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November 19, 2010

Rural Counties Task Force Members

Dear Members:

In 2003, the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA), in consultation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), issued a Final Rule which required each State Department of Transportation to adopt a process for consultation with local officials in rural areas. This process was to be distinct from the public involvement process, with the intention of ensuring that officials in general-purpose government would be included in the statewide transportation planning and programming processes. The regulations required that the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) develop a documented process before December 2003 and that it be presented to a representative group of local officials for comment before January 2004. Caltrans presented the draft process to the Rural Counties Task Force (RCTF) at their November 23, 2003 meeting followed by a 60-day comment period. The procedure was finalized, adopted, and sent to FWHA/FTA in February 2004.

The Final Rule further requires that the state review and solicit comments regarding the effectiveness of the consultation process from non-metropolitan local officials and other interested parties for a period of not less than 60 days within two years of implementation, and thereafter, every five years. In accordance with this requirement, Caltrans presented the existing consultation process to the RCTF in November of 2005, and again on November 19, 2010.

Enclosed for your review and comment is the existing consultation process that was developed in coordination with the appropriate divisions and offices within Caltrans, as defined by FHWA and FTA. Please submit any comments to Tyler Monson by January 19, 2011. If you have any questions, please contact Tyler Monson at (916) 653-8699, or tyler.monson@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Garth Hopkins,
Chief, Office of Regional and Interagency Planning

DRAFT

November, 2010

California Department of Transportation
Non-Metropolitan Local Official Consultation Process

Introduction

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has developed these procedures in compliance with 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 450.212, regarding State consultation with non-metropolitan local officials in the statewide transportation planning and programming process. The CFR states, "*The State shall provide for non-metropolitan local official participation. The State shall have a documented process(es) that is separate and discrete from the public involvement process for consulting with non-metropolitan local officials representing units of general purpose local government and/or local officials with responsibility for transportation that provides an opportunity for their participation in the statewide transportation planning process and development of the statewide transportation improvement program.*" The Regulations further require that non-metropolitan local officials review the documented process on or before February 24, 2004, two years following, and every five years thereafter.

Caltrans uses the following consultation processes in statewide transportation planning and programming.

Regional Planning

- California statute establishes Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPAs) in non-metropolitan areas, which are similar in structure and responsibility to federally recognized Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).
- Twenty-six RTPAs are considered rural, which generally cover single counties. Imperial County Transportation Commission is rural in nature, but is considered to be part of the SCAG region.
- The purpose of these agencies is to coordinate planning and programming to ensure cooperative development of the transportation system. Caltrans works with local officials and RTPA Boards to program state highway projects in the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) and the Interregional Transportation Improvement Program (ITIP).
- The annual Overall Work Program (OWP) includes work elements directly related to Regional, System and Mass Transportation Planning efforts. The OWP sets forth the planning activities that each RTPA will conduct during the year. In conjunction with the Overall Work Program Agreement (OWPA), the OWP constitutes the annual funding contract between the state and the RTPA for state planning funds. Caltrans works with the RTPA staff to develop the OWP work elements and budget. All OWPs in rural counties are reviewed and approved by each RTPA's governing board. Development of the OWP is a vehicle for coordination between Caltrans and the RTPAs.

- The significant planning product of the RTPAs is the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). These documents are directed at the achievement of a coordinated and balanced regional transportation system, including mass transportation, highway, railroad, maritime, and aviation facilities. The plans are action oriented and pragmatic, considering both the ten and twenty year planning horizon.
- FTA 5304, FHWA Partnership Planning, and CA Regional Blueprint grants are made available to RTPAs in order to perform planning activities such as improve modeling capacity, perform transit studies, administer training, and create internship opportunities. Caltrans gives guidance to non-metropolitan agencies during the application process and also issues feedback in the event that a grant application is not chosen for funding.
- Caltrans Headquarters regional planning primarily consults with local officials statewide through the Rural Counties Task Force (RCTF) and works cooperatively with RTPAs through the 12 Caltrans Districts statewide. The Districts consult with local officials on a daily basis statewide through the RTPAs, planning advisory committees and board meetings.

System Planning

- Caltrans is responsible under State statutes for carrying out long-term state highway system planning to identify future highway improvements in consultation with transportation planning agencies, county transportation commissions, counties and cities.
- The system planning consultation process for the counties that are not within the area of a MPO is addressed in a similar manner to that of the MPOs but on a scale applicable to the complexity of the area and issues unique to the region. The basic components of the non-metropolitan consultation process and primary system planning documents related to it are described below.
- System Planning is comprised of three primary documents, 1) Route or Transportation Corridor Reports (RCR/TCR), 2) Transportation System Development Programs (TSDP) and 3) District System Management Plans (DSMP). Corridor studies provide in depth analyses of specific mobility problems in a corridor or route segment and recommend solutions.
- Route Concept Reports – the route concept report identifies current operating conditions, future deficiencies, concept level of service for the roads, and the concept for improving the state highway route to address current and future traffic, non-motorized, modal and other transportation aspects on or adjacent to the route. The local elected officials of cities, counties and the RTPAs are consulted in development of the reports from the initial stages of preliminary information gathering to the final document. Depending upon the nature of the route the report updates are initiated through town hall meetings or briefings to the various local governmental entities of which the elected officials are council and board members.

- Transportation System Development Programs – TSDPs identify a reasonable, comprehensive, and effective range of transportation improvements on state highways. It also identifies modal categories, strategies and actions, and demand and system management options that improve mobility. Identifying the projects and related strategies and actions needed by a route and corridor to improve mobility, this "listing" is Caltrans' "owner/operator" opinion of route and corridor needs that is used in discussions with regional and local partners for priority setting for concepts that are recommended to go into more refined studies, into regional transportation plans and onto project scoping and commitment of funding for projects. For strategies and actions, the listing is Caltrans' recommendations for collaborative work with regional and local agencies primarily in the area of voluntary access control, growth management and other local development issues.
- District System Management Plans – DSMPs present Caltrans' vision, goals and objectives for the district's comprehensive transportation system as both the "owner/operator" of the state highway system and as the partner with other regional, local and modal agencies in planning and operating transportation systems for improved mobility and quality of life. The Plans communicate to regional agencies, local elected officials and the larger public Caltrans' overall and integrated plans for transportation. Plans are developed in consultation with regional and local agencies and modal operators and serve as a strategic document for continuing collaboration in sustained transportation improvement.
- Corridor Studies – the studies are done either through Caltrans itself or by the regional transportation planning agencies. In either case the studies are coordinated across agencies and are guided by a policy and technical committee of which the State, transportation planning agency and members of the cities and counties staff are members. The study alternatives and recommendations are provided to the local elected officials in development stages for comment, potential redirection, and for final acceptance during the study process. Most corridor studies also have a public participation component for which the elected officials may take an active role for their representative area and concerns of constituents.
- Corridor System Management Plans – Corridor system management plans (CSMPs) are tools for managing and operating urban freeway corridors across jurisdictions and modes for the highest sustained throughput of people and freight. The plans are based upon performance measurement, intensive evaluation of technical data, and identification of the causes of congestion on the corridor. Comprehensive corridor analysis is performed and models are developed to test multiple improvement scenarios. The analysis assists in determining the most effective mix of projects, strategies, and actions that will restore mobility and preserve mobility gains in the corridor. These improvements become a plan of action for prioritizing funding from multiple sources (federal, state, and local).

Programming

- In California, the state and federal requirements for transportation programming have been integrated into a sequential process as shown in Appendix A.
- The seven types of documents which serve as the primary building blocks for the Federal Transportation Improvement Programs (FTIPs) and the Federal Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (FSTIP) are: the CTP, the Ten-Year State Highway Operation and Protection Plan (SHOPP), the State Highway Operation Protection Plan (SHOPP), the Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan, the RTPs, the RTIPs, and the ITIP. Note the ITIP and the RTIPs together form the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).
- For the FSTIP, consultation with local governments and public involvement occurs early in the process during the development an adoption of the documents, which serve as the building blocks of the FSTIP.
- The policy decisions on transportation planning and programming by state, regional, and local government officials are made during the development and adoption of these seven basic planning and programming documents.
- As these documents are developed, draft documents are formally circulated and comments are solicited, proposed final documents are circulated and public hearings or meetings are conducted prior to adoption or approval.
- Development and adoption of the State rural non MPO FTIP is based on incorporation of the projects from the above documents into the FSTIP.

Statewide Planning

- Caltrans is enhancing the statewide transportation planning process through the development of a statewide transportation blueprint focused on interregional travel needs. This California Interregional Blueprint (Interregional Blueprint) will address existing federal and state law like NEPA and CEQA, Senate Bill 375 and Senate Bill 391, by directing funding paths towards planning practices that integrate transportation, land use and environmental concerns & issues.
- This Interregional Blueprint will address these issues while articulating the vision for a statewide integrated multimodal transportation system needed to achieve the AB 32 greenhouse gas emission targets by: integrating statewide modal plans; building upon regional transportation plans and regional blueprint plans; and providing the modeling tools needed to evaluate the impact of the statewide transportation system on greenhouse gas emissions.
- The Interregional Blueprint when fully developed will become the foundation that enhances the 2015 update to the State's next long-range transportation plan, the California Transportation Plan 2040 (CTP 2040). SB 391 also requires that the CTP be updated every five years thereafter.
- The Interregional Blueprint and CTP are developed in cooperation with non-metropolitan RTPA's by:

- Promoting early and continuous consultation with non-metropolitan local officials primarily through the RCTF, which is comprised of representatives from each of California's non-metropolitan RTPAs.
- In accordance with the federal requirements of Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), advising non-metropolitan local officials that this information is continuously available electronically on the California Interregional Blueprint Web Portal to members who want to participate in ongoing developments of these efforts.
- Inviting representatives from the RCTF, League of California Cities and California State Association of Counties to participate on technical and policy advisory committees.
- Consulting with local officials when planning public meetings and workshops, and when conducting focus groups and surveys within their jurisdiction (Caltrans conducted a focus group in Redding on May 21, 2009 to discuss issues facing rural California).
- Seeking guidance from non-metropolitan local officials on transportation issues specific to non-metropolitan areas (results of the earlier focus group were presented in a follow-on CIB stakeholder workshop with non-metropolitan local officials in Redding on March 17, 2010, that provided a validation of rural issues).

Rail

- Every other year, the Division of Rail, pursuant to Section 14036 of the California Government Code, prepares a ten-year California State Rail Plan. The California Transportation Commission (CTC), RTPAs, the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Agency (LOSSAN), the San Joaquin Valley Rail Committee, the Capital Corridor Joint Powers Authority, and the North Coast Rail Coordinating Council review the plan. These boards include local officials.
- The Division of Rail works with affected local agencies, both metropolitan and non-metropolitan agencies when conducting workshops, public meetings, and surveys within their jurisdictions.

Aeronautics

- The Division of Aeronautics develops the California Aviation System Plan (CASP) in compliance with California Public Utilities Code 21701, which directs the Caltrans to develop a plan in conjunction with the RTPAs.
- The CASP shall include, but not be limited to, every California Airport designated in the federal National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS).
- One of the mandated elements of the CASP is the development of a ten-year capital improvement program, which is divided into two five-year phases for each airport, based on the airport's adopted master plan.

- The projects included in the Aeronautics Program's Capitol Improvement Program (CIP) come from the regional planning agencies based on the region's RTP. The CIP is not incorporated into the STIP, but is approved by the CTC.
- The CASP also includes a System Needs Assessment for general aviation airports. This document aids airport sponsors by recommending needed safety and capacity improvement projects that, if completed, would benefit not only the airport but the overall system of general aviation airports in the State.

Mass Transportation

- Division of Mass Transportation (DMT) staff work directly with metropolitan and non-metropolitan transportation planning agencies to develop and program STIP and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Sections 5310, 5311, 5316, and 5317 Program transit projects.
- Division and District Mass Transportation staff maintains an open and on-going consultative relationship with non-metropolitan transportation agencies, including conducting stakeholder outreach, FTA grant workshops and regular participation at the Rural Counties Task Force meetings on transit related items.
- In accordance with state law and as documented in the STIP guidelines, rural as well as the urban planning agencies make the Regional Improvement Program programming and funding decisions for local STIP projects. However, consultation with the Caltrans occurs during development of the RTIPs and the subsequent FTA Sections 5310, 5311, 5316 and 5317 program of projects.
- The Division of Programming considers DMT comments on transit projects and transit-related policies before compiling the RTIPs into the STIP and presenting it to the CTC for approval.

Conclusion

Caltrans will evaluate the consultation process at least once every five years as mandated by the Federal Regulations followed by a review and comment period of 60 days. Caltrans intends to work closely with the Rural Counties Task Force to ensure that consultation between the State and non-metropolitan local officials remains an efficient and flexible process that meets the needs of both local and state officials.

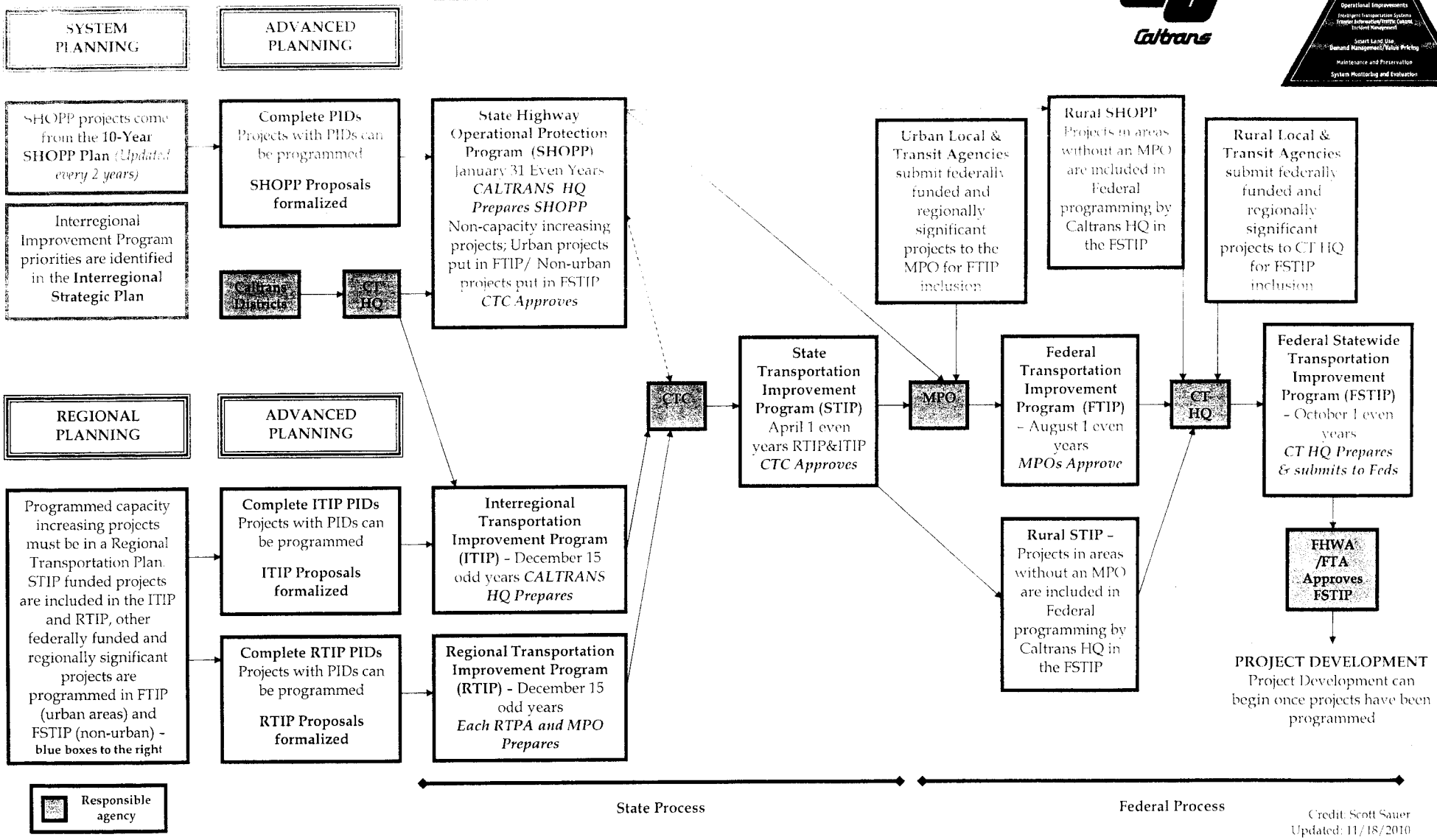
Appendices

Appendix A – Programming Process

Appendix B – Caltrans Organization Chart

Appendix C – Caltrans Contact Information for Non-Metropolitan Local Official Consultation

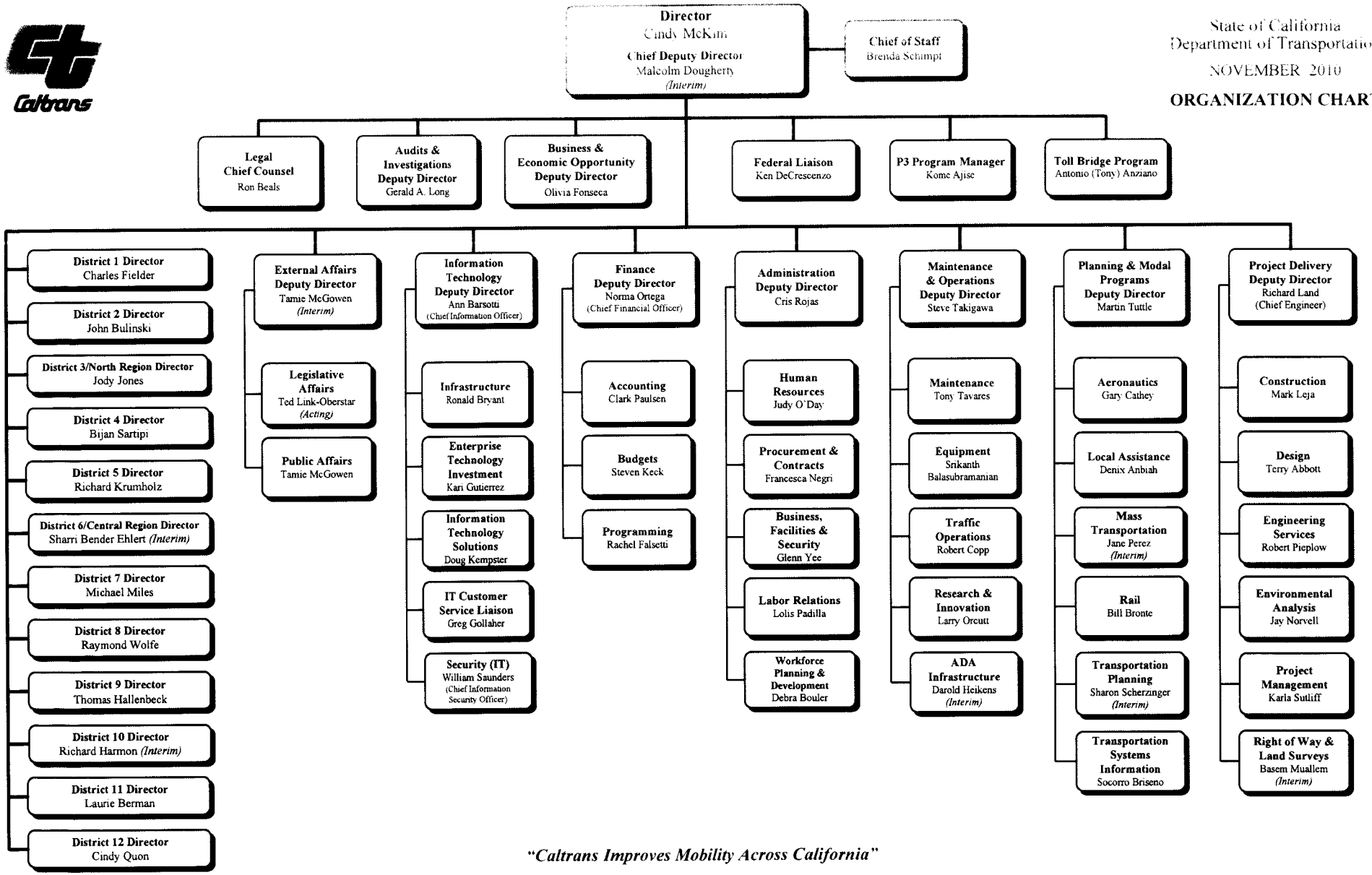
PROGRAMMING PROCESS



Credit: Scott Sauer
Updated: 11/18/2010

State of California
Department of Transportation
NOVEMBER 2010

ORGANIZATION CHART



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Appendix C
Contact information for Non-Metropolitan Local Official Consultation

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