

# Memorandum

**TO:** BUILDING BETTER  
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

**FROM:** James R. Helmer

**SUBJECT: STATUS REPORT ON CAPITOL  
EXPRESSWAY RELINQUISHMENT**

**DATE:** 05-25-05

Approved



Date 5/31/05

## RECOMMENDATION

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

## BACKGROUND

In December 2004, Department of Transportation (DOT) staff submitted an initial recommendation to pursue the relinquishment of Capitol Expressway to the BBT Committee. Capitol Expressway provides significant traffic capacity, allowing neighborhood circulation and freeway access to the Evergreen District in the City of San José. Significant planning activities are underway in the Evergreen District, which are likely to change the design character of the facility.

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 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, the Capitol Expressway has been proposed for relinquishment from the County to the City.

It should be noted, in 1995, the County of Santa Clara relinquished to the City of San José the portion of Capitol Expressway from Almaden Expressway to State Route 87. The remainder of Capitol Expressway, from State Route 87 to Interstate 680 currently remains within the jurisdiction of the County of Santa Clara.

## ANALYSIS

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.

Department of Transportation (DOT) and County of Santa Clara staff have been crafting an agreement that will allow for the relinquishment of Capitol Expressway based upon specific agreed upon criteria and a predetermined schedule. The criteria include, adoption of City design authority at the time of agreement execution, receiving the facility in good pavement condition, and identification of specific relinquishment “triggers”.

It is noted that the City of San José currently has limited funds to support the operation and maintenance of the expressway and staff has recommended a phased implementation of the relinquishment. DOT staff has proposed that the facility be relinquished in three phases as follows:

<b>Capitol Expressway Segment</b>	<b>Relinquishment Trigger</b>
Interstate 680 to Quimby	Capitol Light Rail Extension or Specified Date (Whichever is earlier)
Quimby to McLaughlin	Evergreen Development Improvements or Specified Date
McLaughlin to Route 87	Specified Date

Timing for the relinquishment of these phases would be determined by the agreed upon “triggers” included in the final relinquishment agreement. Among these triggers are improvements to convert Capitol Expressway, which are now being designed as part of the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority’s (VTA) light rail extension project to the Eastridge/Neiman area. Also, new development in the Evergreen area is proposing improvements to the Expressway in the Neiman to Route 101 segment. Both projects will be facilitated by formally resolving the issue of “design control” and ownership of the Expressway.

It is important to note, there are several considerations that may have a major effect on the timing of the relinquishment of any portion of Capitol Expressway.

- First, while construction of the Capitol Light Rail extension is proposed for 2008, it may be delayed as a result of VTA’s ongoing fiscal concerns.
- Second, approval of the Evergreen Smart Growth development plan has been slowed, potentially pushing the start of any development to 2007.
- Third, the City is facing a \$22 million annual funding shortfall for Citywide pavement maintenance. The City has no capacity to absorb the increased maintenance cost for Capitol Expressway without impacting Citywide pavement conditions. The City’s financial ability to accept relinquishment of the Expressway is therefore dependent upon the availability of new pavement maintenance funding from federal, state and/or local sources.

DOT staff continues to discuss the identification of a specified date for final relinquishment with the County in an effort to finalize the agreement and expedite its adoption. DOT staff will work to craft a relinquishment agreement that meets San José's needs and accommodates the County's interests as well. DOT staff will present the full agreement to the City Council upon completion of negotiations with the County.

*for James R. Helmer*  
JAMES R. HELMER  
Director of Transportation