



**DATE:** October 8, 2018

**TO:** Transportation Authority of Marin Finance and Policy Executive Committee

**FROM:** Dianne Steinhauser, Executive Director  
Nicholas Nguyen, Principal Project Delivery Manager

**SUBJECT:** Review and Approve Comment Letter to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission  
Regarding Current State Route 37 Planning Efforts (Action), Agenda Item No. 6

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#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Review and approve comment letter to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and/or SR 37 Policy Committee regarding current State Route (SR) 37 planning efforts, requesting its support and RM3 funding to study levee deficiency in Segment A and to prepare an environmental document for the whole corridor, inclusive of Segments A, B and C, for the ultimate project.

#### **GENERAL BACKGROUND:**

Highway 37 is a key transportation corridor linking the four North Bay counties. Due to its strategic transportation role and environmentally sensitive natural footprint, Highway 37 has been the subject of various long-range planning studies conducted by UC Davis (UCD), the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), MTC, and Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM).

The corridor is broken up into three segments. Segment A is from Hwy 101 to Hwy 121 with 3.4 miles in Marin and 3.9 miles in Sonoma. Segment B is from Hwy 121 to Mare Island with 2.3 miles in Sonoma and 7 miles in Solano. Segment C is 4.4 miles entirely in Solano. Each segment has unique challenges and vary in how those challenges can be met.

The Corridor has been cooperatively developed for over three years by the coalition of the four county transportation agencies in Marin, Sonoma, Napa, and Solano, Caltrans and MTC/ BATA, in concert with numerous resource agency partners. Upcoming, there will be a decision by the partners on pursuing the scoping of an environmental document to widen the Segment B portion of the corridor, from State Route 121 at Sears Point, over to Mare Island. What transpires in the remainder of the Corridor is under discussion, specifically in Segment C through Vallejo, and Segment A from Highway 101 to State Route 121/ Sears Point. TAM is expected to weigh in on the overall corridor planning.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

Staff presented to the TAM Board on September 27, 2018, a detailed update of the current studies and activities of the SR 37 Policy Committee (see attached staff memo of the September meeting). The Board considered

staff's recommendation and approved sending a letter to MTC and/or the SR 37 Policy Committee. However, the Board referred the matter of reviewing the final letter to the Executive Committee.

The attached draft letter reflects the request and concerns that the Board shared; which were to solicit a share of funds from RM3 to further the development of a levee and road project for Segment A and an ultimate project environmental document inclusive of all three segments A, B and C. Staff believes that the recommended letter outlining TAM's position on the current and proposed work on the whole corridor will address the expectations of voters in originally approving RM3.

**FISCAL CONSIDERATION:**

There are no fiscal impacts to the recommended actions.

**NEXT STEPS:**

Staff will finalize and submit the letter to MTC and/or Policy Committee, and continue to engage with the SR 37 various Committees to define future priorities of the SR 37 corridor.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- A. September 27, 2018 TAM Board Meeting Staff Memo
- B. Draft Letter to MTC



**DATE:** September 27, 2018

**TO:** Transportation Authority of Marin Board of Commissioners

**FROM:** Dianne Steinhauser, Executive Director  
Nicholas Nguyen, Principal Project Delivery Manager

**SUBJECT:** Receive and Accept Independent State Route (SR) 37 Planning Studies From the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM), and Authorize Sending Comment Letter to MTC (Action), Agenda Item No. 8

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

Receive and accept staff presentations of the SR 37 MTC-prepared Final Transportation and Seal Level Rise Corridor Improvement Plan and the TAM-prepared Segment A - Sea Level Rise Corridor Improvement Study, consider progress happening in the corridor, and upcoming next steps. Authorize sending a comment letter to MTC outlining TAM's request for future planning of the corridor.

**GENERAL BACKGROUND:**

Highway 37 is a key transportation corridor linking the four North Bay counties. Due to its strategic transportation role and environmentally sensitive natural footprint, Highway 37 has been the subject of a long-range planning study conducted by UC Davis (UCD) and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). In addition, staff and elected officials from the four counties have been in discussion over the past three years about how local transportation authorities might play a role in advancing improvements in the corridor.

The corridor is broken up into three segments. Segment A is from Hwy 101 to Hwy 121 with 3.4 miles in Marin and 3.9 miles in Sonoma. Segment B is from Hwy 121 to Mare Island with 2.3 miles in Sonoma and 7 miles in Solano. Segment C is 4.4 miles entirely in Solano. Each segment has unique challenges and vary in how those challenges can be met.

The Corridor has been cooperatively developed for over three years by the coalition of the four county transportation agencies in Marin, Sonoma, Napa, and Solano, Caltrans and MTC/ BATA, in concert with numerous resource agency partners. Upcoming, there will be a decision by the partners on pursuing the scoping of an environmental document to widen the Segment B portion of the corridor, from State Route 121 at Sears Point, over to Mare Island. What transpires in the remainder of the Corridor is under discussion, specifically in Segment C through Vallejo, and Segment A from Highway 101 to State Route 121/ Sears Point. TAM is expected to weigh in on the overall corridor planning.

## DETAILED BACKGROUND AND PAST ACTIONS:

In September 2015, the TAM Board approved entering into a memorandum of understanding between the Napa Valley Transportation Authority (NVTA), the Solano Transportation Authority (STA), the Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) and the Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA). The intent of the MOU was to define how the four congestion management agencies (CMA) will work together in cooperation to successfully promote and expedite the delivery of improvements in the SR 37 Corridor to address the threat of sea level rise, traffic congestion, transit options and recreational activities. It also created the SR 37 Policy Committee on which Chair Moulton-Peters, Commissioners Arnold and Connolly serve representing TAM.

In January 2016, the TAM Board approved an agreement to fund TAM's share of a financial consultant to help assess likely costs, revenue sources and financial opportunities that will need to be addressed to complete a project in the corridor. Project Finance Advisory Ltd (PFAL) was selected and presented their final analysis to the Board in August 2017.

### MTC Corridor Improvement Plan

In January 2017, the TAM Board approved \$20,000 as TAM's contribution to matching funds for the SR 37 Transportation and Sea Level Rise Corridor Improvement Study, also referred to the Design Alternatives Analysis or Corridor Improvement Plan which was completed by MTC's consultant, Kimley Horn. The nearly \$1 million scope of work, funded primarily through MTC, focused on Segment B of the corridor which is located in Sonoma and Solano.

At that time, in January of 2017, TAM's representatives, TAM Chair Stephanie Moulton-Peters and Supervisors Damon Connolly and Judy Arnold, co-signed a letter outlining what Marin's goals were for the corridor and requesting several specific actions in MTC's Corridor Improvement Plan. This early vision, which remains valid today included the following expectations from Marin:

- Highway 37 should be treated as an interconnected system, not developing each segment separately
- Traffic signalization impacts at Lakeville Highway and traffic impacts on Highway 101 should be included in any analysis
- The flooding and sea-level rise risks, especially at Novato Creek, should be part of corridor planning

While the Corridor Plan was underway, Solano recommended a focused approach for the widening of Segment B from SR 121/ Sears Point to Mare Island. On May 10, 2017, STA approved Solano to be the lead agency for Segments B and C, which starts at the intersection of Highway 37/121 in Sonoma County and runs east to the interchange of Highway 37/80.

On June 8, 2017, the Chair of STA sent a letter informing TAM Commissioners who sit on the Policy Committee that Solano was taking the lead on Segment B and C and STA was looking forward to continued partnering on the SR 37 corridor.

In September of 2017, the MTC Draft Corridor Improvement Plan was released to the Policy Committee. Public outreach soliciting comments on the plan included four Public Open Houses. One Open House in each county of Solano, Sonoma, Marin and Napa were conducted in late September and early October.

On October 26, 2017, the MTC Draft Corridor Improvement plan was presented to the TAM Board as an update of the Policy Committee activities. TAM staff and other Marin County based agencies and organizations, such as the Marin County Department of Public Works and the Marin Audubon Society, submitted written comments to MTC staff.

On November 2, 2017, the SR 37 Policy Committee supported Segment B as the priority corridor segment with TAM Commissioners representing Marin County agreeing to support this finding provided that Segment A improvements would be actively considered and linked to improvements made in Segment B. As a result, MTC's study was finalized with detailed analysis of Segment B for operational and sea level rise improvements.

On February 9, 2018, the MTC Operation Committee approved additional scope to transition the SR37 Corridor Improvement Plan into a formal Caltrans Project Initiation Document (PID). The additional scope of work was approximately \$450,000 in consultant services of which MTC agreed to cover all of the costs.

On February 14, 2018, STA approved \$80,000 in Solano based funding to compensate Caltrans for oversight of the Segment B Project Initiation Document.

On March 1, 2018, the SR 37 Policy Committee was presented with the Final Corridor Improvement Plan including all appendices detailing Open House Summary, Comments and Responses to Comments. The Plan is a high-level assessment of key current and anticipated issues on SR 37 (see Attachment 1). Severe traffic congestion, recent flooding and anticipated sea level rise are the drivers behind the recommended near, mid and long-term improvements.

MTC included in the Final Corridor Improvement Plan a light analysis of sea-level rise topping levees protecting Highway 37 in Marin and Sonoma, from Highway 101 to SR121/Sears Point. The analysis did not address many of the technical aspects of addressing levee reconstruction and management and so was of limited value in deriving a levee reconstruction and management scope.

See attached summaries of findings from the Final Corridor Improvement Plan (see Attachment 3).

#### TAM invests in study of Segment A

In response to the Policy Committee's action in adopting a Final Corridor Improvement Plan focused on the widening of Highway 37 in Segment B, TAM embarked on an analysis of what it would take to raise Highway 37 in Segment A. To complement the detailed analysis that MTC conducted for the priority Segment B in Sonoma and Solano counties, staff engaged the assistance of HNTB engineers in late November 2017 to provide an analysis of long-term solutions for Segment A to include conceptual layouts and cost estimates for three alternatives: 1) a complete causeway, 2) a causeway/road levee hybrid and 3) reconstruction of SR37 to include the Novato Creek Bridge to Highway 101 (see Attachment 2).

TAM's analysis included a rough cost estimate of raising SR37 that varies by scope chosen, with the lowest cost solution at \$1.4 billion.

Staff felt it was imperative that TAM position itself to definitively promote Marin County's long-term interests in Segment A within Regional Measure 3 funds, which allocates \$100 million to the corridor,

#### Three Ultimate Design Alternatives from TAM - SR 37 Segment A Corridor Improvement Study

In response to the findings from these recent studies of the corridor, TAM's consultant, HNTB, provided technical assistance and prepared a study including conceptual plans for long-term integrated solutions to the anticipated SLR affecting Segment A.

### 1. Alternative 1

This option proposes to raise SR 37 on a causeway between US 101 and SR 121. The limits of improvements were dependent on the existing ground elevation compared to the calculated roadway elevation needed to meet for SLR. Lakeville Rd and Reclamation Rd will be elevated on embankment to conform to the proposed elevated SR 37. Proposed improvements to SR 37 between US101 and Lakeville Rd will be on a causeway. Where the existing roadway is above the calculated SLR elevation, the design only proposes to widen for the 12 feet multi-use path.

The preliminary planning cost estimate for Alternative 1 is \$1.83 Billion in 2018 dollars (\$842 Million in Marin Co and \$990 Million in Sonoma Co).

### 2. Alternative 2

This option is a hybrid option in which segment A will be a combination of embankment and causeway structure. The limits of the roadway on embankment was determined from the historic baylands boundary. It is assumed that the goal is to restore the surrounding environment back to its historic condition. As such, any of the current roadway below the projected SLR elevation will be elevated using a combination of a causeway structure and embankment. Where the existing roadway is above the projected SLR elevation, the design only proposes to widen for the 12 feet multi-use path.

The preliminary planning cost estimate for Alternative 2 is \$1.36 Billion in 2018 dollars (\$570 Mill in Marin Co and \$788 Mill in Sonoma Co).

### 3. Alternative 3

This option proposes to only raise the roadway between US 101 to just past Novato Creek to be above the projected SLR elevation. This segment was determined to be on a causeway structure as it falls within the historical baylands boundary and hydraulic connectivity between the north and south sides of SR 37 is easily achieved.

The preliminary planning cost estimate for Alternative 3 is \$364 Million in 2018 dollars (Marin Co only).

## **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:**

Through the completion of these two reports (MTC SR 37 Corridor Improvement Plan and TAM SR 37 Segment A Corridor Improvement Study), the roadmap addressing current and anticipated issues on the highway has been conceptually defined. An essential element that is missing is whether there is a levee reconstruction and management option that could jointly protect the existing Highway 37 in Segment A, perhaps the existing rail corridor as well, and protect other land uses.

Staff recommend that the Board reinforce its past principles in asking that the entire corridor from Highway 101 to interstate 80 be planned for improvements. While Segment A does not need widening, it remains exceptionally vulnerable to sea-level rise and related flooding. Staff recommend additional studies be conducted to determine if a levee reconstruction/ management scope could protect Highway 37, as well as other adjacent transportation facilities and land uses. This study, likely \$2-3 million in cost, should be a first effort under the RM3 framework of funds approved by voters.

A levee reconstruction and management proposal or a highway project to elevate Highway 37 through Segment A, would need to be further designed and environmentally reviewed. Many of the comments, specifically to the MTC SR 37 Corridor Improvement Plan, that were received from various stakeholders regarding the plan's

limitations and lack of specificity (e.g. cost estimates) were acknowledged by MTC staff with the understanding that the plan could not address the entire breadth of the corridor in fine detail and that future segment-specific studies and environmental clearance efforts would bridge these gaps in information. This is necessary for furthering solutions for Segment A.

To kick off some of this work, STA and MTC have committed funds to begin the Caltrans Project Initiation Document (PID) process for Segment B, to include an interim project adding lane capacity. While an interim project in Segment B appears to be supported, developing ultimate 20-year+/- improvements for only part of the corridor will not meet the public's expectations in Marin when they resoundingly approved the Regional Measure 3 toll increase. It does not address a significant corridor need: the impacts of sea-level rise in the lowest corridor segments, many of which are in Segment A.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Both of these concepts, a share of funds from RM3 to further the development of a project scope for Segment A and an ultimate project environmental document needing to include all three segments A, B and C, are recommended for inclusion in a letter to the Policy Committee and/or to MTC.

In the interim, TAM continues to work closely with the County of Marin to assess near and longer-term impacts around the Novato Creek area, including impacts on Highway 37. TAM and Marin County are conducting additional analysis of Segment A to provide more data and guidance utilizing an awarded Caltrans Planning Grant. The work will be done in partnership with Caltrans' Planning staff so that it would feed into a future PID document for Segment A.

With the recent passing of Regional Measure 3 on June 5<sup>th</sup> there will be \$100 million dollars allocated to the four North Bay CMAs for SR 37. It is envisioned that this RM 3 funding would cover Environmental Document work on a first phase set of improvements for Segment B, interchange improvements at SR 121/37, and evaluation, and scoping of improvements, including environmental work, for Segment A.

Staff believes that the recommended letter to the Policy Committee and/or MTC outlining TAM's position on the current and proposed work on the whole corridor will address the expectations of voters in approving RM3.

## **FISCAL CONSIDERATION:**

There are no fiscal impacts to the recommended actions.

## **NEXT STEPS:**

Staff will finalize and submit letter to MTC, and continue to engage with the SR 37 Policy Committee to define future priorities of the SR 37 corridor.

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

1. MTC SR 37 Corridor Improvement Plan (Available on the [TAM website](#))
2. TAM SR 37 Segment A Corridor Improvement Study (Available on the [TAM website](#))
3. Summary of Findings and Recommendations from Independent State Route 37 Improvement Studies from MTC and TAM

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## DRAFT

October 1, 2018

Mr. Steve Heminger  
Executive Director  
Metropolitan Transportation Commission  
375 Beale St, Suite 800  
San Francisco, CA 94105

**Subject:** *State Route 37 Sea Level Rise and Congestion Corridor Planning*

Dear Mr. Heminger:

In January 2017, the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM) submitted a letter to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC) expressing its appreciation for the Commission's support in addressing sea level rise and traffic congestion along the State Route 37 (SR 37) corridor from Highway 101 to Interstate 80. We remain devoted to the collaborative effort to date with MTC and the three other congestion management agencies involved. However, we are concerned about the path this planning effort has recently taken.

As you know, SR 37 is a key transportation corridor linking Marin, Sonoma, Napa, and Solano counties. Due to its strategic transportation role and environmentally sensitive natural footprint, SR 37 has been the subject of studies to determine how to address its congestion and its low-lying footprint. These included not only a long-range planning study that was conducted by UC Davis and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) between 2014 and 2015, but also the SR-37 Transportation and Sea Level Rise Corridor Improvement Plan (Corridor Plan) recently completed by MTC in conjunction with our Policy Advisory Committee comprised of elected officials representing the transportation authorities of Marin, Sonoma, Solano, and Napa.

TAM values the investment MTC is making in helping to study the corridor and the resulting Corridor Plan. Since developing this comprehensive overview report of the entire corridor, the counties have identified Segment B in Solano and Sonoma counties as the priority segment, due specifically to the current traffic congestion. MTC has partnered directly with these two counties to develop a major replacement project of Segment B with no other investments in Segment A between Highway 101 and State Route 121.

While we recognize the importance of resolving the congestion in Segment B as a first phase and supported this finding at the Policy Committee level, we continue to emphasize the importance of developing and, ultimately, implementing a corridor plan spanning the entire corridor. The ultimate plan should recognize SR 37 as an interconnected system, and not as disparate segments that can be managed and viewed separately. The policy decisions around financing and phasing traffic congestion relief, public access, sea level rise adaptation and environmental restoration should be crafted with the entire corridor in mind and not one particular county or segment. This sentiment

has been supported recently by various resource agencies. MTC's current approach is not aligned with this principle.

We agree that an important first step to the Corridor Plan is to reduce the traffic congestion experienced along Segment B where only one lane serves motorists in each direction. To address this, we understand that MTC is working with Solano County Transportation Authority (SCTA) to lead a capacity improvement project consisting of either a managed reversible 3<sup>rd</sup> lane or shoulder running lanes. Development of this project is moving quickly, including environmental review, and would likely be funded by an allocation of RM3 funds. It would be conceivably constructed using managed lane tolling. Our concern with this proposal is that MTC is proposing to conduct simultaneously a separate but concurrent environmental review for the Segment B ultimate replacement project, excluding any work or review of Segment A, between Highway 101 and State Route 121.

The UC Davis study, as well as the MTC Corridor Plan, has identified that the lowest elevation along SR 37 is located in Segment A. It is for this reason that Novato Creek occasionally over-tops its banks and floods SR 37, closing the highway to traffic. Most recently, this closure event occurred during January–February 2017, lasting for three weeks. Even if the congestion were reduced in Segment B and the highway were completely replaced, traffic would be completely stopped at Novato Creek due to these flood closures should additional funds for major levee and/or road improvement not be invested.

TAM and Marin County Public Works are continuing further research into safeguarding the lands and the portion of SR 37 in this segment. Together, our two agencies have committed over \$800,000 in grants and other local funds to conduct preliminary planning for the Novato Creek area. We are identifying further detailed work that will need to be done, to create a levee reconstruction and management project that will protect Highway 37 from Highway 101 to State Route 121. We are currently estimating the larger evaluation to cost \$2-\$3 million, with the environmental studies and design of that effort an additional \$15 million.

In closing, we deeply appreciate MTC's expertise and support in addressing the challenges of sea level rise adaptation and traffic congestion relief along SR 37. We value the partnership with our northern Bay Area counties and look forward to MTC coordination with our SR 37 Policy Advisory Committee to determine how to best utilize RM3 funds and phase projects within each segment to have cumulative beneficial effects.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please don't hesitate to contact us or TAM's Executive Director, Dianne Steinhauser, at 415-226-0820.

Sincerely,

Damon Connolly  
TAM Board  
Marin County Supervisor  
District 1  
MTC Commissioner

Judy Arnold  
TAM Board Vice-Chair  
Marin County Supervisor  
District 5

Stephanie Moulton-Peters  
TAM Board Chair  
Mill Valley Councilmember

cc: Andrew Fremier, MTC

Attachments: TAM January 2017 Letter  
Resource Agency Letters