

State of California
Business, Transportation and Housing Agency
Department of Transportation

PROGRAM AMENDMENTS
STIP Amendment 00S-058
Notice Item
CTC Meeting: November 7-8, 2001

Prepared By:
Wayne A. Lewis
Acting Chief
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PROPOSED

Agenda Item: 2.1b.(1)

Original Signed By

ROBERT L. GARCIA
Chief Financial Officer
November 1, 2001

STIP AMENDMENT 00S-058 NOTICE

SUMMARY

This amendment programs \$627,000 in Regional Improvement Program (RIP) funds from San Bernardino County's Unprogrammed Share Balance to purchase and install capital equipment for the San Bernardino County Call Box Program in FY 2002-03 and 2003-04.

RECOMMENDATION

The San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG) is requesting this amendment. While the Commission has rejected previous requests to use STIP funds for call box programs, the Department has prepared this amendment at SANBAG's request.

RESOLUTION

Resolved, that the California Transportation Commission (CTC) revise the 2000 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) at the end of the 30-day notice period as follows:

Adds:

Project Information								
County:	CT District:	PPNO:	EA:	Element:	Const Year:	PM Back	PM Ahead	Route/Corridor
San Bernardino	08	0000P	SBSAFE	LA	2002-03 2003-04	--	--	210/30 Various
Project Title:	Call Boxes for new 210/30 freeway and for upgrading/retrofitting the San Bernardino Call Box System							
Sponsor:	San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG)							
Implementing Agency:	San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG)							
RTPA/CTC:	San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG)							
Location:	San Bernardino County – along a 15-mile segment of the 210/30 freeway from the Los Angeles County-line to Sierra Avenue in Fontana							
Description:	Install call boxes and replace/update existing boxes.							

STIP Programming – RIP							(Dollars in Thousands)	
Component	PRIOR	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004		Total	
PA&ED								
PS&E								
R/W SUP								
CON SUP								
R/W								
CON				\$313	\$314		\$627	
TOTAL				\$313	\$314		\$627	

BACKGROUND

This amendment programs \$627,000 in Regional Improvement Program (RIP) funds from San Bernardino County’s Unprogrammed Share Balance to purchase and install capital equipment for the San Bernardino County Call Box Program in FY 2002-03 and 2003-04.

The Call Box Program is funded entirely through a dedicated \$1 Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) fee that each San Bernardino County resident pays when their vehicle is registered. Over the years, this DMV revenue source has not increased at the same pace as population or traffic congestion, nor has this revenue source kept up with inflation and increasing program costs. San Bernardino County is the largest county in the nation with more than 1,656 miles of highway, and yet neither the population nor the DMV registration fees adequately support the current county-wide call box system.

The San Bernardino County Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE) is now being challenged with installing call boxes along the new I-210 freeway. In order to keep the call box system at its current level, and to not degrade the system any further, funding for new call boxes is needed for the San Bernardino Call Box Program. The 210/30 freeway is the only state highway in San Bernardino County currently without call boxes, which are used to assist motorists in trouble, and are utilized by the California Highway Patrol and other emergency services.

ATTACHMENT

STIP AMENDMENT 00S-058

Location Map



08-San Bernardino-210/30
PPNO 0000P

Location: In San Bernardino County - At various locations along a 15-mile segment of State Highway 210/30 freeway from the Los Angeles County-line to Sierra Avenue in Fontana

Description: Install call boxes and replace/update existing ones



San Bernardino Associated Governments

*San Bernardino County Transportation Commission
San Bernardino County Transportation Authority
San Bernardino County Congestion Management Agency
Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies*

472 North Arrowhead Avenue, San Bernardino, California 92401-1421
(909) 884-8276 FAX: (909) 885-4407

October 19, 2001

REC'D BY CTC

OCT 23 2001

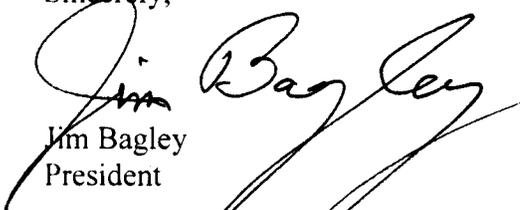
Mr. Allen Lawrence
Chair, California Transportation Commission
P.O. Box 7948
Canoga Park, CA 91309-7948

Dear Mr. Lawrence:

Attached is information relative to the San Bernardino Associated Government's (SANBAG) request for a STIP amendment to program \$627,000 from SANBAG's current uncommitted STIP Regional Share, to fund the purchase and installation of capital equipment for the San Bernardino County Call Box Program

Thank you for the opportunity to bring this very important request before the Commission and we look forward to discussing this item with you and the Commissioners at your November meeting in San Diego.

Sincerely,


Jim Bagley
President

Cc: CTC Commissioners
Diane Eidam, CTC Executive Director

ATTACHMENT

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Overview – SANBAG's STIP Amendment Request

Request

SANBAG requests that the California Transportation Commission (CTC) approve \$627,000 in uncommitted STIP Regional Share funding for the purchase and installation of capital equipment for the San Bernardino County call box program. This funding would be used for call box installation along State Route (SR) 210 freeway, a new 28-mile freeway in the County. By approving this request, the Commission would be recognizing:

1. that call boxes are an integral part of the highway system, along with Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and traffic management applications, as call boxes also alleviate non-recurring congestion on California highways;
2. that there is an inherent inequity in the San Bernardino call box funding mechanism (\$1 Department of Motor Vehicle or DMV registration fee) because of very large disparities in the ratio of State Highway miles to vehicle registrations fees;
3. that the current DMV fee is incapable of achieving the initial objective: a Statewide call box program (without the infusion of any additional funds to the program); and
4. that the current SANBAG request is vastly different from the previous Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) STIP request for funding for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements on their existing call boxes.

Reduction in Current Program

The San Bernardino Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE) program was approved in 1987. {Note that for the purposes of this discussion, the San Bernardino SAFE is synonymous with SANBAG.} The call box program began installation of its backbone system in 1990 and at its peak, the program consisted of 1,708 call boxes throughout the County. The program currently consists of 1,638 call boxes, covers 1,656 highway miles on 19 highway corridors and since inception, has assisted over 1.2 million motorists. Reasons for the reduction in the program are explained more fully below.

Current Funding is Not Adequate for San Bernardino County

The current funding mechanism is not and never will be adequate or appropriate for this type of a program, because the need for call boxes on a State Highway is generally unrelated to vehicle registration fees collected in its vicinity. The number of call boxes installed within a county should be determined from highway miles, congestion levels, and accident data, not from the number of registered vehicles within that county. Because of the inadequacy of the current funding source, 25 counties in the State do not have call box programs. On the other hand, many of the 33 established call box programs have huge reserves/surpluses, and a minority of the established call box agencies are barely able to sustain their programs, much less accumulate huge reserves. For SANBAG, the revenue is insufficient to provide for new call boxes along a

newly constructed segment of SR-210 freeway in San Bernardino County. As an alternative to a one time infusion of funding (such as the STIP request) SANBAG could remove call boxes from non-urban highways and place them on the SR-210 freeway. However, the cost to remove call boxes from other County freeways and place them on this new segment, is not only costly, but also degrades the entire system. Note that the SR 210 freeway segment in operation and the other portions under construction has been funded not only from the STIP, but from SANBAG's half-cent sales' tax measure, Measure I. Unlike most counties within California, all of San Bernardino's STIP funds have been allocated towards the State Highway system, except for a small portion dedicated towards transit capital programs.

Call Boxes are an Integral Part of the Highway System

SANBAG's use of STIP funds has been well in line with the intent of CTC guidelines and Senate Bill (SB) 45. We would find it confusing that the CTC has approved the use of STIP funds for off-system arterial road maintenance, and would not approve the expenditure of STIP funds on call boxes. Therefore, SANBAG's request to use a small portion of STIP funds for call boxes (which support the highway system) is well in line with the desire of the CTC and SB 45. We hope that the CTC will agree with the SANBAG Board, that the State's call box programs are an integral part of the State Highway system. We believe that by denying the SANBAG request, would send a signal that the CTC does not view the call box program as important to the State Highway System. Call boxes mitigate non-recurring congestion, in a similar manner to the freeway service patrol program (FSP - funded by Caltrans), Transportation Management Centers (TMCs) and other ITS strategies supported and funded by Caltrans, the CTC and SB 45.

Previous CTC Action

We understand that the only prior request to the CTC has come from the MTA, as they requested STIP funding to mitigate a settlement from an ADA lawsuit. Note that MTA requested STIP funds for ADA improvements to existing call boxes, whereas SANBAG is requesting STIP funds for direct capital expenditures for new call boxes. Therefore the prior precedent set by the CTC with the MTA request does not apply here.

San Bernardino County's Unusual Circumstances

As stated before, SANBAG is in an unusual situation in regards to the call box program, in that we have the most highway miles in the State and an inadequate DMV revenue base to support such a program. The current call box statute does not prohibit State or Federal funds from being used on the call box system, as the call box system was always intended as a support program to the State Highway system. One question before you today is: "Are call boxes an eligible STIP expense and considered an important component in keeping the State Highways running smoothly and congestion free? If the answer is yes, then we believe the request should be approved without question.

With so many highway miles in San Bernardino County and given the current revenue source, unless there is a one-time infusion to the system, SANBAG cannot keep up with all the current programmatic demands. SANBAG has taken every possible measure to reduce program costs and to increase revenues. These steps have resulted in program reductions on the order of \$265,000 per year.

San Bernardino Compared to Other SAFEs

In order to raise enough revenue to have comparable services to other urban county call box programs, San Bernardino County would have to increase its \$1 DMV fee to almost \$10 per registered vehicle. If San Bernardino call box program had this kind of disproportionate funding level, then SANBAG would be able to place 5.3 call boxes per highway mile compared to the current 1 call box per highway mile. The San Bernardino system would then be able to build over 8,800 call boxes, as well as be able to fund FSP and provide other kinds of TSM support like many of the SAFEs are able to provide with their vast surpluses. To look at this problem in another manner, the San Bernardino DMV generates on average \$890 per highway mile per year for the call box program. Other urban counties' revenue per highway mile ranges from \$1,774 up to \$8,206. Please refer to Attachment A which demonstrates this disparity in revenue.

Out of County Motorists Also Benefit from this Program

Only 1.7 million of the 16 million Southern California residents reside in San Bernardino County. As SANBAG removes call boxes and degrades the system, all motorists suffer and no longer benefit from the program. Out of State and out of County motorists, as well as truckers often use Interstate (I) 15 on their way to Las Vegas, the I-10 to Arizona and SRs 18, 38, 138 and 330 to the mountain resorts. In fact, most of the San Bernardino County call boxes are placed in rural settings (59%) and therefore greatly benefit non-County motorists. Should SANBAG continue to degrade the system, the Board would continue to remove call boxes from rural segments, which would in turn most impact out-of-County motorists.

Summary

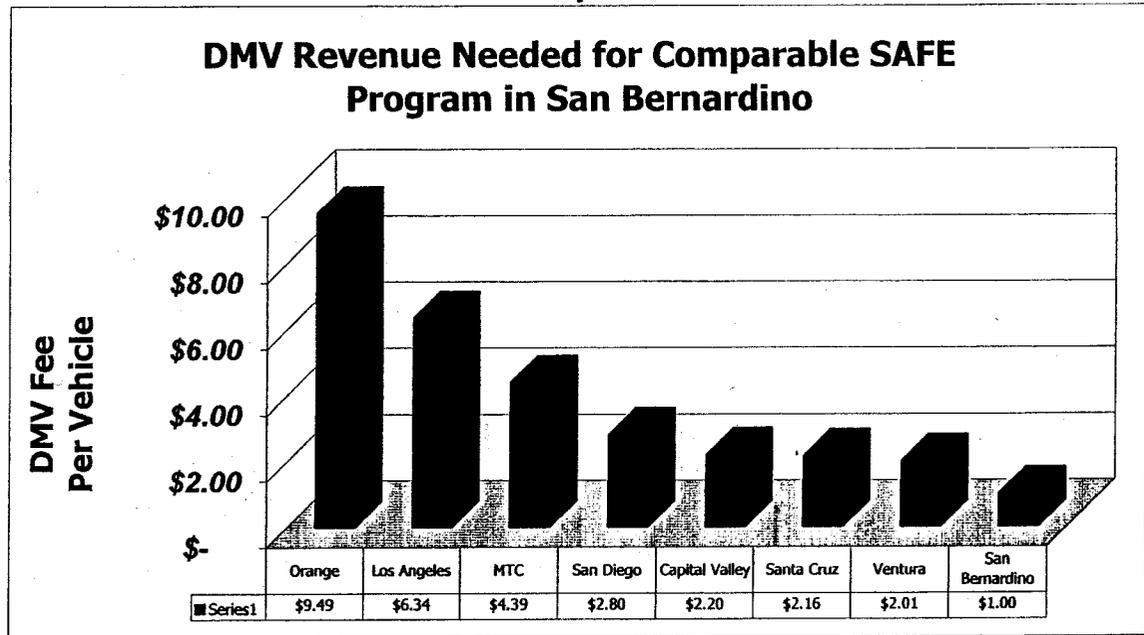
Based on these reasons, we respectfully request that you approve this amendment.

Graph 1

Column A: if San Bernardino were to build a call box program like these SAFEs, the \$1 DMV fee would have to be raised to this \$ amount in order to provide similar services.

Column B: as a result, if San Bernardino had the revenue generated from Column A, then these are the resulting number of call boxes which could be installed within San Bernardino County.

Column:	A	B
SAFE	Equivalent DMV Fee	Equivalent Call Boxes
Orange	\$ 9.49	8,801
Los Angeles	\$ 6.34	6,295
MTC	\$ 4.39	3,729
San Diego	\$ 2.80	3,465
Capital Valley	\$ 2.20	2,408
Santa Cruz	\$ 2.16	1,643
Ventura	\$ 2.01	2,497
San Bernardino	\$ 1.00	1,638



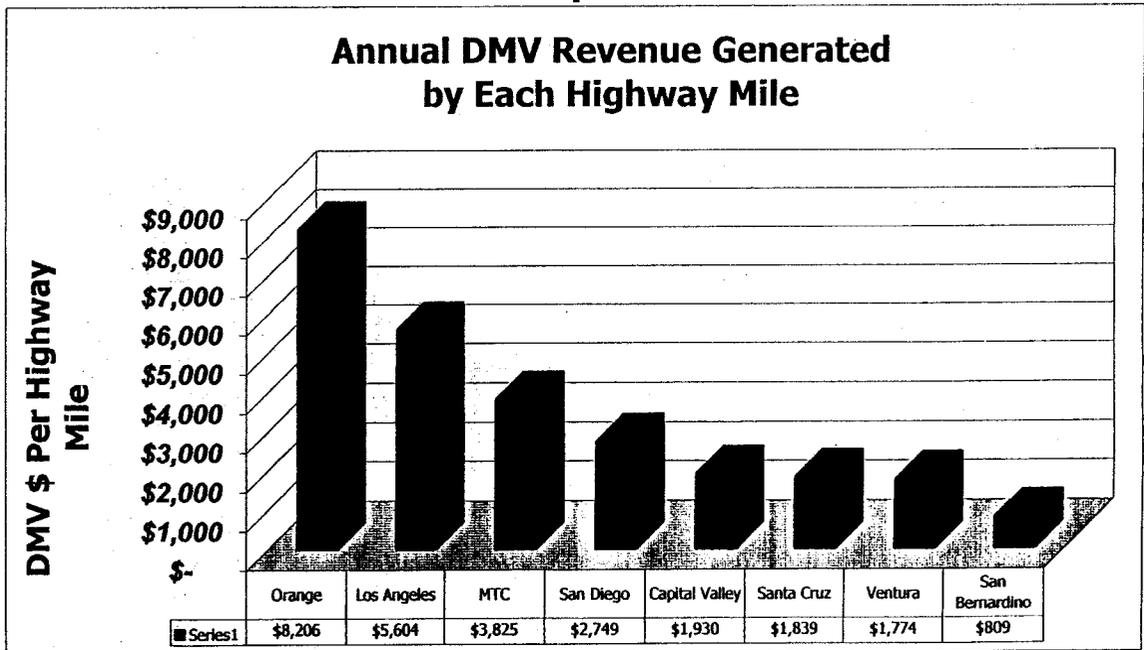
Graph 2

Column C: Approximate Calendar Year 2000 \$1 DMV Fee, based on DMV vehicle registration numbers.

Column D: State highway miles, per Caltrans' Transportation System Information Program, Figure 4, "Centerline Miles by County and Jurisdiction".

Column E: The average DMV fee generated by each highway mile within that county.

Column:	C	D	E
SAFE	Year 2000 DMV Revenue	Highway Miles	DMV \$ Per Hwy. Mile
Orange	\$ 2,245,199	274	\$ 8,206
Los Angeles	\$ 6,520,134	1,163	\$ 5,604
MTC	\$ 5,763,628	1,507	\$ 3,825
San Diego	\$ 2,273,429	827	\$ 2,749
Capital Valley	\$ 1,711,706	887	\$ 1,930
Santa Cruz	\$ 227,345	124	\$ 1,839
Ventura	\$ 654,005	369	\$ 1,774
San Bernardino	\$ 1,265,869	1,565	\$ 809



Additional Information on SANBAG's STIP Amendment

Background

When the California call box programs were created in the mid 1980's, all supporters of the program agreed that a Statewide motorist aid program was an ultimate goal. However, many issues arose as to why neither Caltrans nor the California Highway Patrol (CHP) could or should undertake a program of this magnitude. In the end, it was primarily the transportation commissions who stepped up to fund, implement, and manage the newly created call box programs. Various funding strategies were discussed as mechanisms to fund the program. At the time, it was believed that a \$1 levy on vehicle registration fees county by county would be sufficient, especially for the more urban counties who were the principal proponents of the program.

The San Bernardino call box program began installation in 1990; however, by 1998, the program began to experience fiscal and programmatic issues. As a result, SANBAG recognizes that the Statewide program:

1. has some inherent issues based on how the revenue was derived,
2. has been implemented county by county, resulting in a lack of an economy of scale, and
3. has been implemented based on a vendor market which has no competition.

Therefore, the following revenue and expense issues contribute to the situation that SANBAG finds itself in today.

Revenue Issues:

1. The current \$1 DMV fee is based on the number of registered vehicles in each county. This fee has no relationship to the congestion or the number of highway miles within each county, or accident data for each highway segment within that county. Therefore, counties with a large number of highway miles and relatively low registration fee revenue base, are either unable to implement a call box program, or the funds over time have proven to be insufficient to maintain the program. Conversely, many of the highly urbanized call box counties with low highway miles and high registration fees have deposited millions of dollars in SAFE revenue surpluses and are unable to expend the funds as allowed by the call box statute. For example, San Bernardino County has 1,656 highway miles, but annual DMV fee receipts of \$1.4 million. Orange County only has 274 highway miles, but because of its dense population, brings in over \$2.2 million in DMV revenue to maintain 1,470 call boxes. This has resulted in Orange County surpluses in the millions, and a San Bernardino program barely able to sustain its 1,638 call boxes.
2. The DMV fee has not grown proportionally with other revenue sources, or even kept up with population growth within the State. In fact, there were several years in which the DMV revenue actually declined, as vehicle registration fees

increased, and the requirements became more stringent (showing proof of insurance at time of renewing registration). As a result, residents stopped registering their vehicles therefore stopped contributing to the call box program, resulting in declining revenue.

3. The \$1 DMV fee only benefits the urban counties and results in a disproportionate revenue source. Currently, it is primarily the urban counties (excluding Fresno) or multi-county SAFEs (which includes rural counties) which have established call box programs. Of the 58 counties Statewide, 33 counties have established call box programs. It is highly unlikely that the other 25 counties will be able to establish a call box program, due to the fact that the DMV revenue base is inadequate given rural counties' disproportionate highway miles to their low population base.
4. SANBAG and other SAFEs have attempted to remedy the revenue situation through legislation and possible funding coordination with Caltrans. In the spring of 2000, SANBAG introduced Assembly Bill (AB) 2137 – Longville, seeking a one time funding commitment from the State to assist those rural counties who have established call box programs, as well as assist the other 25 counties to establish new call box programs. This Bill died in Assembly Appropriations for many reasons. But the primary reason was due to lack of support from a few of the established urban SAFEs, which also wanted an allocation for their programs and felt that the Bill was unfair.
5. At times, it has been suggested to amend the call box statute, to permit SAFEs to levy an additional \$1 DMV fee, for those SAFEs where the current fee is insufficient. Note that the DMV is unable to levy fees in any increment except in \$1 increments, due to their current computer and billing structure. So if the fee were increased, it would have to be in \$1 increments. The SANBAG Board has taken the position that an additional \$1 levy in certain counties is unfair to those residents, since residents from other counties, as well as out of state commuters benefit from the call box program. As a result, the Board believes that residents who reside in rural areas of the State should not be burdened with an additional fee because they happen to live in a county with many highway miles. Therefore, the SANBAG Board has directed Staff to continue to look at other ways to sustain the program.

Expense Issues:

1. The vendor who installs and maintains the call boxes, has over time acquired other firms with similar products. As a result, the SAFEs have found themselves having to sole source with only one vendor for these services. As this vendor's prices rise year after year, the SAFEs have no other options except to continue to contact with this vendor. In San Bernardino's case, we have had to reduce the activities that this vendor provides in order to stay within budget and to sustain

the program, thereby resulting in a decrease of services to the San Bernardino call box program.

2. Many of the urban call box programs have been in operation for over ten years, and the call box components are beginning to malfunction and need to be replaced. In addition, some of these components are obsolete and cannot be repaired or replaced. Many counties with DMV surpluses have undertaken a retrofit program. But again, for counties such as San Bernardino, this program is on hold because of lack of funding to implement such a far-reaching retrofit program. Note that retrofitting the entire call box system to replace obsolete components was never a factor considered when the program was created or the revenue derived.
3. Other advances in technology may require a total change-out of certain call box components, for cellular reasons. This is due to the fact that analogue cell sites at some point in the near future may be obsolete and the cellular service providers may be unwilling to continue to sustain analogue cell sites. Already, cellular service providers are pressuring SAFEs to switch their systems to digital and only those SAFEs with surplus funds have begun to undertake this program. Again, these costs were never anticipated or accounted for when the program began.
4. The older call box systems were designed and installed prior to ADA standards. In fact, neither the State nor Caltrans have solidified solutions to assisting persons with disabilities to accessing the call boxes. Yet the SAFEs are under public and legal pressure to retrofit the call box system to meet ADA standards. Again, the costs to retrofit the call box system were never accounted for when the program was developed, and the costs to retrofit the call box system can range in the millions of dollars for larger systems.
5. Over time, Caltrans has also changed some of its design standards and have determined that initial designs approved in the late 1980's for call box sites, may not be as desirable as other current designs. Therefore, Caltrans has required the SAFEs to inventory their current system and has encouraged the SAFEs to retrofit the system to improve safety. Again, these costs can range in the millions of dollars for larger systems and were never anticipated when the program was developed.

Let me highlight that San Bernardino County is in the worst of situations with the above issues, and SANBAG has taken drastic measures to sustain the program given the insufficiency of the funding. The aggressive measures that the SANBAG Board has taken to continue the program within the current funding mechanism, include:

1. Aggressively pursuing claims from motorists who knock down call boxes and retrieving revenue so that knocked-down call boxes can be reinstalled.

2. Transitioning the call answering function from the CHP to a more cost-effective private entity (this joint project is currently underway in San Bernardino and Riverside counties and the transition will be complete by March 2002).
3. Working with the CHP to revise State Guidelines, so that SAFEs which do not use CHP for call taking services, do not have to reimburse the CHP for dispatching services.
4. Increasing spacing of call boxes along highways to exceed recommended Caltrans' minimums. As a result, in many highly congested urban settings within San Bernardino County, call boxes are being placed between 1/2 and 1 mile (Caltrans' Guideline is between 1/4 mile and 1/2 mile), and along San Bernardino County rural highways, call box placing is exceeding 2 miles (Caltrans' Guideline is between 1 and 2 miles).
5. When call boxes are removed due to highway construction or as motorists knock them down, SANBAG is not reinstalling those boxes, as a cost savings measure, thereby continuing to degrade the overall system.
6. Aggressively negotiating vendor contracts, to reduce costs as well as provide the minimum amount of service needed to operate a backbone system.

Where Do We Go From Here?

As a result of the above measures, SANBAG has reduced annual operating expenses by \$265,000 per year. Yet, these measures are still not enough to maintain a backbone system in the largest county in the Country. As we stand today, the SAFE incurs annual operating expenses of \$1.2 million; however, new revenue generated from the DMV revenue source is estimated to be \$1.4 million for FY 2001/2002. The SAFE currently has a fund balance of \$900,000, which has slowly been accumulating since program inception in 1987. Eventually, the fund balance will increase so that the SAFE can address some of the above concerns. However, given the one time demands placed on the system identified above, these one-time costs are estimated to cost the SAFE between \$3 and \$5 million.

For these reasons and more, SANBAG comes before you to bring these issues to the attention of the State, to once again highlight the inequality of the current funding source, and to request that the State approve the use of SANBAG's Regional STIP funding towards the call box program, so that this program may move forward and that the newest freeway segment in the State is not underserved.

Description of STIP Request

Should STIP funds be allocated to the San Bernardino Call Box program, those funds would go towards the construction and installation of 75 call boxes along a 15-mile segment of the SR-210 freeway, which covers seven segments from the Los Angeles

County line to Sierra Avenue in Fontana. Call boxes will be spaced between one half mile to one mile on both sides of the freeway. The project would be completed by the end of FY 2002/2003 and would total \$314,000.

The other uses of the funds would be towards upgrading and retrofitting the current system, which could include the construction and installation of up to 75 call boxes which are knocked down and destroyed by passing motorists or to place call boxes into areas which now have cellular service. Again, these costs are estimated to be \$313,000 and would be completed by the end of FY 2003/2004.

From our research, construction and installation of call boxes along State Highways is an eligible STIP expense. Call boxes are only used to support State Highway operations, they mitigate non-recurring traffic congestion and improve safety by removing disabled vehicles in a timely manner off of the highways. In addition, even though the intent of the enabling call box legislation was to make the program self sufficient, the legislation never prohibited other sources of funding from being used on the programs.

Therefore, the total STIP request is \$627,000. This portion of the SR-210 freeway travels through the communities of Upland, Rancho Cucamonga and Fontana. In addition, the SR-210 corridor is used by residents of many other communities, as they travel through San Bernardino county to their work place, as well as recreational destinations.

Alternatives

Should the request be denied, then SANBAG would have to continue to degrade the existing call box network by removing call boxes from other parts of the system and placing them sporadically on the SR-210 freeway. Over the past two years, SANBAG has removed call boxes from the non-urbanized portions of the county (primarily I-40) because these call boxes are least used and are not in congested areas. However, these rural segments are more often traveled by out of county residents on their way to recreational centers, and these corridors are also heavily used by the trucking industry. Removing call boxes from the non-urbanized segments would be the most likely alternative, so that call boxes could be placed along the more congested SR-210 corridor. This is not a cost-effective way to deal with maintaining the system, as the cost to uninstall a call box on one freeway and then reinstall it on another freeway is approximately 60% of the cost to install a brand new call box. Therefore, many call boxes have to be removed and funds expended in order to make this alternative solution work.

CTC Recommendation of this Request

In discussions with CTC staff regarding this request, CTC references a request from the MTA in February 2000, requesting \$7.5 million in STIP funds for ADA improvements on their system of 4,500 call boxes. This request was brought forward due to a settlement from a lawsuit the MTA had agree to, to bring their call boxes into ADA compliance.

The CTC denied this request, because they did not want to set a precedent of using STIP funds as a way to mitigate ADA settlements or lawsuits. Note that the current request from SANBAG is of a vastly different nature from the prior MTA request. The current SANBAG request is to provide call box support along a new highway segment within the County, as opposed to the MTA request, which was to assist MTA with a court settlement brought about because of their non-compliance with the ADA. Therefore, the SANBAG request would not overturn the prior precedent set by the CTC, and the SANBAG request is of a vastly different nature.

Conclusion

SANBAG brings this request to the CTC to highlight many of the issues associated with maintaining the call box programs, as well as more importantly, to request that STIP funds be used to place new call boxes along needed highway segments in the San Bernardino county system.