerous transportation challenges in both the short and long-term, at a low

cost, and with significant benefits for multiple modes. The system would be designed to maximize the opportunities to build upon existing local transportation resources.

**MARINA AND KING CITY RECEIVE
FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION STIMULUS FUNDS**

Two new projects will receive federal stimulus funds, the Marina Pedestrian Sidewalk Project – \$222,000, and the King City Pedestrian Project - \$160,000. Both projects will fill sidewalk gaps near schools and will provide safety and mobility benefits. These projects also maximize the distribution of the available federal stimulus funds around the County.

**TWENTY NEW CALL BOXES PLANNED FOR
RURAL MONTEREY COUNTY**

Twenty new call boxes will be installed in rural Monterey County areas, including Jolon Road, Carmel Valley Road and Arroyo Seco Road. Monterey County Public Works and the South Monterey County Fire Protection District requested that these call boxes be installed to enhance safety and provide emergency roadside assistance to motorists traveling in rural County areas. Procuring, building and installing the 20 call boxes has been estimated to cost \$112,833.99.