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**Marin-Sonoma Narrows
Policy Advisory Group**

**Marin-Sonoma Narrows
Policy Advisory Group**

Supervisor Cynthia Murray
Marin Board of Supervisors
Chair

Minutes

Friday, May 17, 2002

9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

**Novato City Council Chambers
908 Machin Avenue, Novato**

Council Member Sharon Wright
Santa Rosa City Council
Vice-Chair

Mayor Peter Breen
Town of San Anselmo

1. Introduction

Supervisor Cynthia Murray, Policy Advisory Group (PAG) Chair, opened the meeting and welcomed all of those present.

Council Member Mike DiGiorgio
Novato City Council

Council Member Michael Healy
Petaluma City Council

Supervisor Mike Kerns
Sonoma Board of Supervisors

Supervisor Steve Kinsey
Marin Board of Supervisors

Mayor John Mani
City of Novato

Supervisor Tim Smith
Sonoma Board of Supervisors

Mayor Clark Thompson
City of Petaluma

Cynthia Murray - Supervisor, Marin County Board of Supervisors	Present
Peter Breen - Mayor, Town of San Anselmo/Marin County CMA	Present
Michael Healy - Council Member, Petaluma City Council/SCTA	Present
Steve Kinsey - Supervisor, Marin County Board of Supervisors	Present
John Mani - Mayor, City of Novato	Present
Bryant Moynihan - Council Member, Petaluma City Council (alternate for Mike Healy, Council Member, City of Petaluma)	Present
Clark Thompson - Mayor, City of Petaluma	Present
Mike Kerns - Supervisor, Sonoma County Board of Supervisors/Chair SCTA	Absent
Mike DiGiorgio - Council Member, Novato City Council/Marin County CMA	Absent
Tim Smith - Supervisor, Sonoma County Board of Supervisors/SCTA	Absent
Sharon Wright - Council Member, Santa Rosa City Council/SCTA	Absent

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from April 19, 2002

The minutes from the PAG Meeting on April 19, 2002 were approved.

3. Environmental Update

Environmental Schedule

Caltrans distributed a project schedule (see attachment). The schedule compared original target dates with proposed accelerated dates for completion of project tasks. Staff explained that once the Preferred Alternative is identified, the project moves into the final environmental review phase. Staff suggested this phase would allow for some time reduction, between six and seven months. Consequently, completion of the formal environmental process (Record of Decision) is targeted to be December 2004, rather than June 2005 as originally proposed.

The PAG said it was good news to see the schedule shortened by half a year. They questioned why the final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) would take 402 days.

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Caltrans staff explained that even though the mitigation plan and getting written commitments from agencies could be done concurrently, both of these tasks will take a considerable amount of time. Caltrans also noted that the final EIR cannot be written until there is a buy-off on the Preferred Alternative. To help expedite resource agency concurrence, Caltrans will continue the coordination effort by holding a resource agency meeting in June as a follow-up to the February kick-off meeting and two field reviews that have already occurred.

The PAG asked whether the project schedule was being driven by the environmental schedule. Caltrans said that was the case. Again, Caltrans expects to accomplish some work concurrently. For example, the Draft Project Report is completed at the same time as the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) and approval of the Draft Project Report allows the DEIR to circulate.

Right-of-Way

Caltrans is not allowed to enter into negotiations for or make an offer on property for the purchase of the right-of-way until there is a Record of Decision (ROD) signed and approved by the FHWA (Federal Highway Administration). Anticipated ROD date (on the accelerated schedule) is December 2004.

Budget Considerations

The PAG said that in order to seek funding support from Congress, they would need to start the lobbying process very soon. They asked Caltrans if there was a total project cost estimate they could use, qualifying it would not have to be an exact or final figure. Staff estimated it would cost between \$350 and \$400 million in escalated dollars for all three segments of the corridor. This cost provides for an alternative with a 22-foot median.

The PAG explained that even though they would be using the estimate for their lobbying efforts, there is no realistic expectation that Congress would fund this amount. However, local officials need to weigh in early and often with Congress to earmark some transportation dollars for the Marin-Sonoma Narrows project. To accomplish this, the PAG wants to develop a funding plan about area-wide projects to help them lobby state and federal representatives to procure national and state funding. Although the Marin-Sonoma Narrows project is not seen as a good candidate for a locally funded project, the PAG sees the Marin-Sonoma Narrows project as an outstanding demonstration project for regional connectivity and shared funding responsibilities.

In the meantime, the PAG will work with the Marin Congestion Management Agency and the Sonoma County Transportation Authority to take the lead in developing a preliminary funding plan. Caltrans agreed to provide support data to the two CMAs as needed.

4. Design Exceptions Presentation / Discussion

Caltrans presented information about mandatory and advisory design standards for median width, and horizontal and vertical alignments. Rather than looking at one standard at a time, all standards need to be examined together as they relate to the overall project safety mobility and accessibility. Portions of the Power Point presentation are attached and a summary of the highlights of the presentation follows.

Median Width: Median width (measured from edge of travel way to edge of travel way, including median shoulders) can have a direct impact on the number and severity of accidents on a roadway. Statistics and visual examples were given. In this same regard, the width of a shoulder also affects the number and severity of accidents on a roadway. For example, the inside left shoulder, even with a concrete barrier, has a significant impact on vehicle maneuverability and potential traffic hazards. If the inside left shoulder is too narrow, the following problems can result:

- Limited "wobble room", cars or trucks swing out and hit the concrete barrier
- large trucks hitting the concrete barrier can cause "blow outs" of concrete into the opposing traffic lanes

- not enough room for drainage resulting in water ponding and potential hydroplaning problems
- insufficient room for Maintenance staff to safely remove debris and perform routine maintenance
- not enough room for Caltrans and CHP to move debris from lanes of traffic onto the shoulder where they can safely remove them and limit impacts to traffic flow
- not enough room for emergency parking and CHP enforcement of HOV lanes

Accidents, injuries and deaths are reduced by as much as 84% when the combined shoulder width is 22 feet. Caltrans said they understand environmental concerns and will seek to balance safety and environmental needs as they design the corridor.

The PAG asked if inside paved shoulders are necessary. Caltrans explained that given the narrow median, the inside shoulder needs to be paved to the median barrier for safety reasons.

Horizontal and Vertical Sight Distance: The most critical of these is stopping sight distance, which is based upon a combination of the physical conditions and driver speed. The existing and proposed vertical alignment at San Antonio Creek was shown as an example. To meet freeway standards, the crest must be lowered by 2.3 meters to improve stopping sight distance. Lowering the grade while maintaining traffic will require staging construction.

An example of limited horizontal sight distance was shown for northbound Highway 101. The road curves to the right with a steep hillside and narrow right shoulder, the driveway just beyond the hill is not visible until the driver is 160 meters from it. In situations like this, increased sight distance can be provided by widening/shifting the roadway to the left or cutting into the hillside.

5. Other Business

None.

6. Public Comment

Karen Nygren inquired about the process for eminent domain to deal with difficult property owners along the corridor who are not willing to provide right-of-way rights. She also suggested that land use concerns, especially in Marin County could delay the environmental process and suggested resolving land use concerns first could limit delays down the road.

Karen Nygren said visual appearance is important. There are no concrete barriers in this section of Sonoma County and wondered what it would take to eliminate concrete barriers and provide a design like the I-280 freeway south of San Francisco. Caltrans explained that a 61-foot median would be required to eliminate the barrier. Staff said it is an issue of safety, not design exceptions.

Ms. Nygren then asked if another material could be used instead of concrete. Caltrans said steel guardrail could be used, but requires a wider median than is proposed now and would result in greater environmental impacts. Ms. Nygren stated she thought concrete barriers along the corridor would ruin the rural feel of the corridor.

David Schonbrunn (TRANSDEF) stated that he has concerns with the current limitations in the EIS alternatives. He would like Caltrans to provide the viable alternatives required by law. He suggested Caltrans pursue an alternative study similar to the one done in Portland, Oregon that integrates SMART Growth planning around rail stations. He further suggested that funding currently earmarked for highway expansion/improvements be shifted to fund implementing/improving the rail system. Mr. Schonbrunn illustrated the seriousness of his group's request to Caltrans by pointing out that they are currently in State court right now challenging the negative declaration for the Bay Area's ozone plan. His group is also attempting to overturn the EPA's recent decision about funding Bay Area

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transportation projects through litigation in the US Court of Appeals. He would like to see Caltrans integrate materials that already have come out of the SMART project into their Highway 101 plans.

7. **Upcoming Meeting Schedule**

The PAG will not meet during the summer. The next two scheduled meetings are in September and December. The September meeting will be Friday, September 20 at the Petaluma Community Center. The December 20 meeting will be held at the Novato City Council Chambers. Notices will be sent to the Caltrans mailing list in early June and again closer to the September meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:10.

Next Meeting: September 20 at 9:30 AM
Petaluma Community Center
320 North McDowell Drive, Petaluma

Attachment: Design Exceptions Power Point Presentation

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05/31/2002 09:03 PM

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cc:

Subject: Final PAG Minutes

Thank you all for your timely edits to the May 17 PAG minutes. Attached is the final copy, which includes edits from Lois, Melanie and Sean and an OK from Nino. Please let me know if there is anything else you need in relation to the May 17 PAG meeting. Thank you.

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