



## Marin-Sonoma Narrows Policy Advisory Group Meeting Notes and Summary

Sept. 20, 2006

3:30 p.m.

San Rafael City Council Chambers  
City Hall, 1400 Fifth St.  
San Rafael, CA

### **Attendees:**

#### **PAG Members**

Supervisor Cynthia Murray, Marin Board of Supervisors, Chair

Mayor Carole Dillon-Knutson, City of Novato

Mayor Pro Tem Jeanne MacLeamy, City of Novato

Council Member Michael Healy, Petaluma City Council

Supervisor Mike Kerns, Sonoma Board of Supervisors

Supervisor Tim Smith, Sonoma Board of Supervisors

#### **Caltrans**

Ray Akkawi

Sean Charles

#### **SCTA**

Seana L. S. Gause

#### **TAM**

Dianne Steinhauser

#### **CirclePoint**

Andrea Nocito

#### Members of the public:

Bill Wright

Pat Wright

Alan Zahraduic

Nick Silva

Susan Stompe

Nathan Botwinik

Rick Fraites

Karen Nygren

Donald Wilhelm

## **1. Environmental Process Update**

Sean Charles of Caltrans presented a project update.

Charles reported that the internal Caltrans review of the ED is in progress. After the internal review, the document will be sent to the Local Partners Team and the Federal Highway Administration for review.

The ED will be ready for release Dec. 1, 2006. Due to the holidays, the public hearings will be held during the week of January 8-12, 2007, on Tuesday/Wednesday or Wednesday/Thursday. The public comment period will be extended through the month of January.

The Value Analysis is in its second week. Caltrans invited PAG members to attend the final presentation to the stakeholders on Sept. 21, 2006, at 1:00 p.m. in Oakland. The VA team has not found any significant changes or items of concern for the project. The VA team's focuses have been on phasing and funding of the project. Overall, the VA is pleased with the project.

Akkawi stated that the VA draft report will be out next week.

Murray asked if the county representatives (SCTA and TAM) will be attending the VA meeting on Sept. 21, 2006.

Charles confirmed their attendance.

Nygren asked if the DED will be made available for the public, and if so, how can the public obtain a copy.

Charles answered Nygren by stating that the DED will be released Dec.1, 2006. The document will be made available in public places, on the Web site and by special request. Special requests can be made by contacting Ray Akkawi's office; a request list has already been started. However, due to the document's large size, not everyone who requests a copy will get one. Charles encouraged the public to visit the Web site for an electronic version of the DED. The team is hoping to set-up and receive electronic comments from the public.

Nygren asked if Caltrans will be available to present the project to special interest groups such as the Sierra Club, the Conservation League, the League of Women Voters, etc.

Akkawi answered Nygren by stating that there will be public meetings; one in Novato and the other in Petaluma. Akkawi will need to check with his environmental staff on possibly presenting to public interest groups. Akkawi added that if the team was to present to one special interest group, the team would need to present to all public interest groups in Sonoma and Marin counties for the sake of equal knowledge among all groups.

Nygren stated that SMART and MSN are both very important and those groups will want a presentation.

Murray suggested that there would be enough opportunity to learn about the ED through the hearings, unlike the SMART project because it was on the ballot.

Charles reiterated that during the open house public meetings that it may be possible to reserve time after the normal presentation in which the team can answer any questions from the public interest groups.

Nygren asked if the team was planning on presenting to the TAM Board.

Akkawi and Charles said that was not in the plans.

A member of the public asked about the content of the VA.

Akkawi answered by stating that the VA team identifies and considers ways to cut costs of the project, and ways to phase the project. The VA session held earlier today's was a technical review with advisors. The session on Sept. 21, 2006, will be a presentation to stakeholders regarding the information they have considered. Akkawi noted that the information from the VA team will create potential options for the project.

Charles mentioned that the VA team serves as a "fresh set of eyes" for the project to find ways to make the project better, saving money, finding considerations the team has missed, and/or by saving construction efforts.

Murray indicated that funding is a significant issue with this project. Much of the funding is not yet final.

## **2. Funding Update**

Ray Akkawi of Caltrans presented a funding update.

Akkawi reported that this project is not 100% funded yet. There is some money for mitigation and some money for design. Some funding can possibly come from Proposition 1B (the Infrastructure Bond or I-Bond), which is on the November ballot. It is Caltrans' hope that some of the funding from the I-Bond could fund an element of the MSN project. Additionally, Caltrans is hoping to phase the project in order to spread the cost of the project over time as well as for operational benefits.

Akkawi presented the updated cost of the project based on elements of the project to the Board and audience members using 2006 dollar criteria. This cost estimate includes the construction increase of last fall, support costs and ROW costs. The project is estimated to cost \$525 million. The project currently has \$80 million in funding.

Steinhauser presented an update on the MOU. She discussed that the purpose of the MOU is to describe how the agencies will relate to one another, and to identify a funding

framework for the project. The MOU has not been finalized because funding for the project has held up discussions of how each agency will coordinate, work and carry out its responsibilities under the MOU. TAM hopes to have the MOU approved within the next few months to officially begin the partnership.

If Prop 1B passes in November, funds could be produced from Prop 1A and 1B for regions in California for corridor improvement projects. It is expected that the Bay Area will get a share of the funding and then, that MSN could get a share of the Bay Area's funding. MSN is a strong candidate for that funding because it is not up to current freeway standards and has additional safety issues. Prop 1B funding would have to be used for construction. Legislation requires that by December 2012, the project would need to be under construction in order to be eligible for these funds.

Murray asked for a best-case scenario should the bond pass to obtain funding.

Steinhauser replied that TAM hopes there is enough funding to do all phases but that is doubtful. More discussions need to occur in order to narrow down a phase for the I-Bond funding to go toward. Steinhauser and VA hope that Segment B is identified as a regional priority for the funds.

Murray asked if any federal funding or renewal funding is available.

Steinhauser answered that discussions are planned in winter of 2007 to discuss earmarked funds. There is no renewal funding at this time. There is some annual funding, approximately \$1-2 million, that will carry the MSN project into design and mitigation planning but not into construction.

Murray asked what would happen if the bond is not passed.

Steinhauser said that the MSN project would have to compete with other transportation projects. Some funding has been dedicated to Caltrans from MTC that could be looked into. Other possibilities include toll roads, public and private funding, similar to what other states are doing to fund infrastructure projects.

Murray stated there is a need to keep looking for other funding options.

Dillon-Knutson asked if the bike path that is part of the MSN project is the same bike path as SMART.

Charles answered by stating that MSN has coordinated with SMART to have a separate bike path along stretches of MSN project that allow for bikes, excluded from the new freeway in Segment B, but putting a continuous bike path along the freeway on frontage roads. This means there will be two parallel bike paths in some sections of the corridor.

Anderson announced that SMART has removed its bike path plans from the Narrows section. The only bike path in Segment B would be MSN's. Phase two of the SMART

project included a bike path but that has not been approved, passed, or funded yet, nor is it in the EIR.

Kerns added that SMART hopes to connect its bike path to the MSN bike path. However, environmental issues such as wetlands exist and phase two is not yet final.

An audience member made a statement on behalf of the Sierra Club noting that the organization is opposed to non-HOV vehicles using the HOV lanes.

**3. Update Regarding Future Draft ED Public Hearings**

Item 3 was covered in item 1.

**4. Public Comment**

No further comments were presented.

**5. Adjourn**

Murray announced that future PAG meetings will be scheduled immediately after SMART meetings. The SMART board will notify PAG board of the anticipated length of their meetings so that attendees of both meetings do not have a time gap waiting between meetings.

Next PAG meeting will be Jan. 17, 2007, immediately following SMART meeting (with an estimated PAG start time of 2:30 p.m.) at San Rafael City Council Chambers, City Hall, 1400 Fifth St., San Rafael, CA.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:10 p.m.