



# Memorandum

**TO:** BUILDING BETTER  
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

**FROM:** James R. Helmer

**SUBJECT:** CAPITOL EXPRESSWAY  
RELINQUISHMENT

**DATE:** 09-21-05

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Approved

Date

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

Accept report on the status of relinquishing Capitol Expressway from the County to the City.

## **BACKGROUND**

Based on adopted regional plans, the design character for portions of 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 and as a result the Capitol Expressway is proposed for relinquishment from the County to the City.

City and County staff have been negotiating an agreement on the relinquishment issue. This report provides an update to the Building Better Transportation Committee on this topic.

## **ANALYSIS**

Capitol Expressway extends from Route 680 to 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 average annual cost to operate and maintain the facility is \$800,000.

Based on City and County staff discussions to date, there is general consensus on dividing the relinquishment into 3 segments:

- Segment 1: Route 680 to Quimby – Relinquishment would be triggered by start of construction for the VTA’s light rail extension project to the Eastridge/Neiman area.
- Segment 2: Quimby to McLaughlin – Relinquishment would be triggered by start of construction for improvements associated with new development in the Evergreen area,

based on the “Evergreen - East Hills Vision Strategy”, currently under development. These improvements provide enhanced traffic flow, new pedestrian facilities, increased street lighting and attractive median islands.

- Segment 3: McLaughlin to Route 87 - Relinquishment would be triggered by a specific date that would generally follow the relinquishment of Segments 1 and 2.

Overall, the County desires a specific end date at which the entire length of Capitol Expressway would be relinquished to the City. Current negotiations have considered an end date in the range of 2008 to 2012. The City desires to have Capitol Expressway “design control” for both the LRT and Evergreen projects, at the time the relinquishment agreement is executed. This helps facilitate implementation of both projects by providing clarity of approval authority for street infrastructure.

At this time, a significant issue exists over the implementation schedule for the VTA’s Capitol Expressway LRT extension project. This project is the primary reason that the City is considering the expressway relinquishment. Previously the VTA’s goal was to begin construction of the project in 2008. However, this was based on the assumption of having a successful ½-cent transportation sales tax measure approved in November 2006. The current direction of the VTA Board is to only consider a ¼-cent tax measure, and as a result the earliest start of construction date the VTA is considering for the LRT project is now 2014. In the event a new transportation sales tax measure is not approved, the LRT project schedule would likely be further extended. Due to the current uncertainty over the implementation schedule for the Capitol Expressway LRT project, staff suggests deferring further consideration of the expressway relinquishment agreement until funding for the LRT project is more certain.

The status of the Capitol Expressway relinquishment has implications for implementation of the “Evergreen - East Hills Vision Strategy”. The Strategy is scheduled to be complete and forwarded to the City Council in Spring 2006. Staff is reviewing options to facilitate near-term development in Evergreen without requiring relinquishment of Capitol Expressway.

Staff will be available at the Committee meeting to address questions and support further discussion of this topic.

JAMES R. HELMER  
Director of Transportation