REPORT TO SHASTA COUNTY RTPA

SUBJECT		MEETING DATE	ITEM NUMBER
Independent RTPA		02/28/06	9

RECOMMENDATION
Consider directing staff to prepare a proposed budget for an independent Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA).

SUMMARY
At the October meeting the consensus of the Board members was to present an item to discuss how the RTPA is staffed.

DISCUSSION
Currently the RTPA's legal status is defined in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Caltrans that spells out the functional roles and responsibilities of the RTPA in discharging responsibilities such as administering the Transportation Development Act (TDA), preparing various improvement plans and preparing the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The by-laws or rules of the RTPA are contained within the rules of the Shasta County Regional Transportation Planning Agency.

Specifically Section 15 provides "The Director of Public Works of the County of Shasta or a designee appointed by the Director and approved by the Board shall serve as the Executive Officer of the Shasta County Regional Transportation Planning Agency. Sufficient funds shall be approved by the Board for the Executive Officer and staff to carry out the planning and administrative responsibilities of the Regional Transportation Planning Agency."

Currently the staff of the County and staffs of the three cities through various revenue pass-through arrangements carry out this section collectively. Due to this arrangement there are several agencies funded through the RTPA's budget (the Overall Work Program) and the need for separate cost recovery plans. The Agency charges only direct salaries and benefits to the Overall Work Program (OWP). As a result, many more hours of service are provided for the same level of funding.

This item was discussed by the Agency in 1997 and at that time it was decided to remain with the status quo. The reasons to support changing the staffing arrangement of the RTPA identified by staff include removing a perceived conflict of interest due to the majority of staff work done by the RTPA is done by staff employed by the County of Shasta. To the extent that decisions are made that impact the County of Shasta, one could argue that recommendations and funding decisions are made to the benefit of the County.

Annually the RTPA is audited by external auditors, not only for financial reasons, but also to determine compliance with TDA and other laws that govern the operation of the Agency. Recent audit reports have contained no compliance findings or management letter findings. This information is provided as support that the current staffing arrangement is satisfactory. Staff is of the opinion that decisions are made on the basis of what is good for the region and not what is good for each individual agency. Having said that, it is recognized that the appearance of a conflict of interest could be reasonable given the many hats that county staff wear at various times.

An RTPA staffed independently (similar to LAFCO) may elevate the status within the pantheon of local agencies within Shasta County. At the current time many of the activities of the RTPA are viewed as County activities due to the staff involved. If the RTPA were to be staffed independently with no connection to any of the Cities or the County, one could argue that it would rise in prominence among local agencies and that this could be useful in pursuing future goals such as establishing regional traffic impact fees or even a sales tax measure.

The final positive aspect of an independent RTPA would be that it would require more involvement of Board members. For example, it would be assumed that an independent Executive Officer would work under an employment contract that would need to be negotiated and would receive annual performance evaluations from the Agency. This is seen as positive because obviously the more involved Board members are presumably the better the outcomes.

The reasons to not change the current staffing structure of the RTPA generally revolves around dollars and cents. An independent RTPA will cost more money to operate due to the fact that overhead will need to be recovered. At the present time the majority of staff within the RTPA are housed within the Shasta County Department of Public Works who pays the light bill and provides employee benefit programs, medical benefits, retirement programs, etc. The cost to provide and administer all of these programs would presumably be necessary in an independent RTPA and would require either separate administration or would involve contracts with some local agencies such as a city or the county. If the organizational staffing is changed to an independent format this will result in loss of funding, which is currently passed through to the local agencies as follows:

2005/2006 Overall Work Program	
Redding	$109,960.00
Anderson	$ 30,163.42
Shasta Lake	$ 29,999.40
Shasta County	$101,774.56

It should be pointed out that overhead is also not charged by the cities' staff, but in most cases the work that is funded by the RTPA is work that the local agencies would pursue independently and would need to be funded from some other source. Examples of the type of programs funded at the local agencies include accident investigation and surveillance, traffic counts, and general monitoring of the transportation system. Generally, when an RTPA transitions from being housed within one agency to an independent status, all pass-through funding such as we have implemented in Shasta County is lost.

ALTERNATIVES

No staff recommendation has been provided for this item as it is for the consideration of Board members. Impacts of the alternatives have been laid out within the discussion section.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

This item was reviewed with the staffs of the Cities, the County and Caltrans at the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting of February 14, 2006.

FINANCING

If the Agency should choose to pursue independent staffing of the RTPA it would require substantial revision to the current year Overall Work Program. If the status quo staffing arrangement is the desire of the Agency, there will be no financial impact associated with that decision.

For Daniel J. Kovacich, Executive Officer

DJK/jac