



DATE: July 8, 2019

TO: Transportation Authority of Marin Board of Commissioners

FROM: Dianne Steinhauser, Executive Director
Dan Cherrier, Deputy Executive Director

SUBJECT: Letter to Caltrans Requesting Financial Assistance with the Bellam Boulevard Safety Project (Action) – Agenda Item 12

RECOMMENDATION

Send the attached letter from the TAM Chair to the Caltrans District 4 Director requesting financial assistance with the Bellam Boulevard Project, widening the offramp from Northbound Highway 101 to and through Bellam Boulevard, improving safety of Highway 101 and improving access to the Richmond San Rafael Bridge.

BACKGROUND

On July 28, 2016, the TAM Board allocated \$7,700,000 of Measure A Bond Reserve Funds for projects that improve access from Northbound Highway 101 to the Richmond San Rafael Bridge. The two routes to the bridge include East Sir Francis Drake Blvd from U.S.101 to I-580 and the northbound off ramp from U.S. 101 to Bellam Blvd. This work also included preliminary work on a direct connector from Northbound 101 to Eastbound 580 which help to facilitate agreement on a new direct connector being part of Regional Measure 3. The East Sir Francis Drake Project has been completed.

The scope of the Bellam Blvd improvements involves improving safety on Northbound Highway 101 by allowing for additional storage on the on-ramp and reducing the stopped traffic in the right lane of Highway 101. Other improvements include, adding a second lane to the off-ramp to separate Highway 101 traffic turning left at Bellam from traffic going straight across the ramp or turning right. In addition, this Project will add a second right turn lane to help with traffic merging from the I-580 off-ramp, reconfigure the crosswalk across Bellam, and make improvements to the eastbound on-ramp.

The TAM Board approved the California Environmental Quality Act document in 2018 along with an interagency agreement with Marin County. Marin County Public Works has agreed to administer the construction contract. Marin County hired the construction management firm for this project in late 2018.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Recent developments have increased the cost of the Project. Additional geotechnical investigations have revealed that the foundation systems must be updated to account for “Bay Mud”. In addition, the required lightweight fill makes burying the Aerially Deposit Lead (ADL) impractical, requiring additional off-haul costs. Estimated cost increase due to the geotechnical investigation and the off-haul of the ADL is approximately \$1.1 million. The second development is the higher than anticipated right of way cost

associated with the tree removal and retaining wall access. Additional right of way and associated redesign cost is expected to be \$280,000.

The current budget for the Bellam Boulevard Project is \$4.9 million with money budgeted from the Measure A Transportation Sales Tax interest funds and the bond debt reserve account. With the additional cost increase, total project cost will increase to \$6.3 million. At the present time, a funding source for the cost increase has not been identified.

FISCAL CONSIDERATION

Staff are recommending that a request be made of Caltrans to split the total cost of the Project 50/50. This is a very important safety project and the Caltrans State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP) program is designed to fund projects that improve safety. A request will be made of Caltrans to amend half of this Project into the 2018 SHOPP program or look at programming for the 2020 SHOPP.

Staff believes it is prudent to request \$3.2 million, in order to preserve some funds for additional cost increases or higher than expected construction bids.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will continue the work with the design consultant to finalize the right of way agreements and to implement the design changes as soon as possible. At this point the Bellam Boulevard Project will be delayed until next construction season with advertising expected early in 2020, assuming that the funding shortfall can be solved.

Should Caltrans agree to assisting this Project with SHOPP funds, a Project Cooperative Agreement will be required which normally requires several months to execute. If Caltrans does not agree to help with the funding, staff will return with recommended project scope changes.

ATTACHMENTS

Letter to Caltrans District 4 Director



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Judy Arnold

July 8, 2019

Mr. Tony Tavares
Director, District 4
Caltrans District 4
P.O. Box 23660
Oakland, CA 94623-0660

Dear Mr. Tavares:

The Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM) has been working diligently with your staff to pursue an important safety project on Northbound U.S. 101. The Project at the Bellam Boulevard exit will help to remove daily vehicles stopped on U.S. 101 waiting to take the off-ramp. The Project will reduce rear-end type collisions by adding a second lane to increase storage and through-put on the on-ramp and improve circulation at the Bellam Boulevard traffic signal.

The TAM Board authorized funding for this project in 2016 and our staff have been working to complete this project as an encroachment permit with Caltrans oversight. Unfortunately, recent additional design work has disclosed the presence of unsuitable foundation material and Aerially Deposited Lead that must be off-hauled rather than buried. Our revised Project estimate has increased to \$6.3 million, which far exceeds TAM's ability to fund this priority safety project. Due to the projected cost increase, TAM is requesting that Caltrans consider funding half of the project out of the SHOPP program. TAM decided years ago that the safety improvements associated with this Project were worth the investment of our local sales tax funds and we have a strong desire to see this Project be completed.

The funding partnership between Caltrans and local agencies is critical to ensure projects can be delivered and this request demonstrates the importance of that partnership. TAM has committed to paying for half of the Project, administering the construction and design contracts and addressing any additional project cost increases. Our request from the SHOPP program will remain fixed at \$3.2 million. Should you have any questions, please contact TAM's Executive Director, Dianne Steinhauer, at (415) 226-0815 or TAM's Acting Deputy Executive Director, Dan Cherrier, at (415) 226-0829.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Judy Arnold
Chair, Transportation Authority of Marin

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