

Report of the TA Citizens Advisory Committee

Meeting of October 3, 2023

COMMITTEE ACTION ITEMS

- Item 4: Consent Calendar items with split votes:
 - (4.d) TA Board Item 5.d - Authorize the Filing of an Application for TA Highway Program Funding and Adopt a Resolution in Support of the US 101/State Route 92 Area Improvements Project – Motion Passed 11-1
 - Sandra Lang asked whether the funding amount will be sufficient to see the project to completion. Staff confirmed that the funding amount is based on more detailed designs that have emerged and will be sufficient in combination with other previously committed funds.
 - Mike Swire asked how the project would provide congestion relief. Staff said the project will address operational and safety issues that will help reduce cut-through traffic impacting local streets from drivers avoiding the highway. As such, staff confirmed this project will not increase VMT.
 - Giuliano Carlini asked whether there would be tracking of VMT over time. Staff said no as the project is not increasing highway capacity. Mr. Carlini said he couldn't support the project without this.
 - (4.e) TA Board Item 5.e - Authorize the Filing of an Application for TA Highway Program Funding and Adopt a Resolution in Support of the US 101 Managed Lanes – North of I-380 Project - Motion Failed 7-5
 - Gus Mattammal said that the \$40MM cost for the design phase seemed high for only seven miles of highway. Staff said there are multiple structures that may need to be modified, which is the primary cost driver of the design costs.
 - Mr. Carlini asked why there was no opportunity for public input between the environmental phase completion and start of the project design. He urged more opportunity for public input. Staff confirmed that all three options were still on the table and that the public would be afforded the opportunity to weigh in during the EIR presentation at public meetings. Staff said that they will ask Caltrans to ensure that the project cost and schedule are realistic and that the project satisfies new sustainability and equity criteria.
 - Ms. Lang asked whether the design phases had been paid for. Staff said that they are approving up to the 50% maximum and that the money hadn't been spent. Cities and the public will have the opportunity to provide input during the design phase.
 - Mr. Swire asked whether the Board had an opportunity to change the resolution on which it was voting if it didn't support the presented design options. Staff said the Board could accept, reject, or amend/comment on the resolution.

- Mr. Swire asked for confirmation whether the design option, “Adding a Managed Lane,” involved widening the highway. Staff confirmed that this option would widen the highway from four to five lanes.
- Mr. Swire said that if the Board can influence the resolution and design options at this point, it should remove Option 1, which would widen the highway. He said another widening of 101 would be the worst possible environmental decision possible for San Mateo County as it will greatly increase the number of cars on the road. He said that transportation is responsible for 60% of greenhouse gas emissions in SM County and that 101, per a presentation given last month, is the busiest corridor in the County. He said that increasing the width of 101 by 25% could undo much of the positive GHG work that the County has done around electrification and other initiatives. He said that more cars mean more air pollution, especially in the low income and diverse neighborhoods adjacent to the highway, increasing childhood asthma. He also said that more cars on the highway means more cars driving through low income and diverse neighborhoods adjacent to the highway, increasing traffic violence in these communities. He cited the 101-onramp next to his kids’ school in San Mateo and the resulting frequency of injuries to kids who walk or bike to school. He said that widening highways has never proven to reduce congestion and that the public knows this. He said that a Smart Growth America study and his own unscientific NextDoor polling shows that most people believe that highway widening is a waste of money as it doesn’t improve congestion.
- Item 4: Consent Calendar items - the following items were approved unanimously:
 - (4.a) - Minutes of the CAC meeting of 9/5/23
 - (4.b) TA Board Item 5.b - Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2023
 - (4.c) TA Board Item 5.c - Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for the Period Ending August 31, 2023
 - Jeff Londer asked why sales tax revenues were down. Staff said that part of this was due to a timing issue. The TA receives funds two months in arrears, and this is trued up in the third month.
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 - (4.f) TA Board Item 5.f - Authorize the Receipt of Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Funds from California Department of Transportation for the Active 101 Plan
 - (4.g) TA Board Item 5.g - Approval of the 2024 Board of Directors Meeting Calendar

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- Start of the meeting:
 - In the wake of recent disruptions of other Zoom meetings in the area, Chair Barbara Arietta announced that, in accordance with the Brown Act, those acting improperly during the meeting will be removed from the room or muted on Zoom.

- Item 5. TA Board Item 5.a - Approval of Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of September 7, 2023

- Item 6. TA Board Item 10.a - Broadway Grade Separation Project Update
 - John Fox asked about the power setup and paralleling at this station.
 - Nheeda Enriquez asked how the costs of this project compare with other grade separations. Staff confirmed that the costs of grade separations have increased significantly over time and that electrification of the railroad has further increased costs.
 - Ms. Lang said that this looked like a good, practical design. She wanted to make sure that this project would avoid flooding in the underpass, as occurred elsewhere. Staff said that modeling suggestions that the design will be able to avoid flooding in all but the most extreme events.
 - Peter Ohtaki said that the high costs would eat up a huge chunk of the TA's original allocation for grade separations. Staff confirmed that grade separations are very expensive and that future projects will require new funding sources to progress.
 - Chair Arietta asked whether regional funding was an option for future projects. Staff confirmed that they were looking at this, but that funds are very limited.
 - Mr. Carlini asked whether we should continue to fund grade separations if the costs keep rising significantly. Staff would like to keep other projects moving, like Ravenswood and Linden/Scott. Even with cost overruns, the TA will not fund more than 50% of the project.
 - Mr. Carlini asked whether there was flexibility in converting the shoe fly to a passing track. Staff said that space was limited due to environmental mitigation work.
 - Mr. Carlini mentioned that other grade separations offered narrow, uncomfortable bike paths. Staff confirmed that this project would include a Class I bike path.

- Item 7: TA Board Item 11.a - Overview of Fixed Income Investing
 - Mr. Ohtaki was curious about the purpose of the presentation and how often the TA's investment policy was updated. Staff indicated the presentation was for informational purposes and the policy is updated annually.

- **Item 8: TA Board Item 12 - State and Federal Legislative Update**
 - Mr. Swire asked whether the TA Board could write to the Governor in support of several transportation bills that are awaiting signature. Staff said that they have written letters to the Governor in the past but that there wasn't time at this point to write letters on bills for which the TA hasn't already approved support.
 - Mr. Carlini asked about the impact of the Governor's rainy-day fund which is full. Staff said that MTC is in charge of determining whether such money can go to transit agencies facing fiscal cliffs.
 - Mr. Carlini asked about Local Partnership funds. Staff clarified that 50% of these funds are competitive and 50% are formula allocations to transportation sales tax entities such as the TA.
 - Mr. Ohtaki stated that, given cities' difficulty in funding large grade separation projects, it would be helpful if the TA could highlight funding options. Staff said that the TA's website includes a list of funding sources and options.

- **Item 9: Report of the Chair**
 - Chair Arietta reported that this weekend's closure of Hwy 101 southbound lanes between Whipple and Brittain Aves for the Cordilleras Creek Bridge Replacement Project went so well that the work finished 9 hrs. early.

 - She praised all those who worked on the project, citing the fact that this new Accelerated Bridge Construction (ABC) process, which also includes a "cut and cover" method, allows CALTRANS to construct the bridge in one season alone, instead of doing it over a three-year period.

 - Chair Arietta also praised the fact that this new approach reduces the effects on traffic, increases the safety of travelers and construction workers, as well as minimizing environmental impacts.

 - She concluded by reporting that CALTRANS plans once again to shut down all lanes this time going northbound between Whipple and Brittan Ave for a 55-hour long weekend between 10PM, Friday, October 13 and ending at 5AM on Monday, October 16. Chair Arietta advised that more information concerning this full northbound lanes closure can be found on the CALTRANS website.

- Item 10: Report From Staff
 - Staff also praised the Cordilleras team and welcomed Tyshaun, the District Secretary's office new intern who was present at the meeting.

- Item 11: Member Comments
 - Ms. Lang commended the group for its thoughtful discussion. As a Burlingame resident, she enjoyed learning about the innovations of the Broadway grade separation project.
 - Mr. Mattammal said that while he agrees with many of the arguments against widening the 101, he thought it better to oppose the project later in the process.
 - Chair Arietta lamented the political chaos on Capitol Hill and its potential to jeopardize transportation funding.
 - Mr. Ohtaki praised the speed of the Cordilleras 101 work. He said that much of the public remained unaware of the planned closure and long delays resulted. He urged staff to consider other ways of getting the word out for the next phase.
 - Ms. Enriquez said that she was excited about Caltrain's electrification and recently attended the public tour in San Francisco.
 - Mr. Swire praised the group for its no vote on the 101 widening and providing its views to the TA Board. He also mentioned that in the South San Francisco discussion of the Utah Avenue (Produce Ave) project, staff urged approval of funding for fear that rejection of the money would potentially discourage future support from funding sources (such as the TA).