

APPROVED MINUTES

SHASTA COUNTY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AGENCY

Tuesday, February 22, 2011, 4:00 p.m.
Shasta County Board of Supervisors Chambers,
1450 Court Street, Suite 263, Redding, California

(Note: These minutes are not intended to serve as a transcript or verbatim record of the proceedings of the Shasta County Regional Transportation Planning Agency, but rather as a record of the meeting time, place and attendance; the order and general nature of discussion; board deliberations; and actions taken, if any.)

Board members Dickerson, Jones, Watkins, Moty, Baugh, Hawes and Cornnick were present.

1. Call to Order

Chair Dickerson called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

2. Staff Introductions

3. Public Comment Period

There was no one who wished to speak during the public comment period.

4. Elect RTPA Chair and Vice-Chair

Board member Cornnick nominated Leonard Moty for chair and Greg Watkins for vice-chair. Board member Baugh seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Executive director Little presented outgoing chair Dickerson with a photo of the Dana to Downtown Project.

Consent Calendar

5-1 Minutes of December 14, 2010, RTPA Meeting

5-2 Future RTPA Meeting Schedule Through February 2012 - Information Only

5-3 2010 Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) Amendment #3

5-4 Correspondence

Board member Baugh abstained from item 5-1 and requested that the executive director's regional meetings be included in the meeting schedule so board members could attend if they choose.

Chair Moty pulled item 5-3 from the consent calendar at the request of board member Baugh.

Board member Baugh asked for clarification on item 5-4 concerning the letter from the RTPA to the Shasta County Planning Department regarding the Hawkins development.

Executive director Little explained that the letter is consistent with an earlier comment letter that the RTPA board approved. The letter provides information about project mitigation and makes no judgment on the project itself.

Board member Baugh motioned that the consent calendar be approved, as amended, with board member Baugh abstaining from item 5-1. Board member Connick seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

5-3 2010 Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) Amendment #3

Executive director Little explained that FTIP amendment #3 is necessary to amend the Shasta Scenic Byways Project (Volcanic Legacy Community Partnership). This project will fund continued public outreach and awareness projects.

Board member Baugh commented that if the money could be used for actual improvements to the roadway; that would be his preference.

By motion made and seconded (Hawes/Dickerson), the staff recommendation passed unanimously.

Regular Calendar

6. Executive Director's Report

Executive director Little noted the federal government has over 200 different transportation programs. The federal government is looking to simplify and condense programs. In the federal reauthorization extensions there will be a big emphasis in safety and sustainability. There is a significant capital program for sustainable transportation projects.

Based on discussion at the federal level, including Congressman Herger's office, and Senators Feinstein and Boxer's office, the traditional practice of 'earmarks' are not expected in upcoming extensions or with the reauthorization of the Federal Transportation Bill. The new bill will focus on a 'systems' level approach. It would be beneficial for the RTPA to adopt a plan for the region's biggest system priorities; such as the Interstate 5 corridor – to complete the "gap project". This is the area between the South Redding Six Lane Project and the Cottonwood Hills Truck Climbing Lanes Project, and possibly the interchanges in between. Staff will prepare a system-wide program for I-5 to put the region in a better position for federal funds in an anti-earmark environment.

The South Redding Six Lane Project is being advertised this month for award in April. The California Transportation Commission shut off project funding after the last meeting until state budget issues are resolved and a new bond sale can occur.

The Senate Budget Committee unanimously recommended to reinstate the gas tax swap.

Discussion:

Board member Jones: Is there going to be a highway bill introduced this year?

Executive director Little: It will be at least a year before there is a new bill. The federal gas tax revenue has not been raised since about 1990, nor has it been adjusted for inflation. Without new revenue, there isn't much incentive to overhaul the program.

Board member Dickerson: There are two things of interest to the legislature: 1) the potential for shifting responsibility to the local agencies for state roadways that pass through their jurisdictions; and 2) the potential for shifting the responsibility from Caltrans to local agencies relative to the engineering on highway projects.

Executive director Little: These are not new ideas. One was formerly known as the highway relinquishment program. There are agencies that do deliver state highway projects, including the engineering, such as Butte county. Shasta county has the option of delivering state highway projects now; however, Caltrans District 2 has been doing the job efficiently compared to other areas of the state.

Mary Machado, executive director of Shasta Voices: executive director Little mentioned interchanges when talking about earmarks. Can he expand on that? Which interchanges would it be?

Executive director Little: It is unknown and will be discussed at the April board meeting.

7. Consider 2011/12 Transit Needs Assessment and Conduct 2011/12 Unmet Transit Needs Hearing (Public Hearing)

Executive director Little explained that this is the annual process to set a budget for the next fiscal year for the Redding Area Bus Authority (RABA) system. Funds are derived primarily from a ¼-cent general sales tax. The current RABA system is evaluated and it is determined if it meets the minimum requirements under law, and if the system services can stay at the current level, be expanded or reduced.

Staff member Anne Jensen gave a presentation on the annual transit needs assessment. Anne gave the background for the Transportation Development Act (TDA). TDA dollars create two funding sources – the Local Transportation Fund, and the State Transit Assistance Fund.

Before the RTPA can allocate and disburse TDA funds it must first identify public transit needs. This is a four step process. 1) assess the transit needs within the jurisdictions of Shasta county; 2) conduct a public hearing to consider any specific unmet transit needs; 3) accept the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council recommendation regarding current transit performance and identified unmet needs; and 4) adopt the unmet transit needs findings.

Currently all jurisdictions are meeting their transit obligations. No services are expanding. All are able to sustain the present level of service. If the economy does not improve, or continues to worsen, it's possible that service cuts or reduction in hours may need to be considered. RABA's required farebox ratio requirement has temporarily been reduced to 16.2%. For 2009/10, the RABA system farebox recovery was 15.18%. There will be no consequences for the shortfall this year, as the first time an operator

fails to meet farebox is considered a one-time grace year. For the year 2010/11 RABA must meet farebox, or measures to reduce operating costs will be recommended.

The Burney Express is currently exceeding its 10% farebox ratio. The total number of passengers decreased 23.71% this year, and operating costs increased 10%. Options to help cover operating costs, such as a fare increase, may need to be considered in the future to keep the Burney Express feasible.

Discussion:

Board member Baugh: Is there a plan of action for RABA to meet the farebox ratio?

RABA executive director Brian Crane: A couple of years ago the City of Redding adopted a Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) to try to increase RABA ridership. Ridership has not gone up. Ridership has stayed about the same and the farebox ratio has gone down a little. RABA is going to do a request for proposals for another SRTP that will look at changes to be implemented, such as potential route cuts. A point may have been reached where there will need to be a joint workshop with the RABA and RTPA boards to discuss RABA's future.

Board member Baugh: If there are underperforming routes and a lot of money is being spent on them, the money could be used for the backlog of repairs within the roadway itself.

RABA executive director Brian Crane: As long as unmet needs are met, TDA money can be used for roadway purposes.

Board member Hawes: What is the correlation between ridership, fuel prices and operating costs?

RABA executive director Brian Crane: A few years ago when gas prices went up, ridership did not go up. It was also hoped with the economy like it is; more people would ride the bus. That hasn't happened either.

Board member Watkins: The Burney Express dropping 24%, what is that attributed to?

Executive director Little: Burney Express has a small ridership of 6-7 riders a day. The difference in percentage could be one regular rider.

Chair Moty opened the public hearing.

Christopher Shields lives in McArthur and requested that the Burney Express run on weekends.

The public hearing was closed.

The board gave consensus to move forward with the unmet needs process and bring the item back to the board at the April meeting.

8. Resolutions Authorizing Cal Fire and Transportation Planning Grants Program Applications

Executive director Little noted it's been an agency goal to be a grant resource to the local agencies. The RTPA tries to find grant opportunities that might compliment what needs to be done under Senate Bill 375 to develop the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS).

Staff member Dan Wayne explained that under the direction of the RTPA board, staff has begun the SCS planning process. The state has not provided any dedicated funding source for the planning or implementation of the SCS. Staff has pieced the budget together with various grants. Whenever there is a nexus between a certain grant program and what the RTPA is trying to accomplish with the SCS, such funds are pursued. Two such grant opportunities are the Cal Fire Urban Forestry Grant and the Caltrans Transportation Planning Grants Program. The Cal Fire grant has a local match requirement for which Shasta College has received funding. If the Caltrans grant is received, the City of Redding will provide the local match requirement.

The RTPA is under contract with ENPLAN for the regional Geographic Information System (GIS) platform and the project is getting started. Letters were sent to local agencies informing them of what is being done and requesting any special direction they may have. All local agencies returned response letters to the RTPA.

Discussion:

Board member Baugh: Where does California get the money to hand out grants in a state that can't pay its bills?

Staff member Dan Wayne: The majority of money received so far has been through proposition 84, which was a voter approved bond before the economic recession began. For the Cal Fire grant; even if the grant is approved, it depends on the state budget as to whether the money is distributed. With the Caltrans grant; the Transportation Planning Grant Program has been around for many years and routinely provides funding for a number of different planning projects.

Board member Baugh: In regards to the Urban Forest Grant, how far does the authority of the RTPA go? Will the RTPA eventually be providing resources to almost every agency? What is the limit?

Executive director Little: The RTPA is not extending its authority. The RTPA gives technical support to local agencies. The local agencies are the implementers. If local agencies are not interested, the RTPA will not assist. It is a goal of the RTPA to be a resource to the local agencies. If grants are tied to SCS type projects, it can strengthen the grant application if the RTPA is the lead, a co-sponsor, or writes a letter of support.

Board member Baugh: What is the level of budgeting for the GIS and what does that process look like?

Staff member Dan Wayne: Bids were received from several firms with \$177,000 awarded for the project. This includes work in all four jurisdictions in Shasta county.

Board member Jones: The majority of the money for the Cal Fire grant is going for trees – what type of trees and where are they being planted?

Staff member Dan Wayne: The McConnell Arboretum Botanical Gardens has a new section. There is a trail that leads to a wetland area that is the environmental mitigation site for the Dana to Downtown Project. Along the trail there is an acre that was burnt in a wildland fire. The City of Redding, in cooperation with Turtle Bay, has removed the burnt trees and is replanting the location with native trees and native plants.

The City of Anderson has two projects. A multi-use pathway is being built along the new alignment for Rhonda Road, between Highway 273 and the Wal-Mart shopping center. Forty-two trees will be planted along the pathway. Also, trees in the Anderson downtown business district have repeatedly been vandalized. If the grant is funded, it will provide decorative metal protection for these trees.

By motion made and seconded (Hawes/Comnick), the staff recommendation passed unanimously.

There being no other business to discuss, chair Moty adjourned the meeting at 5:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel S. Little, Executive director

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