



DATE: June 27, 2019

TO: Transportation Authority of Marin Board of Commissioners

FROM: Dianne Steinhauser, Executive Director
Derek McGill, Planning Manager
Scott McDonald, Senior Transportation Planner

SUBJECT: Accept Caltrans Planning Grant for Bus on Shoulder and Authorize Local Resolution of Support (Action), Agenda Item No. 7d

RECOMMENDATION

Review and approve the resolution Authorizing the Executive Director to execute Agreements with Caltrans to accept a Caltrans Planning Grant to conduct a Bus on Shoulder Feasibility Study for Highway 101 and approve matching funds from TAM required by the grant. Refer actions to the TAM Board for approval.

On June 10, the TAM Administration, Projects & Planning Executive Committee unanimously approved and referred this recommendation to the full TAM Board.

BACKGROUND

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. At its June 1, 2017 meeting, the TAM board approved a resolution supporting HOV hours of operations changes in conjunction with a number of improvements to benefit all users on the highway, including improvements such the completion of the Marin Sonoma Narrows, highway interchange improvements, ramp metering and a Bus on Shoulder Pilot Project.

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 November 2018, staff submitted a grant application to Caltrans for funding needed to conduct a Feasibility Study for a Bus on Shoulder Pilot Project. This study will enable partner participation to shape the outcome, including 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.

Additionally, the Bus on Shoulder Pilot Project was included in the initial project list submitted to MTC for the upcoming Regional Transportation Plan update, Plan Bay Area 2050, as discussed at the TAM Board in April 2019.

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. In order to accept this grant, an agreement with Caltrans must be entered into, and a resolution of support by the TAM board is required (Attachment A).

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.

TAM staff will convene a project development team to conduct this study including staff from Marin Transit, Golden Gate Transit, SMART, California Highway Patrol, Caltrans, MTC, County of Marin, and the cities of Novato and San Rafael. 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.

The Proposed FY2019-20 TAM Annual Budget, which is currently under the 30-day public comment period, will be updated to reflect the revenue and expenditure that will occur in FY2019-20.

NEXT STEPS

TAM will enter into agreement with Caltrans and staff will convene the project development team. An RFP will be issued and a qualified consultant team will be hired to conduct the study. Staff will return to the Board for approval of the contract award.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Resolution Authorizing the Executive Director to Execute the Caltrans Agreements.

TAM RESOLUTION NO. 2019-05

RESOLUTION OF THE TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY OF MARIN AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE AGREEMENTS WITH THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR THE MARIN COUNTY US-101 BUS ON SHOULDER FEASIBILITY STUDY

WHEREAS, The Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM) is eligible to receive Federal and State Funding for certain transportation planning related plans, through the California Department of Transportation; and,

WHEREAS, a Restricted Grant Agreement is needed to be executed with the California Department of Transportation before such funds can be claimed through the Transportation Planning Grant Programs; and,

WHEREAS, the California Department of Transportation has awarded TAM \$308,000 in funding for the Marin County US 101 Bus on Shoulder Feasibility study; and,

Whereas, the TAM board authorizes matching funds totaling \$42,000 as a match to the state grant;

WHEREAS, TAM wishes to delegate authorization to execute these agreements and any amendments thereto;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the TAM Board of Commissioners, hereby authorizes the Executive Director to execute all Restricted Grant Agreements and any amendments thereto with the California Department of Transportation.

PASSED AND ADOPTED at a regular meeting of the Transportation Authority of Marin held on the 27th day of June, 2019, by the following vote:

AYES: Commissioners:

NOES: Commissioners:

ABSTAIN: Commissioners:

ABSENT: Commissioners:

Judy Arnold, Chair
Transportation Authority of Marin

ATTEST:

Dianne Steinhauser
Executive Director

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