



TTAC STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: SAFE funding for Changeable Message Signs on Highway 101 and Highway 166

MEETING DATE: November 2, 2017 **AGENDA ITEM:** 8

STAFF CONTACT: Fred Luna

RECOMMENDATION:

Provide input and a recommendation of support to the SBCAG board on the plan to purchase changeable message signs (CMS) to improve safety on Highway 166 and assist with Highway 101 traffic management plans during construction.

SUMMARY:

SBCAG is the designated Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways (SAFE) Agency for Santa Barbara County and as such receives revenue (\$1 per registered vehicle) to use for motorist-aid purposes along these routes. SBCAG receives about \$375,000 annually in revenue and has a fund balance of approximately \$950,000. SBCAG primarily uses SAFE funding for administering the roadside call box program but has in the past used the funding in a number of other ways that qualify as motorist-aid services such as:

- To fund pilot project for travel time studies
- To fund and support the development of the SBROADS.com and other websites
- To provide local match for federal grants on ITS projects
- To purchase Changeable Message Signs for use on freeways/expressways
- To fund public information safety campaigns

SBCAG is now proposing two specific efforts that would require the use of SAFE funds to work with state and regional partners to improve highway safety and assist with traffic management during construction projects. Those two efforts are:

1. To purchase two CMS units that would be used to improve safety and used in conjunction with enhanced enforcement on Highway 166 (East) between US 101 and the Kern County line.
2. To purchase two CMS units for use by Caltrans construction to better support the Transportation Management Plan (TMP) for the Linden Casitas Project and for use on future Highway 101 HOV construction.

SBCAG is seeking input from TTAC and a recommendation of support to move forward with these two efforts.

DISCUSSION:

Highway 166

The Highway 166 Safety Task Force has been in effect for a number of years. The task force was first initiated in response to safety enforcement grants that were received in response to increasing trends in collisions on Highway 166 East between Highway 101 and the Kern County line. The safety task force continues to meet up to two times per year and includes membership from the California Highway Patrol (CHP), California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), Kern Council of Governments (KernCOG) and San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG), as well as other local first responders and stakeholders. The task force has focused on Engineering, Enforcement and Education solutions (the 3 E's) to improve safety on the corridor. Several capital improvements have been constructed over the years by Caltrans, SLOCOG and SBCAG. The Highway 166 safety task force has also promoted the use of additional enforcement and education components.

The SBCAG board has approved the use of Measure A funds for purposes of additional enforcement grants to CHP which has had a positive effect in reducing collisions in the corridor. SBCAG has also approved the use of SAFE funds for motorist-aid purposes such as purchasing a CMS in partnership with SLOCOG and KernCOG. The CMS board has been provided for shared use by CHP and Caltrans.

In 2008, MOU's were approved to fund and govern the use of a CMS that was purchased by SBCAG. This CMS has been effectively used by Caltrans during periods of regularly maintenance and capital projects and by CHP in tandem with additional enforcement and other pursuits. The CMS unit is now approximately 10 years old and has had to have a number of repairs recently and parts are no longer easy to find for these older models. In June 2017, the North County Subregional Planning Committee (NCSPC) of SBCAG received an update on the use of the CMS and options which at the time included the purchase of new CMS units, participation in safety campaigns and other potential uses. Staff indicated that it would develop details and present to TTAC for discussion.

Staff is recommending the following actions:

- Purchase two new units, at a cost of approximately \$40,000 total
- Develop MOU to define funding contribution from SLOCOG and KernCOG to share in costs
- Develop MOU for use, maintenance and storage with CHP and Caltrans
- Work with CHP and other stakeholders on refreshing safety campaign materials and strategies with financial contribution of up to \$5,000

SBCAG staff has had discussions with SLOCOG and KernCOG about the financial contributions and we are confirming the amounts from each and will develop an MOU based on that information. We have also received conceptual approval on continued use of the Cuyama Maintenance yard of Caltrans for one of the new units and for the second use of the Santa Maria maintenance yard.

Highway 101

Construction of the Linden Casitas Interchanges project in the City of Carpinteria began in September 2016. This project, which is Phase 3 of SBCAG's 101 widening strategy, is seen as the advent of consistent construction activities on the Highway 101 corridor for the next several years to complete the Highway 101 HOV project (Phase 4). A critical and necessary component of each construction project is the development of a Transportation Management Program (TMP), which works to promote a safe working environment for crews and the traveling public, to provide information and minimize disturbances to the public and to address recurrent congestion that may be affected by construction activities, among other aspects.

The TMP for the Linden Casitas project includes a number of different strategies including a robust public outreach program, freeway service patrol, demand management efforts, and use of CHP construction zone enforcement, and reduced speed zones as primary approaches. As Caltrans is managing this effort, it has become apparent that the use of Changeable Message Signs (CMS) has become a critical tool to convey issues to the traveling public such as ramp closures, detours, reduced speed in construction zones and messages related to local circulation issues. Furthermore, the need for a reduced speed zone for construction was not originally planned for and now has been implemented and the CMS' provide a visual reminder for the public.

Caltrans and the contractor have recently issued a change order accelerating the overall delivery of the Linden Casitas project by about a year. This will require that multiple work efforts be completed at the same time and limits the ability Caltrans has to use a finite amount of CMS' that are currently available for the project to convey all the potential issues and information to the public. Caltrans pays a daily rate each and every time the units are used on the project and it is likely that budget will be exhausted.

SBCAG staff met with Caltrans, the City and TMP members and discussed how to provide more flexibility to the construction team to not be constrained in their use of CMS' to be able to inform the public of key issues during construction. SBCAG proposed the idea of purchasing two additional CMS units for Caltrans' use on the project. These would be made available to Caltrans throughout the construction of Linden Casitas and also available for future phases of the Highway 101 HOV construction beginning in FY 19/20.

Staff is recommending the following actions:

- Purchase two new units, at a cost of approximately \$40,000 total
- Develop MOU for use, maintenance and storage with Caltrans

SBCAG has already had discussions about the storage of these units at Caltrans' new construction office near South Padaro Interchange or at their maintenance yard in Santa Barbara.

CONCLUSION:

Staff's recommendation is to spend up to \$100,000 from the SAFE fund for motorist-aid services to work with our State and Regional partners to promote highway safety and for traffic management benefits. The existing fund balance from the SAFE fund is more than sufficient to cover these costs. SBCAG will partially offset these costs by entering into funding contribution agreements with regional partners at SLOCOG and KernCOG.

For the recommendations related to Highway 101, SBCAG will present an MOU to the South Coast Subregional Committee in November and to the SBCAG board in November to initiate this procurement process and make available the CMS units for the Linden Casitas project by the beginning of 2018.

For the recommendations related to Highway 166, SBCAG will continue to work with our partners at SLOCOG and KernCOG regarding a funding contribution MOU. We will also continue to work with CHP and Caltrans regarding an MOU for shared use, maintenance and storage. Staff would plan to present both of these MOU's to the North County Subregional Committee and the SBCAG board in January 2018. Staff would also continue to work with CHP and other stakeholders to update safety campaign materials for Highway 166 with a financial contribution of up to \$5,000.