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COMMISSION

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Memorandum

TO: MTC Commission

DATE: June 17, 2009

FR: Programming and Allocations Committee

RE: Next Round of Station Area Planning Grants: Sonoma Marin Rail Transit Corridor.

Background: After awarding Station Area Planning Grants totaling \$7.5 million in summer 2008 to Resolution 3434 station sites and Priority Development Areas, MTC has a balance of \$2.5 million in STP funds. The program gives preference to Resolution 3434 corridor stations in order to advance MTC's Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Policy that requires cities to adopt local land use plans to support corridor development targets before requesting regional construction funds.

Staff reserved the \$2.5 million in planning funds for the Sonoma Marin Rail Transit (SMART) project in the event the sales tax measure would pass, which it did in November 2008. Based on MTC's evaluation in fall 2007, the SMART corridor average number of existing housing units per station is about 1,400 short of the 2,200 required by MTC's TOD policy. The only major land use plan adopted on the corridor since 2007 is the Railroad Square/Downtown Santa Rosa station plan funded by MTC, which calls for 2,500 new units and thousands of new jobs that will transform downtown Santa Rosa and the SMART station area. The city of Cloverdale is currently embarking upon a land use and transportation plan funded by MTC in summer 2008. However, even with these two new plans, there is still a considerable gap for the corridor to overcome.

ABAG and MTC are working closely with the cities, TAM, and SCTA to gauge the level of local commitment as well as the financial needs of each city. Letters of interest are expected from the cities by the end of June. It is worth noting these are challenging times for some local cities to undertake local planning due to funding constraints. The Planning Grant program has historically required a 20% match to demonstrate local commitment, which the cities may be unable to provide. Instead, we are likely to request 15% or the federally required 11.47% and a city resolution of support.

Recommendation: After reviewing this at its June 2009 meeting, the Programming and Allocations Committee forwards this item to the Commission to approve the investment of \$2.5 million in available Planning Grant funds in the SMART corridor for the following reasons:

1. Time to construction: SMART staff indicated they will be making construction allocation requests as soon as late 2011. This leaves only two years to complete the necessary land use plans to meet the TOD policy.
2. Local interest: Now that the SMART project is set to become a reality, a number of cities are interested in advancing land use planning along the corridor.

