



DATE: September 16, 2019

TO: Transportation Authority of Marin Citizens' Oversight Committee

FROM: Derek McGill, Planning Manager

SUBJECT: Update on Caltrans Planning Grant for Bus on Shoulder Feasibility Study (Information), Agenda Item No. 5

RECOMMENDATION

Discussion item only.

BACKGROUND

In November 2018, staff submitted a grant application to Caltrans for funding needed to conduct a Feasibility Study for a Bus on Shoulder Pilot Project. TAM has discussed the concept for a bus on shoulder pilot project in Marin County at multiple occasions in the recent years, most notably during the Highway 101 carpool lane hours of operations discussions in 2017. Under the guidance of the Board, TAM staff has been working on advancing the suite of projects that can benefit all users on Highway 101.

In May 2019, TAM staff received notification from Caltrans that the Bus on Shoulder Feasibility Study grant application resulted in TAM being awarded the requested amount of \$308,000 in state funding. This study will be conducted with partners from the County of Marin, City of San Rafael, City of Novato, Golden Gate Transit, Marin Transit, Caltrans, MTC, SMART, and CHP. The effort will enable the team to further understand the cost of a pilot project, potential benefits to users in the corridor, and operational and capital improvements needed to accommodate the bus on shoulder.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Bus on shoulder is a concept that has been successfully implemented in various parts of the US, as well as piloted in California. During peak hours, public transit buses are allowed to operate on the shoulder of the highways to bypass areas of traffic congestion. This operational exception can significantly improve travel times for transit users, and make transit services a more attractive travel option.

In Marin County, more than 500 buses use Highway 101 every day, carrying over 20,000 people on both regional services provided by Golden Gate Transit, and local services provided by Marin Transit. The buses normally utilize either the inside HOV lane or the outside lane if required to serve the bus stops. These particular buses must wait in the same back-up as the general purpose traffic. Traffic congestion is often cited by transit operators as the main cause of poor travel reliability and longer travel time.

This study will provide a feasibility assessment and conceptual design for converting the existing shoulders of Highway 101 to limited-hour bus only lanes in Marin County. This study will assess the use of limited-hour bus only shoulder lanes to improve transit speed, reliability and ridership on the heavily congested portions of Highway 101. During the study, TAM will work with local communities, Caltrans, Transit

Operators and the California Highway Patrol to identify the proposed locations of bus on shoulder facilities in the county, preferred operational concept, potential user benefits, and project costs estimate. The project location for this study would extend from Downtown San Rafael to San Marin Drive in Novato. Highway shoulders are not available in Southern Marin, as all available space was utilized in order to implement the Carpool Lanes on Highway 101 and various auxiliary lanes between interchanges.

The feasibility study would be developed over the course of two years, and would develop a preferred operational concept, an analysis of ridership and user benefits, public outreach, and initial capital and operational costs for this project. One of the key elements of this work is the development of an implementation plan to understand how any proposed pilot project would fit within other improvements in the corridor such as ramp metering, completion of the Marin Sonoma Narrows, and highway interchange improvements.

FISCAL CONSIDERATION

TAM staff have estimated the cost of the feasibility study, including elements of ridership analysis, operational concept development and public outreach, to be about \$350,000. Caltrans has awarded \$308,000 in state funds, and TAM's local contribution from City/Town/County fees would make up the \$42,000 funding gap.

NEXT STEPS

TAM will enter into agreement with Caltrans and an RFP will be issued and a qualified consultant team will be hired to conduct the study.

ATTACHMENTS

N/A