

## SBCAG STAFF REPORT

**SUBJECT:** Traffic Solutions Program Update

**MEETING DATE:** January 18, 2018

**AGENDA ITEM:** 4J

**STAFF CONTACT:** Kent Epperson

### RECOMMENDATION:

Receive a report on the activities of the Traffic Solutions division of SBCAG.

### 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. The following is an update on several Traffic Solutions programs and activities from 2017.

### 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.

Traffic Solutions continues several Countywide rideshare programs, such as SmartRide (carpool matching, trip planning and employer program management system), vanpool incentives, Emergency Ride Home, and Santa Barbara County Open Streets initiative, Love Your Ride (Bike Theft Prevention Program), Try Transit, employer commuter program consulting, Green Business Program, and is a member of CalVans. Traffic Solutions also has two South Coast programs including CycleMAYnia, passenger rail marketing and the Linden and Casitas Pass Traffic Management Program. As of January 1, Traffic Solutions has taken on the management of the SAFE program, including the Freeway Service Patrol and the Call Box program. The following is a brief description of each of these programs and activities.

**SmartRide.org:** In 2015, SBCAG entered into a two year contract with Ride Amigos, Inc. to design and maintain the countywide rideshare website, SmartRide.org. SmartRide.org is the countywide rideshare website that includes a trip planner to help commuters find and form carpools and vanpools, and to find transit schedules, bike routes, driving directions, traffic cameras and traffic conditions. The website also provides tools for employers to manage their commuter programs, including Cottage Health System, Sonos, Santa Barbara City College, Sansum Clinic, LinkedIn, Dignity Health, City of Goleta, Deckers, City of Santa Barbara, County

Member Agencies

Buellton ■ Carpinteria ■ Goleta ■ Guadalupe ■ Lompoc ■ Santa Barbara ■ Santa Maria ■ Solvang ■ Santa Barbara County

of Santa Barbara and others. Traffic Solutions also uses SmartRide.org to manage countywide rideshare challenges and promotions such as CycleMAYnia and Rideshare Week. The website serves 8,574 commuters and has had more than 790,535 commuter trips logged since April 2015, reducing countywide CO2 emissions by 3,038 tons.

**Individualized Marketing and Outreach:** One of Traffic Solutions' primary functions is to inform the public about commute options through the distribution of information. Traffic Solutions distributed more than 150,000 pieces of information including brochures, bike maps, transit maps, bus schedules and passes, commuter surveys, social media posts and e-newsletters. Traffic Solutions also serves the public through the 963-SAVE commuter hotline, receiving hundreds 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 12 stand-alone events throughout the county. These events are attended by a large number of residents and present an excellent opportunity to educate the public regarding alternatives to driving alone.

**Employer Consulting:** Traffic Solutions provides commuter support services for employers, including commuter surveys, the Emergency Ride Home program, and commuter benefit 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 2017, Traffic Solutions provided support to the following 25 employers:

*Chumash Employee Resource Center (Buellton), Hayward Lumber (Santa Maria), Innovative Workshop Consulting (Santa Barbara), Santa Barbara Maritime Museum (Santa Barbara), Shepard Place Apartments (Carpinteria), Willow Springs Apartments (Goleta), Allen Construction (Santa Barbara), Santa Barbara Airbus (Goleta), MedBridge (Santa Barbara), Rancho Franciscan Apartments (Santa Barbara), and Kitson Landscape Management, Inc. (Goleta), Cottage Hospital (Santa Barbara, Goleta and Santa Ynez Valley), Gigavac (Carpinteria), Procure (Carpinteria), Carpinteria Valley School District (Carpinteria), FLIR (Goleta), CMC Rescue (Goleta), SONOS (Santa Barbara), SBCC (Santa Barbra) and the City of Santa Maria Utilities Division (Santa Maria).*

This year was a productive year helping employers implement new Commuter Benefits. Traffic Solutions was instrumental in crafting and implementing comprehensive commuter benefits, such as transit, carpool or vanpool incentives for eight employers. Traffic Solutions is currently aware of 47 employers that offer commuter benefits. Nationally these programs have not only proven to increase sustainable transportation use by employees by 10-15 percent, but also have proven to be effective strategies to decrease turnover and improve recruitment.

**Green Business Program, Santa Barbara County:** The Green Business program is a multi-jurisdictional pollution prevention effort that educates businesses on how to incorporate resource conservation in their practices, make the public aware of businesses that are environmental stewards, and foster a positive relationship among governmental agencies, the business community and the general public. Businesses that implement a wide range of environmental practices are certified as a Green Business and receive community recognition and consumer marketing. To become certified, businesses must offer commuter benefits to their employees as a means to reduce air pollution and traffic congestion. This certification requirement has greatly expanded the reach of SBCAG Traffic Solutions by exposing many new businesses to commuter benefits that would not have been otherwise. SBCAG Traffic Solutions, along with 24 other organizations and government agencies, is a member of the Green Business Program.

**Vanpool Program:** For several years, Traffic Solutions has offered various support services for vanpools operating in Santa Barbara County. These services include vanpool referrals, the New

*Rider Rebate* program, which provides a \$100 rebate to new vanpool riders, and the *Vanpool Quick Start* program, which provides new vanpools with a 50 percent subsidy the first month and a 25 percent subsidy the second month. Approximately 35 vanpools are currently in operation in Santa Barbara County. Since 2011, SBCAG has been a member of CalVans, a statewide Joint Powers Authority (JPA) that operates commuter vanpools in Fresno, Riverside, Kings, Madera, Monterey, Merced, San Joaquin, Sutter, Tulare, Ventura and Imperial counties. CalVans offers commuters with a more flexible vanpool option than is provided by the other privately operated vanpool companies.

**Emergency Ride Home (ERH):** One of the barriers to using sustainable transportation is a fear of being stranded at work with no means to handle unexpected household emergencies during the work day. The Emergency Ride Home Program is a \$55 taxi or rental car reimbursement to help commuters return to home for any family or household emergency on a day that they have rideshared, biked or taken the bus or train. Although commuters are eligible to use the ERH program up to 4 times a year, very few reimbursements are submitted. While these kinds of emergencies are very rare, commuters can rest easy knowing that they will be able to return home quickly if needed.

**Try Transit:** Traffic Solutions has received three cycles of Low Carbon Transit Operations (LCTOP) funding from Sacramento to provide free introductory 10-ride passes for commuters that have not tried the service within 6 months. For many commuters, a free 10-ride pass can be the impetus to try the service for a week, making it much more likely that they continue riding the service into the future. Through this program, Traffic Solutions has engaged with nearly a thousand potential transit passengers at the Farmer's Market, employer benefits fairs, CycleMAYnia events, public events and individualized marketing.

**Santa Barbara County Open Streets Initiative:** Open Streets is a worldwide movement to temporarily repurposing a stretch of roadway to promote active transportation, public health and wellness by creating car free environment for families to enjoy for a day. Since 2013, Traffic Solutions has partnered with several other organizations to host Open Streets events throughout the County, including three in Santa Barbara, one in Guadalupe, Lompoc and Carpinteria. These events include activities such as a bike rodeos, learn to ride a bike workshops, family rides to and from the event and a whole host other physical fitness and cultural activities. Open Streets has proven to be a great way to introduce many people to bicycling by removing cars from the roadway, helping kids and families build riding skills that later improve safety and confidence riding in traffic. These events also provide an opportunity for SBCAG to build relationships with local businesses and organizations. In 2018, Traffic Solutions plans to host an Open Streets event in Santa Maria and will assist the Lompoc Valley Community Health Organization in hosting a second event in Lompoc.

**CycleMAYnia:** CycleMAYnia is a public/private collaboration, using community resources and seed money to leverage large numbers of volunteers to organize their own bicycle events for the community. These bicycling events are packaged and marketed to the public at large with help from Traffic Solutions and the Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition. CycleMAYnia was well received by the community, with thousands people attending the events. New this year was the Carpinteria Open Streets event held on April 1<sup>st</sup> as a pre-cursor event to CycleMAYnia. More than 5,000 people attended the event, many of them on bicycle. Several other new bike rides were added to the CycleMAYnia calendar, including the Zootopia Family Ride, Sunset and Full Moon rides, the Mujerista Community Bike Ride and movie screening, and several food truck rides. New this year was the week long Bike to Work Challenge and the All Star intercounty competition with San Luis Obispo Regional Rideshare. Both Challenges were employer-based competitions with winners making the greatest percentage of bike commute or lunch trips during the week of May

15<sup>th</sup>. Santa Barbara County prevailed over San Luis Obispo competitors in the All Star Challenge. In the South Coast Bike to Work Challenge, more than 2,160 bike trips and 19,424 miles were logged during the week long competitions.

**Love Your Ride:** Love Your Ride is a community-based bike theft prevention program in Santa Barbara County, coordinated by Traffic Solutions with the help of SBBIKE and the Bike Index. The program aims to empower the cycling community to prevent bike theft and recover stolen bikes through educational materials, free and convenient bike registration (Bike Index), and social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook. Prior to this program, there was no coordinated bike registration system throughout the county. While this program is in its infancy, with additional staff resources, Traffic Solutions hopes to work more closely with local law enforcement to promote the Bike Index free bike registration, as well as to educate bicyclists how to properly secure their bikes.

**Cycle California Coast:** Cycle California Coast is a collaborative effort with participation from many diverse stakeholders who are committed to the shared vision of making Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties premier cycling destinations and improving the bicycling environment for locals. Spearheaded by Ventura County Supervisor Steve Bennett and former Santa Barbara County Supervisor Salud Carbajal, the group has already developed a website, identified routes, and created a Bike Friendly Business Program aimed at improving the biking experience and attract travelers to our region. The mission of Cycle California Coast is to promote Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties as premier national and international bicycle tourism destinations. SBCAG Traffic Solutions is one of the founding partners for this program and continues to assist in the marketing, outreach and a social media campaign.

**Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) and SAFE Call Box Program:** On January 1, 2018, Traffic Solutions took on management of the FSP and SAFE programs (previously managed through the Programming Division). The Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) program is a free towing service provided by the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG), the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and Caltrans. FSP is composed of a fleet of tow and service trucks that patrol designated routes of Highway 101 on the south coast corridor. The service is provided Monday through Friday during peak commute hours. The FSP program provides congestion relief, safety and air quality benefits by reducing traffic jams through prompt removal of stalled cars, reducing the chance of further accidents and bottlenecks caused by impatient drivers and onlookers, saving fuel and cutting air polluting emissions by reducing stop-and-go traffic, and by keeping narrowed lanes clear during highway construction projects.

**Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE):** This program is responsible for the installation, operation and administration of the system of approximately 350 roadside call boxes in Santa Barbara County. In addition to the call boxes, SAFE funds can be used for other safety related projects, rideshare programs and other services that improve freeway safety. This system is financed by a \$1 annual fee on all motor vehicles registered in the county. One of the goals of transferring these programs to Traffic Solutions is to explore new and innovative safety programs and to more actively market existing SAFE and FSP programs.

**Hwy 101: Linden and Casitas Pass Traffic Demand Management (TDM):** The Highway 101: Linden and Casitas Pass Project is a mix of local circulation improvements and key bridge replacements that prepare for future Highway 101 widening. The roadway extensions, bike lanes, and sidewalk improvements will make it easier for residents to use local streets for in-town trips. The longer overcrossings, new bridges, and safer on and off-ramp connections all prepare for the future addition of a carpool lane on Highway 101. In order to mitigate traffic impacts during construction, SBCAG manages the Traffic Management Plan that includes public information

about the project and Traffic Demand Management (TDM) measures that will help to shift peak period car trips to sustainable transportation trips. TDM programs include a temporary Carpinteria Creek Easy Lift shuttle that provides weekday and weekend shuttle service from the mobile home parks along Calle Real near Casitas Pass Rd. during the reconstruction of the Carpinteria Creek multi-use path. to downtown Carpinteria. Other programs include a 50% discount on vanpools traveling through the corridor, employer program consulting and bike and pedestrian education.

**Partnerships:** Although Traffic Solutions Division is comprised of only three staff members, much of what is accomplished is a result of the strong collaborations with other government agencies, non-profits and private businesses. Some of the key partners over the past few years include: The Santa Barbara Air Pollution Control District, County of Santa Barbara, the Cities of Santa Barbara, Goleta, Santa Maria, Carpinteria, Lompoc and Solvang, the Chamber of Commerce organizations, Higher educational institutions such as UCSB and SBCC, non-profits such as SBBIKE, COAST, the Lompoc Community Health Organization and the Community Environmental Council, and businesses such as, Ride Amigos, Yardi Systems, Cottage Hospital, Sonos, Deckers, LinkedIn and many others.

**COMMITTEE REVIEW:** None