Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter
101 Eighth Street
Oakland, CA 94607-4700
TEL 510.817.5700
TDD/TTY 510.817.5769
FAX 510.817.7848
E-MAIL info@mtc.ca.gov
WEB www.mtc.ca.gov

Memorandum

TO: BATA Oversight Committee

DATE: February 6, 2008

FR: Executive Director

RE: Richmond-San Rafael Bridge: Bicycle & Pedestrian Access Study
3rd Traffic Lane Study

Background

In March 2006, MTC staff updated the BATA Oversight Committee on the status of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge (RSRB) Bicycle and Pedestrian Access study begun by BATA in Fall 2003. This study followed studies by Caltrans (1998) and the Mineta Transportation Institute (2001), which developed conclusions that could not be supported by all stakeholders; this prompted BCDC to adopt a motion in September 2002 requesting Caltrans and BATA to perform a final, comprehensive assessment on how bicycle and pedestrian access could be accommodated on the RSRB.

The bridge is identified in MTC's Regional Bicycle Plan and ABAG's San Francisco Bay Trail Plan, while local plans in Marin and Contra Costa counties identify routes leading to the bridge from the east and the west. Currently bicyclists and pedestrians can only traverse the bridge on Golden Gate transit buses or taxis if a buses' bike rack is full.

As presented at the 2006 BATA committee meeting, congestion in the corridor during the weekday peak periods is growing, and traffic modeling indicates there is excess motor vehicle demand for the current bridge configuration, which currently provides two traffic lanes and a wide shoulder in each direction. As a result, Caltrans and BATA staff agreed that all non-motorized access study alternatives assume three-lane bridge operations (the existing shoulder would be converted to a new traffic lane) during the morning peak (westbound from Contra Costa County) and the afternoon peak (eastbound from Marin County). In early 2006, Caltrans started a separate study to develop the design of the necessary roadway improvements to operate the bridge with 3 traffic lanes on each deck. Furthermore, given the long-standing concerns about non-motorized user safety on the bridge, a concrete or steel barrier was assumed in all pathway designs to safely divide vehicle traffic from non-motorized users.

Eight non-motorized access alternatives were initially prepared subject to the requirements outlined above with input from the study's technical advisory committee (TAC). Those alternatives included a variety of treatments including the use of reversible lanes, moveable barriers, and narrowed travel lanes. After careful review with the TAC and Caltrans , six of the eight pathway alternatives were removed from further consideration due to vehicular safety, non-motorized safety, and ADA access issues.

During Summer 2007, Caltrans and BATA staff agreed to merge the public access study and the Caltrans 3rd bridge traffic lane study . As a result, the following alternatives remain under consideration:

Alternatives Descriptions	Capital Cost – (2008$)
Preferred Alternative: Provides for off-peak public access to the existing bridge (roughly 9 a.m. – 6 a.m. Mon.- Fri., All-day and weekends) on the upper deck via a moveable barrier that can be moved to create three travel lanes during the morning peak	$55+ million
Existing six lane bridge with separate off-deck bi-directional pathway	$400+ million
New six lane bridge with new pathway	$7+ billion

The cost for the preferred alternative cannot be confirmed until final design alternatives and design exceptions have been determined. While the cost for both the moveable barrier and other non-motorized access improvements can be estimated, costs for the eastbound roadway segment from the toll plaza to Marine Drive must be evaluated before defining a total cost estimate.

BATA staff has been working closely with Caltrans over the last 12 months to articulate an agreed upon design exceptions report for the preferred alternative (the preferred alternative does not meet all current Caltrans design standards, such as adequate shoulder widths, shy distance from the movable barrier, merge distances, lane widths, or barrier dimensions). At this time the department and FHWA have not made a final determination to accept the required design exceptions for the preferred alternative above.

Furthermore, Caltrans requests that BATA share tort liability for accidents on the bridge if the project is ultimately constructed. Despite having design immunity, the Department perceives additional risk associated with the proposed changes to the bridge that could result in additional claims against Caltrans. BATA staff do not support this request as there are no examples of such an agreement elsewhere in the state. BATA staff acknowledges the unusual character of the proposed project but does not recommend that our agency accept liability for a bridge it does not own or have design authority over. If the Committee wishes to discuss this issue in any detail, General Counsel suggests a closed session for that purpose.

Findings

Thus far the RSRB Bicycle and Pedestrian Access study has made several key findings, including:

- The bridge is in need of a new third traffic lane to accommodate current and projected demand in the peak period/peak direction (i.e. westbound AM and eastbound PM)
- It appears feasible to convert the existing shoulder to accommodate both a third traffic lane in the peak period/peak direction and an off-peak two-way non-motorized path on the bridge's upper deck (westbound direction) via a movable barrier with appropriate design exceptions
- If the capital cost of the preferred on-deck alternative is close to the $55 million lower-bound estimate, it could be funded from a combination of the following three sources: RSRB vs. deck repair project savings, the Toll Bridge Rehabilitation Program, and state/local bicycle project funds.

- Movable barrier operating costs of about $400,000 per year (2007$) could be funded by BATA's ongoing operations budget.
- Off-deck bike options (either cantilevered or separate structure) may be feasible, but are not fundable in the near term

Staff requests direction from the committee whether to pursue design and construction of the preferred on-deck alternative. We will present additional materials from the study at the committee meeting.

/Steve Heminger/

J:\COMMITTE\BATA Oversight\2008\b_February_2008\4_RSR Access 3rd Lane Study.doc