



Memorandum

TO: BUILDING BETTER
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

FROM: James R. Helmer

SUBJECT: STATUS REPORT ON CAPITOL
EXPRESSWAY RELINQUISHMENT

DATE: 01-25-06

Approved

Date

RECOMMENDATION

Accept status report on the relinquishment of Capitol Expressway between Interstate 680 and State Route 87 by the County of Santa Clara to the City of San José.

BACKGROUND

Capitol Expressway extends from Interstate 680 to State Route 87, a length of 8.7 miles. The facility has 18 signalized intersections and the current pavement condition is rated as “very good.” The estimated annual cost to operate and maintain the facility is \$800,000.

In December 2004, Department of Transportation (DOT) staff submitted an initial recommendation to the BBT Committee to pursue the relinquishment of Capitol Expressway. Based upon adopted regional plans, Capitol Expressway is proposed to convert from an auto-oriented, high speed expressway to a multi-modal boulevard with light rail transit (LRT) services, bicycle lanes, sidewalks, and landscaping. The converted expressway is not consistent with the design standards used by the County for their expressway system. As a result, Capitol Expressway has been proposed for relinquishment from the County to the City.

The VTA’s Capitol Expressway LRT extension project is the primary reason that the City is considering the expressway relinquishment. However, with the uncertainties that have arisen over the implementation schedule of the LRT extension, staff thoroughly reviewed the rationale and benefits behind the relinquishment proposal. The start date for construction of the project remains unspecified. In March, the VTA Board is scheduled to consider a proposed Revenue and Expenditure Plan, which assumes a new 30-year ¼-cent sales tax to support the construction and operation of various projects, including the LRT extension. Therefore, the implementation of the LRT extension project is subject to both VTA Board approval of the Expenditure Plan in March and voter approval of the ¼-cent sales tax measure in November 2006.

The status of the Capitol Expressway relinquishment also has implications for implementation of the “Evergreen – East Hills Vision Strategy.” Many of the proposed transportation improvements for the Evergreen area are not consistent with current County design guidelines, and would require very significant exceptions by the County if relinquishment did not occur. For example, the creation of an access point to the expressway from the Arcadia property is a crucial component of the Evergreen Development Plan, yet would be a significant exception to the County’s design guidelines. Therefore, Capitol Expressway relinquishment would help to facilitate the development process in the Evergreen area.

ANALYSIS

The Department of Transportation (DOT) and the County of Santa Clara have crafted a draft agreement for the relinquishment of Capitol Expressway. The draft agreement provides the City with design authority for all future improvements at the time of agreement execution. This design authority enables the City to implement plans to convert the expressway into a multi-modal boulevard with LRT services, bicycle lanes, sidewalks, and landscaping.

The timing for final approval of this proposed agreement is expected to be approximately one month before the approval of the overall “Evergreen – East Hills Vision Strategy”, and is anticipated before the end of fiscal year 2005-06. The purpose of this timing is to ensure that the Evergreen development process has advanced to a point of certainty that justifies the City accepting the additional operating and maintenance responsibilities that relinquishment of Capitol Expressway will bring.

The draft agreement divides Capitol Expressway into segments, and specifies triggers and dates for the relinquishment of each segment. According to the draft agreement, Capitol Expressway will be divided into three segments and relinquished according to the following triggers/dates:

Capitol Expressway Segment	Relinquishment Trigger/Date
1. Interstate 680 to Quimby Road	Start of construction for the VTA’s LRT extension project
2. Quimby Road to Tuers Road	Start of construction for improvements in the Evergreen area, or July 1, 2010, whichever is sooner
3. Tuers Road to Route 87	July 1, 2010

It is noted that the City currently has limited funds to support the operations and maintenance of the expressway. This phased plan affords the City flexibility to proceed with implementation of planned improvements to segments of the expressway, such as those in the Evergreen area, without assuming operations and maintenance costs before the improvements occur.

Through a preliminary review, DOT staff has estimated the annual costs to operate and maintain Capitol Expressway at \$800,000 annually. A more detailed review, including engineering analysis, field reviews and condition assessments, will occur before the final agreement is proposed for approval to the City Council.

Given the uncertainty of the implementation plan for the VTA LRT extension, the relinquishment triggers are particularly significant to the City. For instance, if construction of the LRT extension is delayed, the City would assume control of only the segments needed for other improvement projects. In short, the terms of the draft agreement allow the City to achieve its expressway improvement and development related objectives, while postponing the operations and maintenance responsibilities to a more appropriate time in the future. The agreement also seeks to meet the needs and interests of the County of Santa Clara, the Valley Transportation Authority, and the Evergreen Developers. County staff is reviewing the terms of the agreement currently, and is expected to seek County Board approval in the near future.

COORDINATION

This report has been coordinated with the Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement. The major elements of the agreement have been coordinated with the County Roads and Airport Department. The continued efforts to advance the relinquishment of Capitol Expressway have been coordinated with the Evergreen Developers.

JAMES R. HELMER

Director of Transportation