

**NORTH COUNTY CORRIDOR
EXPRESSWAY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY TECHNICAL ADVISORY
COMMITTEE**

ITEM: 4c

SUBJECT:

NCC Delivery Strategies

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The TAC will discuss the options described in this agenda item and develop a recommend strategy for the NCC Board.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this discussion at this time.

DISCUSSION:

We are at a critical juncture in the life of this project. Collectively, we need to determine a recommendation for a best course of action to present to the policy makers. The attached document was the basis for a discussion with then District Director Kome Ajise on January 16, 2009, his staff, StanCOG staff and NCC TEA staff. This document was also shared by email with the TAC in an effort to keep you informed. Consequences to not achieving resolution on the delivery strategy for the project may be that we cannot meet the 2010 STIP mandate to have a programmable first phase project, thus resulting in the potential loss of up to \$91 million in interregional transportation improvement program funds to the region.

The traffic numbers are indicating that there is current and future need for the project. In fact, the purpose for the project is being drafted and includes the following:

- To provide a high-capacity west-east roadway to accommodate anticipated traffic growth in north Stanislaus County, southern San Joaquin County and the cities of Modesto, Riverbank and Oakdale
- To alleviate traffic congestion on parallel roadways and enhance local traffic circulation
- To accommodate multi-modal travel opportunities; and
- To provide interregional connectivity

The North County Corridor has merit whether it is an interregional state route or a local route, and the needs can be met with either designation. However, there is consensus by all that the \$91 million available in the ITIP should stay in the region. At the time StanCOG approached the CTC, the NCC was the most viable option to keep the money in Stanislaus County. It looked more closely like a replacement project to the Oakdale Bypass project. It would more closely address transportation issues from Oakdale, but unlike the Oakdale Bypass, it would also address transportation issues in Riverbank, Modesto and the County. At that time, the Route 132 Connectivity Study had not been completed and the \$14 million in federal earmarks was not designated. Otherwise Route 132 may have been a better option at the time, given that it is now a viable project and it is already designated as an interregional route.

The issue today, and discussed on the attachment as Plan A, is that as the owners and operators of the State Highway System, Caltrans must determine what type of state facility will meet *their* needs. From a statewide perspective, Caltrans wants a facility that will minimize their liability, facilitate interregional travel, and can be efficiently and safely maintained and operated. To that end, Caltrans has developed very specific design standards relating to freeway-to-freeway connections and interchange spacing. These are very difficult standards to meet in this circumstance and it affects other projects such as the Kiernan Road Interchange Project and the Hammett Road Interchange Project (both considered as local projects at this time). It also affects how the Salida Community Plan will be implemented. Paraphrasing Caltrans, it is possible to obtain a route adoption for the NCC project by *assuming* that all standards will be met. We do not have to state how or when those standards will be met within the route adoption project report or environmental document allowing us to technically move forward.

However, if we do move forward with the route adoption and assuming that standards will be met means that the region is “silently” agreeing to fund future improvements to meet those standards on a Caltrans timeframe. It may be 30 years out, but we should not assume that the region would have adequate funding dollars available to commit. In addition, we are looking at tremendous social and economic impacts to the system IF either Kiernan I/C or the Main St. I/C in Ripon is closed to meet interchange spacing. The proposed Salida Community connections to the new Route to Pirrone Road or Stoddard Road would not be viable. The County would have to require right of way reservations and access agreements from existing and potential commercial development to meet a standard freeway interchange footprint.

In the Plan A- Option 2 scenario, some of the issues can be addressed by changing the roadway designation from a proposed freeway (or expressway) to a conventional highway. The interchange spacing standards then become 1 mile, as opposed to 2 miles thereby saving the elimination of either Kiernan I/C or Main Street I/C. However, the local connection at Pirrone will still not be viable. Right of way reservations and access agreements from existing and potential

commercial development would still be required. This option assumes that Caltrans will transfer the existing Route 108 to the new conventional highway. We are waiting for clarification regarding this process.

Plan B helps move the NCC project forward. The project would not require a route adoption, and state standards, except at existing highway connections would not be required. Even then, the state standards would be for a local connection to a state highway, not a freeway to freeway or even a conventional highway connection. Road reservations and access agreements would be of less impact to existing or potential commercial development. The local access at Pirrone and Stoddard would not be affected. Alleviating these constraints allows the project to move forward unencumbered by meeting a 2010 STIP date and a legislative action for designation as an interregional route.

In addition, the proposed corridor studies would not be required for a local project. We could more adequately address the public concerns brought forward in the public scoping meetings.

However, there are constraints associated with Plan B to the Route 132 project. That project will need to be able to program a buildable phase of the project in the 2010 STIP to capture the potential \$91 million in ITIP funds. The preliminary schedule for the project could accommodate this. StanCOG is in the process of selecting a consultant.

The funding issues may be the hardest for the policy makers to address. Plan B would require that current public facilities fee dollars on the Route 132 be replaced by the ITIP funds and that the ITIP funds we are trying to secure for the NCC be replaced dollar for dollar with the public facilities fee funds. This policy decision would require approval by the StanCOG Policy Board as well as the NCCTEA. It also requires support from Caltrans at the highest level, Will Kempton, to gain CTC approval.

Whichever Plan is ultimately chosen, it needs to be chosen fast. The two plans require very different delivery strategies with the Plan A scenarios being much riskier as far as timing to receive the potential \$91 million. If Plan B is chosen, we need to move resources from a Plan A strategy to a Plan B strategy, thus eliminating the remaining work to accomplish a route adoption. The Route 132 project will have to move forward based on the funding schedule to go to CTC by the end of the year.

At the January 16, 2009 meeting, District 10 Director Kome Ajise, was supportive of Plan B. However, by Monday, January 19th, the Director was reassigned to headquarters and District 10 has an interim Director, Tony Tavares. Christina Hibbard, District 10 Project Manager has stated that the District will remain supportive of Plan B.

**North County Corridor
Strategies for Capturing the \$91M from ITIP Funding in the 2010 STIP
Discussion DRAFT**

Based on the meeting with Caltrans on January 12, 2009 two strategies have been identified in this document. The meeting was held at the Caltrans District 10 office, and was attended by Terry Ogle & Anton Kismetian (Central Region – Design), Christina Hibbard (District 10 Project Manager), Matt Machado & Laurie Barton (NCCTEA JPA) and Kris Balaji (Jacobs). It is essential that a resolution on the strategy be agreed upon by the next NCCTEA Board Meeting on February 11, 2009.

The intent of these strategies is two fold:

1. To capture the \$91M in Interregional funding that was committed by Caltrans to the North County Corridor project in the 2010 STIP
2. To enable the NCC project and any other projects currently in progress to proceed without design constraints regarding future standards (primarily freeway-to-freeway connection and interchange spacing)

Current Plan A – Option 1

This plan calls for proceeding with the North County Corridor as an expressway with connection to State Route 99 on the west and SR120 on the east. This plan calls for completing a CEQA document and a modified Project Report to enable CTC Route Adoption at its November 2009 meeting, followed immediately by an Interregional designation through legislation. There will also be a Project Study Report prepared for a buildable Phase 1 segment of the Corridor. These actions will allow Caltrans to nominate the NCC for Interregional Funding in the 2010 STIP, and obtain CTC approval to program up to \$91M in ITIP funding committed by the Caltrans Director.

The following are the opportunities and constraints for this plan.

Opportunities

1. Delivery of an equivalent project to the original Oakdale Bypass project that is ITIP eligible for the \$91M funding that was unprogrammed from the original project and keep the funds within the region
2. Considerable progress has been made in the areas of environmental and public outreach that would enable completion of the route adoption CEQA document on time.
3. Consensus has been reached among the stakeholders (Cities, County and Caltrans) on future relinquishment of SR 108.
4. The NCC will be a state maintained roadway.

Constraints

1. The route adoption requires a connection to SR 99 and SR 120 that assumes full design standards being met. Caltrans requires that the route adoption address the interchange spacing requirements that could ultimately lead to closing the following interchanges: Kiernan Ave / SR 99, Main Street / SR99 (San Joaquin

- County) and the proposed interchanges at Pirrone Road and Stoddard Road in the Salida Community Plan area.
2. Though Caltrans will permit constructing the Salida Plan area infrastructure to a less than full design standards at this time, it will require a monitoring plan to be put in place with a commitment to address future operational and safety impacts. This commitment will be in the form of providing first priority to mitigate these impacts using the Stanislaus County's share of federal/state/local transportation funding. Caltrans will have the option to require full compliance to design standards when the monitoring plan triggers this requirement.
 3. Caltrans requires the route to be built to a full expressway/freeway standards.
 4. The overall time constraints to meet the route adoption and interregional designation are tight. The legislative ease in getting the interregional designation is difficult given the current political climate.
 5. Adopting the NCC as a state route will require the NCC JPA follow all Caltrans Project Delivery processes thus delaying the construction date.
 6. State resources will be impacted due to oversight of project; project approval and NEPA/CEQA delegation.

Plan A – Option 2

This plan attempts to resolve some of the constraints identified in Option 1 described above. This plan designates NCC as a conventional highway. With this designation, the requirements for a freeway-to-freeway and subsequent interchange spacing requirements will be eliminated.

Opportunities

Same as for Option 1 above

Constraints

Except for Constraints 1, 2 and 3 the remaining three constraints shown for Option 1 will apply

Plan B

This plan will propose to apply the \$91M of ITIP funding to the SR 132 West project in exchange for an equal amount of Stanislaus County's Public Facility Fees (PFF) that is currently earmarked for the SR132 project. The NCC will be designed and constructed as a local expressway.

Opportunities

1. All constraints identified in Plan A will be eliminated.
2. SR 132 West is already an interregional route and therefore is ITIP eligible.
3. NCC will be designed and built as a local roadway thus expediting the construction date.
4. SR132 West has federal earmark funds that can be used leverage the ITIP funding.

Constraints

1. Obtaining Local Agencies, Caltrans and CTC support to enable the transfer of committed funding from NCC to SR132 West.
2. There will be no relinquishment of SR 108.
3. As a local expressway, NCC will have to be maintained by the local agency.