Highway 37 Stewardship Study: Stakeholder Meeting (#2) Notes

May 24, 2011

Mare Island – USGS San Francisco Bay Estuary Field Station

Present:

Helene Le Maitre	UC Davis
Fraser Shilling	UC Davis
Norm Yenni	Landowner HWY 37
Ken Tipon	Sacred sites Protection - Graton Rancheria
Jeanne Gorham	Caltrans D4 Landscape Architect
Leigh Sharp	Napa County Resource Conservation District
Scott Briggs	Sonoma County PRMO
Tito Sasaki	North Bay Agricultural Alliance, SCFB
David Vautin	Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Joe Peterson	Caltrans D4 - Hydraulics
Robin Amatya	Caltrans D4 - Hydraulics
Jim Haire	Farmer
Susanne Von Rosenberg	GAIA Consulting, Inc.
Eliot Hurwitz	Napa County Transportation Planning Agency
Lee Taubeneck	Caltrans District 4 – Deputy Director of Transportation Planning
Steve Ehret	Sonoma County Regional Parks
Rolf Ohlemutz	Vallejo Sanitation District
Leandra Swent	Sonoma County Resource Conservation District
Maureen Gaffney	Association of Bay Area Governments - Bay Trail
Joseph Aguilar	Caltrans D4 – System Planning
Maggie Weems	North Bay Agricultural Alliance /Canalways
Tom Gandesbery	Coastal Conservancy
John Yeakel	Caltrans D4 – Environmental Planning
Katie Benouar	Caltrans – Director's Office
Louis Terratos	San Pablo Bay NAR - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Christopher Devick	Moffatt & Nichol
Erik Alm	Caltrans D4 – System Planning
Robert Guerrero	Solano Transportation Authority
Jere V. Starks	Infineon Raceway
Karen Weiss	Bay Conservation and Development Commission
Devin Chatoian	Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria
Lorelle Ross	Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria
John Nemeth	SMART Rail District
Julian Meisler	Sonoma Land Trust

1) Welcome / Introductions of each participant

There are many issues and pressures in this SR 37 Stewardship Study that we want to get on the table, inform each other and discuss improved processes or strategies to address them. Among the issues:

- Traffic demand increases over time / what the road handles
- Sea Level Rise / expected habitat change
- Tidal Flows/Sediment (both a long-term and near-term issue)
- Preserving farmland and protected lands
- Runoff pollution
- Impact of maintenance activities

We're not going to solve all of these issues here, but a key goal is to look at how to improve our communication and decisionmaking to make addressing these issues a whole lot easier. An early first step in this process is for all of us to better know who we are, what we do, and know what our most important issues are.

Notes from introductions:

- Grayton Rancheria Vice-Chair expressed a desire for inter-governmental relationship
- NCTPA is concerned about shifting traffic to SR 121
- Local farmers/property owners expressed need to address protection of agricultural use and related issues

2) Ecological and Transportation Framework for the Corridor

- Fraser Shilling presented brief study background and overview of key elements of SR 37 Stewardship Study [Refer to his presentation for content]
    - Intermodal transit/Novato, Napa rail among the multi-modal opportunities
    - TCAPP website and excellent resource (transportation for communities - advancing projects thru partnerships)

- Julian Meisler (Sonoma Land Trust) presented on part of the environmental and land-owning context of SR 37. He stressed the need for contributions from other agencies for pumping and levee/dike repair. [Refer to his presentation for content]
    - 80% of tidal lands are diked from late 1800s
    - Peaty soils become oxidized – land sinks to BSL (below sea level)
    - Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Report (1999)
    - Petaluma Marsh is largest pristine marsh in CA
    - Highest tides up to 9'
    - Stormwater pumps: $70K/yr
    - Levee (dike) protection is burden on pvt. landowners

Question – where is the sediment for tidal marsh adaptation in response to sea level rise supposed to come from?
Answer – primarily from tidal suspended sediment

Comment – The Army Corps of Engineers does not consider the dikes as levees, neither does the state.

Question – what will happen to land values under different SR 37 alts and sea level rise? How will we get appropriate land valuation done?

Comment – Opening up the Tolay Creek channel would benefit a lot of people.

Question – What are the funding mechanisms to pay for actions on SR 37?
Answer – Depends on the timeframe and whether the project is local or inter-regional.

Question - Are there other examples of projects like this?
Answer – Some recent examples of similar corridor planning efforts, but nothing this comprehensive with regards to ecological issues. SR 46 in Caltrans District 5 recently conducted a comprehensive long-range corridor planning process with stakeholders http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist05/planning/sys_plan_docs/ccs/sr46e_ccs_document.pdf. Corridor planning on SR 12 is in progress. http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/corridor-mobility/d_4_subpages/moving_sr12_forward/d4_moving_sr12_forward.html

3) Overview of State Route 37 Corridor Planning (Aguilar, Alm)

Primary task of Caltrans System Planning is to conduct long-range transportation system planning to identify future highway improvements in cooperation with its planning partners. One of the ways Caltrans does this is developing Corridor Plans and Transportation (Corridor) Concept Reports. A draft SR 37 Corridor Plan was produced in July 2010 and put on hold pending the results of this SR 37 Stewardship Study effort. In that draft Corridor Plan, the long-range facility concept for SR-37 consisted of two alternatives: a four-lane freeway on a raised roadbed, or a four-lane freeway built on a causeway. That SR-37 Corridor Plan was not finalized; the SR-37 Stewardship Study will inform a revised and updated SR-37 Corridor Plan.

Comment – In medium-term could raise the highway bed, in long-term go to causeway, in short-term use Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) – i.e: technologies that improve highway operations - solutions. SR 37 Corridor Plan currently on hold while TRB study takes place, then corridor plan will be completed.

Question – how does the 2040 RTP timeframe fit with this?
Answer – The improvement recommendations made as part of this SR-37 Stewardship Study and revised/updated SR-37 Corridor Plan will inform the next Regional Transportation Plan, which is

developed every four years. Major transportation projects need to be listed in the RTP to be considered for future funding.

Question -- Any consideration of a toll road?
Answer – hasn't been discussed before, and isn't on the region's planned Express Lane network. If stakeholders want to we could mention the possibility as a mechanism for funding future improvements. Could be operational issues when traffic diverts to non-toll routes.

Question – what entities and when do they get together to discuss funding for different SR-37 alternatives for SR 37?
Answer – Actual funding of specific project ideas not part of SR-37 Stewardship Study. RTP develops a 25-year funding estimate for whole region, proposed projects attempt to fit with that RTP fund estimate. All proposed projects within the RTP are evaluated for performance according to regionally accepted RTP criteria. Once projects are clearly defined and within RTP, planning agencies can attempt to secure funding. The Stewardship Study will explore a range of different improvement scenarios for inclusion in the Corridor Plan.

Other Comments
- use peak-hour traffic and AADT to model capacity
- need intersection with SR 29 corridor planning
- recreational and weekend traffic patterns need to be included, not just commuting
- economic trends need to be taken into account
- MTC traffic projections are based upon current ABAG land-use projections

4) Caltrans Response Strategies to Flooding/Erosion (Joe Peterson)
Brief flooding/Erosion response presentation by Joe Peterson, Caltrans Hydralics. Guidance on SLR in project-specific planning came out from Caltrans HQ in mid-May. SR 37 at White Slough is at 12' >sea-level, Guadalcanal village is at 6' >sea-level. They are developing a District-wide flooding model. There are automated gates for adjusting flooding of tidal marshes, which seems to work well. Coastal Commission is recommending that some parts of SR 1 alignment be moved inland to avoid continuous bluff erosion.

Comment – there are some current elevation data for dikes from USGS. Dike settling changes elevations.
Discussion: What is the likelihood of 50" SLR? What is the height of the lowest point on SR 37? How much does the highway need to be elevated?
Answer – Need 6-7' of elevation to get out of 75-year effect.

Other Comments
- levees and road-beds settle from their own weight, reliability of some elevation monuments is in question.
- Need dike elevation data; USGS may be able to help

- Fewer but more concentrated events will overwhelm hydraulics
- Study H2o with regards to fish passage

5) Stakeholder process / Types of environmental needs (Shilling)

Environmental and transportation data needs:

-- ecological attributes and processes

-- economic conditions

-- transportation patterns, projected and current

-- Framing alternatives at different time-frames, accessing data

Other comments

- Need good data sharing. All regulatory agencies will be involved in short-term and long-term process/planning
- Design life for facilities should be used to drive SLR consideration in planning
- Question – is the alignment of SR 37 going to change?
  Answer – this study could consider alternative alignments at a high-level
- Stakeholder process: this summer will be looking at more alternatives and solutions, weighing impacts vs. benefits

Web Resources mentioned at meeting:

- Caltrans HQ Climate Change Branch: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/orip/climate_change_policy_guidance.html
- SR-46 Corridor Plan: http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist05/planning/sys_plan_docs/ccs/sr46e_ccs_document.pdf
- SR-12 Interregional Corridor Study: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/corridor-mobility/d_4_subpages/moving_sr12_forward/d4_moving_sr12_forward.html
- Travel Demand Models: http://www.mtc.ca.gov/maps_and_data/datamart/forecast/
- Sea Level Rise Map: http://www.mtc.ca.gov/maps_and_data/GIS/maps/monthly/Sea_Level_Rise_8x11.pdf
- SLR Report: http://www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/climate/sea_level_report.pdf
- Transportation for Communities (TCAPP): http://transportationforcommunities.com/
- Tribal Transportation & Tech Assistance: http://www.nijc.org/ttap.html
- SF Bay Joint Venture: http://www.yourwetlands.org/
- CA Enviro Resources Evaluation System (info/data library) http://ceres.ca.gov/