



BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MAY 23, 2003

AGENDA ITEM NO. 03-05-4-B
ACTION REQUESTED - APPROVE

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION AND ACTIONS

Meeting of May 16, 2003

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Transportation Committee was called to order by Chair Joe Kellejian (North County Coastal). Other voting Committee members in attendance were Vice Chair Dick Murphy (City of San Diego), Mickey Cafagna (North County Inland), Art Madrid (East County), Jerry Rindone (South Bay), Ron Roberts (County of San Diego), Bob Emery (MTDB), Judy Ritter (NCTD), and Terry Johnson (San Diego County Regional Airport Authority). Also in attendance were alternates Corky Smith (North County Inland), Jack Dale (East County), Phil Monroe (South Bay), and Mary Sessom (San Diego County Regional Airport Authority) as well as ex-officio member Pedro Orso-Delgado (Caltrans) and SANDAG Chair Ron Morrison.

CONSENT ITEMS (1-2)

1. 2002 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (RTIP) ADMINISTRATIVE AMENDMENT NO. 10 - STATE ROUTE 905 (APPROVE)

Due to the current suspension on Traffic Congestion Relief Program (TCRP) allocations, there is a \$3 million shortfall for the SR 905 project, which is in immediate need of funding to purchase a parcel for mitigation purposes. This administrative RTIP amendment would temporarily move \$3 million of Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) funds from SANDAG's RSTP Reserve to cover the shortfall in TCRP funding. The RSTP funding is expected to be programmed back to the RSTP Reserve in January 2004, when federal Corridor and Borders Program funds can replace the RSTP funds.

Action: The Transportation Committee approved Administrative Amendment No. 10 to the 2002 RTIP.

2. CONGESTION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (CMP) QUARTERLY REPORT (INFORMATION)

This report summarizes the activities to date since the adoption of the 2002 CMP update by the SANDAG Board of Directors in January 2003. Four CMP workshops with local agencies have been held, and work on the first round of Deficiency Plans is scheduled to begin in early FY 2004. The Transportation Committee received this item as information.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

Eric Pahlke, SANDAG, reported that the Governor's proposed May Revised Budget maintains TCRP funding for projects already allocated ("voted") by the California Transportation Commission (CTC). In addition, the Governor is proposing that all funds transferred from the TCRP to the General Fund be repaid by FY 2009.

Pedro Orso-Delgado, Caltrans, stated that if the State Legislature concurs with the Governor's budget proposal, there would be sufficient funding to complete many of the region's TCRP-funded projects, such as the I-5/I-805 merge, I-15 Managed Lanes, SR 56, and SR 905.

The Transportation Committee requested periodic updates on the status of the TCRP and progress of the region's TCRP-funded projects.

REPORTS

4. LOSSAN RAIL CORRIDOR SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS (SUPPORT)

Staff summarized the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) rail corridor, which currently serves Amtrak intercity passenger rail, Coaster and Metrolink commuter rail, and Burlington Northern Santa Fe freight service. Since 2001, the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) and Caltrans have been working on technical studies for the coastal rail corridor between Los Angeles and San Diego. These studies will lead to a program-level environmental impact report/environmental impact statement (PEIR/EIS) for each agency.

Steve Schibuola of the IBI Group, consultant to CHSRA and Caltrans, summarized the alternative alignments evaluated in the Encinitas and Del Mar areas. The screening criteria used for the evaluation considered constructability, train performance, community, and environmental issues. CHSRA and Caltrans staffs are recommending retaining three of the four alternatives in the Encinitas area, and three of the five alternatives in the Del Mar area for further analysis. Chair Kellejian stated that at its May 9, 2003 meeting, the San Diego Regional High-Speed Rail Task Force recommended that the Transportation Committee support the proposed screening recommendations.

Mr. Schibuola stated that CHSRA has assumed only non-electric steel-wheel-on-rail train technology for the coastal rail corridor between Irvine and San Diego. In other statewide corridors, including San Diego's Inland Corridor, an electrified, fully grade-separated high speed passenger rail system is being studied. CHSRA and Caltrans are scheduled to release the technical studies in Summer 2003. CHSRA expects to release the draft PEIR/EIS for the statewide high-speed rail system in August 2003, and Caltrans expects to release the PEIR/EIS for the LOSSAN corridor in late 2003/early 2004.

A Transportation Committee member asked whether the Coastal Corridor and the Inland Corridor were still being considered as alternative alignments in the San Diego region. Mr. Schibuola replied that both corridors show strong ridership forecasts; therefore, both may be retained and would likely be phased into the statewide system over time.

The Committee discussed other potential uses for the corridor if the rail line were removed from the Del Mar bluffs. It was suggested that the property could be used for continuing the Coastal Rail Trail. A Committee member also asked whether grade separations were being considered in the downtown San Diego area. Mr. Schibuola replied that a short trench between Sassafra Street and the Santa Fe Depot, which would separate the rail line from vehicular traffic, was included in the "high build" alternative.

The Committee discussed the feasibility of the proposed tunnels and trenches. A Committee member asked whether seismic impacts were being evaluated. Mr. Schibuola responded that at the program-level, CHSRA has made sure that no tunnel or trench crosses an existing fault line to minimize the potential for earthquake impacts. Subsequent project-specific environmental documents and detailed design work would be required.

Action: The Transportation Committee supported the LOSSAN rail corridor screening recommendations in the Encinitas and Del Mar areas and authorized staff to transmit this position to Caltrans and to the CHSRA Board of Directors at their May 27, 2003 meeting.

5. **SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT BOARD (MTDB) OPERATING BUDGET UPDATE (INFORMATION)**

Staff summarized MTDB's projected operating budget issues for Fiscal Years 2004 through 2008. Since 1993, MTDB has been dealing with an operating "structural deficit," in which recurring revenues have not been sufficient to cover recurring expenses. This structural deficit has been bridged each year by implementing operating efficiencies and cost control measures as well as by using non-recurring resources.

Staff noted that operating costs are rising faster than recurring revenues. Staff summarized increases in diesel, compressed natural gas (CNG), and electricity costs over time. Other volatile budget components include rising costs for risk management, workers compensation, and benefits, and declining sales-tax based revenues available for operations, including Transportation Development Act (TDA) and *TransNet* funding.

Staff highlighted the actions taken by the MTD Board of Directors to balance the FY 2004 budget. These include using budget reserves, deferring certain capital projects, eliminating less productive services, implementing fare increases, seeking new sources of revenue, and requesting a change in the *TransNet* transit capital/operations formula (the subject of Transportation Committee Agenda Item No. 6). The MTD Board will be continuing its budget process at its May 22 meeting, will hold a public hearing on the budget and proposed service changes on June 12, and is scheduled to adopt the agency's FY 2004 budget on June 26, 2003.

A Transportation Committee member suggested that MTDB pursue recovering higher energy charges resulting from the energy industry's collusion. Staff responded that this may be possible as part of the statewide effort to recover excessive energy charges.

The Committee discussed the existing process for evaluating and eliminating less productive services. MTDB has an existing service evaluation policy (Policy No. 43), and the North San Diego County Transit Development Board (NCTD) also has similar service evaluation criteria

in its Short-Range Transit Plan (SRTP) and adopted fiscal policies dealing with transit service levels. A Committee member asked for the history of MTD Board votes on service changes over the past three years.

The Committee also discussed the need to maintain lifeline services for transit dependents. It was noted that as part of the consolidation under SB 1703, SANDAG's Transportation Committee would be reviewing all future service evaluations after July 1, 2003.

Public Comment

Robert Hoffman stated his opinion that public transit is not a marketable transportation service.

Lynne Baker, Endangered Habitats League, voiced her support for improving public transit services as an alternative to freeway travel. She supports improving the frequency of transit to encourage more ridership.

A Committee member noted that the San Diego region is ranked among the lowest in local taxes supporting public transit operations. The Committee discussed the need to consider this issue as part of the future extension of the *TransNet* program.

6. REQUESTED CHANGE TO *TransNet* ORDINANCE FOR TRANSIT OPERATING SUPPORT (RECOMMEND)

Staff stated that one of the strategies adopted by MTDB to address its multi-year operating budget issues is a request to change the level of operating support from the *TransNet* program. The current *TransNet* Ordinance allows up to 20 percent of the *TransNet* funds available each year for transit purposes to be used for operations. The Ordinance dedicates the remaining 80 percent toward the rail transit capital projects specified in the *TransNet* Expenditure Plan and bus capital projects to support express bus services in the I-15 corridor.

The *TransNet* Ordinance anticipated the need to make changes over the 20-year life of the program and included the ability to amend most provisions of the Ordinance with a two-thirds vote of the SANDAG Board of Directors.

MTDB has requested changing the existing 80/20 transit capital/operations formula to a 62/38 distribution. The 62 percent for transit capital purposes would cover MTDB's current commitments, including completing the Mission Valley East light rail transit (LRT) extension and other previously approved capital projects, debt service costs, and project development work on the Mid-Coast extension to University Towne Centre. The remaining 38 percent would be available for transit operating support and for project development work on MTDB's Transit First Showcase and Early Action bus rapid transit (BRT) projects.

NCTD supports the requested change to the *TransNet* transit formula, because it would provide future flexibility in funding. Staff stated that a letter was provided to the Committee from City of San Marcos Councilmember Lee Thibadeau opposing the requested Ordinance change.

To make it easier for the public to understand, a Committee member recommended a 60/40 transit capital/operations formula in lieu of the original 62/38 formula request. Staff noted that a 60/40 distribution would provide sufficient funding to complete MTDB's current capital commitments. A Committee member asked whether increasing the percentage available for transit operations from 38 percent to 40 percent would allow MTDB to reconsider its proposed fare increase. Tom Larwin, MTDB, replied that the MTD Board already approved the fare increase, which goes into effect July 1, 2003.

The Committee recognized that as the San Diego region's public transit system matures, less capital funding may be needed for system expansion, while more funding may be needed to support transit operations. Committee members noted that the requested *TransNet* formula change received unanimous support of both the MTD and NCTD Boards of Directors.

A Committee member asked what other changes could be made by a two-thirds vote of the SANDAG Board. Staff replied that the *TransNet* Ordinance requires a vote of the people to change the amount of the tax (½%), the duration of the tax (20 years), the overall allocation of the revenue (one-third each to highways, transit, and local streets and roads), and the prohibition of the use of *TransNet* funds for the portion of SR 56 in the City of San Diego's Future Urbanizing Area. The Ordinance specifically allows the amendment of any other provision of the Ordinance by a two-thirds vote of the SANDAG Board acting as the San Diego County Regional Transportation Commission.

Action: The Transportation Committee recommended to the SANDAG Board of Directors that the *TransNet* Ordinance be amended to provide up to 40 percent of the annual revenues from FY 2004 through FY 2008 for transit operating purposes and other transit service improvements, such as the development of Transit First Showcase/Early Action BRT projects.

7. TRANSIT POLICIES BEING CONSIDERED FOR THE CONSOLIDATED AGENCY (RECOMMEND)

Staff stated that as part of the consolidation process under SB 1703, SANDAG and transit agency staffs have been reviewing board policies in effect at SANDAG, MTDB, and NCTD to determine whether new or updated policies should be adopted in preparation for SANDAG's new transit-related responsibilities.

As a result of this review, staff has prepared a SANDAG Board of Directors policy on Transit Service Planning, which was previously approved by the Board in February 2003 as part of the initial transition plan for transit planning and programming activities. Staff highlighted the different responsibilities of SANDAG and the transit operators under the proposed policy. Staff summarized other key policies that are being evaluated and which may be brought to future Transportation Committee meetings.

Staff reported that the Executive Committee also is considering 12 new or updated administrative and procedural Board policies. These policies would be brought to the SANDAG Board in June 2003 along with the proposed Transit Service Planning policy.

Action: The Transportation Committee recommended that the SANDAG Board of Directors approve the Transit Service Planning Policy at its June 27, 2003 meeting.

GARY L. GALLEGOS
Executive Director