

# Memorandum

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Subject: **VISION REPORT ON SAFETY ROADSIDE RESTS**

## **SUMMARY:**

This report describes a proposed vision and recommended action plan for the improvement of the Safety Roadside Rest Area (SRRA) system on California highways. As proposed, this would launch a program that will bring California's SRRA system up to a world-class standard and take maximum advantage of California's dynamic environment, technology, tourism, history, and culture. It builds upon the existing system, while taking advantage of the synergy and cost savings arising from making enhancements at the same time as meeting regulatory compliance requirements for accessibility. The California Department of Transportation (Department) envisions the system serving enhanced and multiple purposes in the future and will become:

- An even more essential part of California's traveler safety program, providing safe, attractive and comfortable locations for drivers to seek respite and rest, thereby reducing the number of drowsy and distracted drivers.
- A "welcome mat" for statewide and regional tourism, thereby enhancing the economy. This effort will be accomplished through close coordination with the California Travel and Tourism Commission (CTTC).
- An improved system for truck-stopping opportunities, thereby facilitating the safe, timely and efficient movement of goods.
- A showcase for maintainable, sustainable and "green" design, practices and technology, thereby demonstrating California's expanding commitment to environmental stewardship that is both cutting-edge and cost effective.
- A venue for travelers to garner useful information about their route, local attractions and businesses, and state and regional themes (historic, environmental, cultural, etc.), thereby enhancing the travelers' experience in California.
- A catalyst and a demonstration of partnerships among public and private entities, thereby benefiting all parties through greater public usage of the facilities and services.

**BACKGROUND:**

The existing SRRA system includes 87 units and serves over 100 million users annually. While currently serving essential functions, the rest areas are not being utilized to full potential as assets to the people of California and as expressions of California's forward-looking creativity. The Department and the Business Transportation and Housing Agency (BTH) propose to create a world-class SRRA system that continues to contribute to the Department's safety goals, but also provides greatly enhanced traveler services and facilities that promote regional/statewide tourism, improve statewide economic vitality, and highlight environmentally friendly design and management practices.

The Governor's Strategic Growth Plan and the resulting transportation bond infrastructure proposals offer unique opportunities for California to reduce traffic congestion, improve mobility, and more effectively coordinate regional transportation. The Department asserts that the SRRA system could become an integral component of efforts to meet these goals. Key to the successful implementation of this effort would be the development of partnerships with other public and private entities for enhancements and for capital and maintenance cost-sharing.

The Department has existing legislative authority (passed in 1984) to develop up to six new safety roadside rest areas funded through joint development with the private or public sectors. Until now, this authority has not been utilized. The intent of joint development at these new rest areas is to improve the quality of the rest area experience, improve services, support safe off-road truck parking, reduce maintenance expenditures, increase statewide and regional tourism, and enhance local economic vitality. The Department plans to pursue these joint development demonstration efforts at three rest areas in northern California and three in southern California.

Recommendations in this Vision report include:

- 1) Complete the restoration of existing safety roadside rest areas to comply with American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Cal/OSHA mandates (projected to cost \$136 million, programmed in SHOPP).
- 2) Make significant, additional enhancements to meet future user demand, entice more travelers into using the system, facilitate partnerships, and showcase innovative practices and technologies (projected to cost \$150 million, not yet programmed).
- 3) Promote the value of the SRRA as an integral part of California's safety program.
- 4) Update the 2000 SRRA Master Plan.
- 5) Expand and formalize partnerships for existing and new areas.
- 6) Develop and issue Requests for Proposal to pursue implementation of six new rest areas for which joint development authorization already exists in law.
- 7) Conduct ongoing evaluation of SRRA performance.
- 8) Investigate in-route truck parking capacity issues.
- 9) Update rest area design standards and guidelines to reflect current and projected user needs.
- 10) Promote California tourism on local and regional levels, in close coordination with CTTC.