STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Traffic Solutions FY06-07 Annual Report

MEETING DATE: November 15, 2007

AGENDA ITEM: 15

STAFF CONTACT: Kent Epperson

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive annual report from SBCAG Traffic Solutions on FY06-07 accomplishments and expenditures, as well as goals for FY07-08.

SUMMARY:

SBCAG’s Traffic Solutions division operates programs and provides services to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality by reducing reliance on single occupant vehicle use. In response to board member requests, a Traffic Solutions annual report has been prepared for the last several years to provide information on the scope of services, revenues and expenditures and program performance measures. The following is a summary of Traffic Solution FY 2006-07 accomplishments.

DISCUSSION:

Traffic Solutions, a division of SBCAG, is responsible for implementing the Ridesharing and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs throughout Santa Barbara County. The primary goal of the Traffic Solutions program is to provide transportation services, information, assistance and referrals in an effort to reduce the reliance on single-occupant vehicle use for commuting during peak hours.

Fiscal Year 2006-07 was a busy year for the Traffic Solutions program. In addition to maintaining the vanpool program, carpool program, FlexWork SB program and bicycle program, Traffic Solutions entered into its sixth year of management of the Clean Air Express, including contract administration, route and schedule development, marketing, fare collection and customer service for the commuter bus program. In FY 2006-07, Traffic Solutions added a new round trip to the VISTA Coastal Express with direct commuter service from Ventura to Goleta. Traffic Solutions launched Traffic Solutions Online, the new online one-stop-shop for commuters providing commuter matching, commuter savings calculator, Emergency Ride Home, commute
Traffic Solutions also conducted a 2007 Commuter Profile, random telephone survey.

**FY06-07 EXPENDITURES AND REVENUE**

Traffic Solutions Division expenditures totaled $1,723,840 in FY 06-07, including $1,053,386 for the Clean Air Express, $212,658 for SBCAG’s portion of the VISTA Coastal Express and $457,796 for Rideshare programs. There were several funding sources for the Traffic Solutions Division in FY 2006-07. The primary sources of funding included Clean Air Express fares ($857,376), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality - CMAQ ($368,757), Santa Barbara County Measure D ($298,706), Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District ($135,000) and local funds ($64,000).

**FY06-07 PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

Traffic Solutions evaluates its performance using standardized measures commonly used in the rideshare industry. Many of the TDM programs, such as individualized marketing, general outreach and employer consulting cannot be measured using these quantitative performance measures, however four major Traffic Solutions programs can be measured using these indicators; the Vanpool Program, the Coastal Express program, the Clean Air Express program and the Team Bike Challenge. The Traffic Solutions saw a 20% - 36% increase in all performance measures in FY06-07 over the previous fiscal year.

In FY06-07 Traffic Solutions programs resulted in the following reductions:

- 489,536 fewer automobile trips,
- 19.7 million fewer vehicle miles traveled,
- 887,382 fewer gallons of gasoline consumed,
- $8.8 million in commuter cost savings, and
- 7,570 metric tons of pollutants avoided.

**MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

**Traffic Solutions Online**: In FY 2006-07, Traffic Solutions developed Traffic Solutions Online, a web-based one-stop-shop resource for commuters and employers. Traffic Solutions Online was launched on July 1, 2007 and replaced the carpool matching system developed in-house in 2004. The new system offers commuter matching services (carpool, vanpool and commuter bus services), commuter savings calculator, Emergency Ride Home, commute calendar and employer tools for administering employee commuter benefits and promotions. Traffic Solutions Online is being used to administer commuter benefits programs by most of the largest employers in Santa Barbara County including the County of Santa Barbara, City of Santa Barbara, Cottage Health System, Santa Barbara City College, Valle Verde Retirement Community and Marian Medical Center. Approximately 1,600 commuters are currently registered with Traffic Solutions Online.

**2007 Commuter Profile Survey**: As a follow-up from the 2002 Tri-county Commuter Profile Survey, the second Tri-County Commuter Profile was conducted in February 2007. The project was funded by SBCAG, San Luis Obispo Council of Governments and Ventura County Transportation Commission. The target universe of the survey was residents 18 years of age or older that work 35 hours a week or more. More than 3,000 telephone surveys were conducted. According to the survey, the drive alone rate in Santa Barbara County decreased from 79% to
71% since 2002, while carpooling increased from 10% to 14%, telecommuting increased from 2.0% to 4.5% and bus use increased from 1.9% to 3.8%. The Commuter Profile will have four primary purposes; transportation planning, rideshare planning and marketing, and to identify commute trends and job/housing imbalances.

**Clean Air Express:** The Clean Air Express is a commuter bus service, serving residents of northern Santa Barbara County who commute to jobs in Goleta and Santa Barbara. There are currently eleven (11) Clean Air Express roundtrips per weekday. The following are some of the Clean Air Express accomplishments in FY06-07:

- 13% growth in ridership (185,642 annual boardings)
- 15% increase in farebox revenue ($857,376 in annual fares)
- Farebox recovery ratio increased to 81% (79% in FY05-06).

Ridership has grown to such a point that passengers are regularly left at the curb due to bus overcrowding on some select routes. Increased ridership is likely a result of the higher fuel prices.

Securing operating funds for the Clean Air Express has been unpredictable and uncertain from year to year; however in FY06-07 the SBCAG Board approved an interim operating plan for the Clean Air Express which provides $750,000 in regional Measure D funds through June 2009. The Measure D funding, combined with $587,200 in Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds from Santa Maria, Lompoc and Santa Barbara County will provide enough funding to operate the service through June 2009. If stable funding for regional transit programs is made available through the renewal of Measure D or another source, the long term plan is to transfer the Clean Air Express to one or more of the local transit operators.

**VISTA Coastal Express:** The VISTA Coastal Express is an intercommunity bus service between Ventura, Carpinteria, Santa Barbara and Goleta. The VISTA Coastal Express provides thirty one (31) daily trips on weekdays, twenty (20) daily trips on Saturdays and eighteen (18) trips on Sundays. The VISTA Coastal Express is jointly funded and administered by SBCAG and the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC). The following are some VISTA Coastal Express accomplishments in FY 2006-07:

- One additional express non-stop round-trip for commuters from Ventura to Goleta,
- 21% increase in ridership (179,300 annual boardings),
- 28% increase in farebox revenue ($443,788 in annual fares), and
- Farebox recovery ratio of 65%.

**Vanpool Program:** Traffic Solutions offers various support services for vanpools operating in Santa Barbara County. These services include referrals to vanpools through the use of Traffic Solutions Online, the **New Rider Rebate** program, which provides a $100 rebate to new vanpool subscribers, and the **Vanpool Quick Start** Program which provides new vanpools with a 50% subsidy the first month and a 25% subsidy the second month. The following are some of the vanpool accomplishments in FY06-07:

- 25 new rider rebates awarded to new vanpool riders, and
- Twenty-seven vanpools currently operate in Santa Barbara County, resulting in 6.1 million fewer vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per year.
**Team Bike Challenge:** In June 2007 Traffic Solutions held the third annual Team Bike Challenge, a month long bicycle competition in which teams of five individuals tracked the number of days they made trips by bicycle instead of by car during the month of June. The following are some Team Bike Challenge accomplishments in FY06-07:

- 253 teams and 1,180 participants
- 44,108 one-way bike trips and 127,691 miles were logged
- 30% increase in bicycle trips during month after the promotion.
- Grand Prize winner was awarded to the BourgEOlsie team whose members work for Electro Optical Industries in Goleta.

**Individualized Marketing and Outreach:** One of Traffic Solutions’ primary functions is to inform the public about commute options through the distribution of information. In FY 2006-07, Traffic Solutions distributed more than 23,000 pieces of information including brochures, bike maps, transit maps, carpool matchlists, email flyers, bus schedules, commuter surveys and e-newsletters. Traffic Solutions also serves the public through the 963-SAVE commuter hotline, receiving thousands of calls each year from commuters and members of the general public. These calls serve as an opportunity to engage in individualized marketing, helping to resolve the transportation needs of commuters and others. In addition to distributing information, Traffic Solutions attended more than fifteen stand alone events throughout the county. These events are attended by large number of residents and present an excellent opportunity to educate the public regarding alternatives to driving alone.

**Employer Support:** Traffic Solutions provides commuter support services for employers, including commuter surveys, the Emergency Ride Home Program and commuter program consulting services. These services not only reduce traffic, but they are valued by employers who are increasingly challenged to recruit and retain qualified staff. In FY 2006-07, Traffic Solutions provided support to the following employers:

- Citrix Online
- Clipper Windpower
- Santa Barbara County,
- City of Santa Barbara,
- Mission Linen,
- Marian Medical Center,
- Cottage Health System,
- Fess Parker’s Double Tree,
- Santa Barbara City College, and
- Valle Verde Retirement Community.

Traffic Solutions was instrumental in crafting and implementing comprehensive commuter benefits, such as transit passes or carpool or vanpool subsidies for 9 out of 10 of these employers. Traffic Solutions is currently aware of 22 major employers that offer commuter benefits. Nationally, these programs have not only proven to decrease single occupant vehicle commuting by employees by 10% to 15%, but also have proven to be effective strategies to decrease turnover and improve recruitment.

**WiFi On Buses Pilot Program:** Over the past two years, several communities have started to offer wireless internet service on commuter buses to attract new riders. Wireless internet on buses provides a unique opportunity for passengers to regain the lost time spent commuting either by working while they commute. In June 2006 Traffic Solutions conducted a month-long
WiFi on buses pilot program to test the use of wireless routers designed for transit vehicles and to test wireless coverage in the Hwy 101, Hwy 1 and Hwy 246 corridors. The wireless routers use Sprint cellular service to provide an internet connection. The wireless routers operated smoothly and the cellular service was found to be strong in the Hwy 101 corridor to Ventura as well as in areas in North County. Traffic Solutions hopes to install WiFi on the Clean Air Express and the VISTA Coastal Express in FY07-08.

2006 Green Awards: Traffic Solutions is a Green Award Consortium member, honoring businesses for their environmental programs. 2006 Green Award winners were: Four Seasons Resort, The Family School, Marian Medical Center, Van Atta and Associates, and NWA, Landscape Architecture and Construction.

Curb Your Commute / FlexWork SB Phase II: In FY06-07 Traffic Solutions continued to prepare for the Curb Your Commute Program in anticipation of the 101 Milpas to Hot Springs Construction Project. The program is a package of traffic mitigation strategies that will result in decreased peak period commuting and increased carpooling, vanpooling and telecommuting during the four year construction project and is a required element of the project’s Traffic Management Plan. Strategies include extensive employer outreach, cash incentives and a general awareness campaign. Originally it was anticipated that some of these TDM efforts would begin in FY06-07 (about six months prior to the construction project), however since ground breaking for the construction project has been moved to the summer of 2008, the Curb Your Commute program will begin in FY07-08 to better correspond with the construction schedule. The one year contract with Telecommuting Advantage Group (TAG) executed in August 2006 was put on hold for 6 months to overlap with the new construction project schedule.

COMMITTEE REVIEW: None.