Air Quality Conformity Task Force
Summary Meeting Notes
January 18, 2010

Attendance:
Ginger Vagenas – EPA
Ted Matley – FTA
Joseph Vaughn– FHWA
Dick Fahey – Caltrans
Mike Brady – Caltrans
Andrea Gordon – BAAQMD
Saravana Suthanthira – ACTC
Marcella Rensi – VTA
Jim McKim – SMCTA
Scott Kelsey – URS
Jeff Zimmerman – URS
Lynn McIntyre – URS
Mark Papano – City of Novato
Julian Skinner – City of Novato
Janet Adams – STA
Scott Steinwert – Circle Point
Shannon Hatcher – ICF
SunMee Imm – Caltrans
Kelly Hirschberg – Caltrans
Glenn Kinoshka – Caltrans
Christina Jaworski – VTA
Laurel Poeton – ACTC
Lauren Bobadilla – VTA
David Kobayashi – VTA
Ashley Nguyen – MTC
Grace Cho – MTC
Brenda Dix – MTC
Harold Brazil – MTC
Sri Srinivasan – MTC
Adam Crenshaw - MTC

1. **Welcome and Self Introductions:** Ashley Nguyen (MTC) called the meeting to order at 9:45am. See attendance roster above. She stated the purpose of the task force meeting was primarily to .conduct interagency consultation for $PM_{2.5}$ project level conformity.

2. **$PM_{2.5}$ Interagency Consultations:** Ashley asked each project sponsor give a brief project summary before the Task Force begins to ask questions. Ashley briefly explained the federal agencies are the decision makers in determining project of air quality concern status (POAQC) and therefore since FHWA and FTA staff are not in attendance of the meeting she asked that POAQC determinations be considered tentative until feedback is received about the project's POAQC status from FHWA and FTA. Note: FHWA and FTA staff joined the meeting later, and their comments are as noted below.

POAQC Status Determinations

City of Novato – Novato Boulevard Improvements – Diablo to Grant

Julian Skinner (City of Novato) explained the project is a two-lane widening project that spans approximately 7/10th of a mile. The project improves this main arterial through Novato by adding a through lane in each direction, a left turn lane, a center median, class 2 bicycle lanes in each direction, continuous curb, gutter, and sidewalk in each direction. The project also has three signals which will be upgraded and there will be acquisition of 30 individual parcels for the right of way. The City of Novato looks to complete environmental review this year. With the new capacity improvements, the project will see truck traffic volumes remain less than 3% and heavy duty diesel remains at less than 1% in the build scenario. The ADT is around 20,000 currently and projections into 2030/2035 place the ADT at approximately 28,000.

Dick Fahey (Caltrans) asked if there was a significant difference in truck volumes between the build and no build scenarios. Julian answered by mentioning since the existing facility is already a truck route, there is not much difference seen. Ginger Vagenas (EPA) asked when the traffic counts were taken, and Mark Papano (City of Novato) answered saying the counts were taken in May 2008, but were confirmed again in a recent traffic count in December 2010. Ginger also asked the City of Novato to provide additional information regarding the underlying assumptions and details about the traffic counts, which Julian agreed he would send that information to Grace Cho (MTC).

Joseph Vaughn (FHWA) jumped into the conversation with a brief process question regarding MTC's interagency consultation process. Ashley answered MTC modeled the interagency consultation process and using the same project form as the southern California region (SCAG). Joseph then stated since he has not had an opportunity to review the materials, he would not be making any determinations on behalf of FHWA at the meeting, but will provide input and relay what was said at the meeting with our regular regional FHWA representative.

Mike Brady (Caltrans) joined in stating the reasons he believed the project is not a POAQC. Based on his observation, the project is not affecting the freeway and the truck and traffic counts for Novato boulevard are well under the EPA threshold criteria, for purposes of conformity the project is not a POAQC. Dick, Ashley, and Ginger concurred with Mike's decision. The Task Force concurred that this project is not a POAQC subject to confirmation and concurrence from FHWA and FTA

Final Determination: MTC followed up with FHWA and FTA regarding the project after the Task Force consultation. FHWA and FTA concurred with the tentative Task Force determination that this project is not a project of air quality concern.

San Mateo County Transportation Authority: US 101 Broadway Interchange Improvements
Jim McKim (SMCTA) and Jeff Zimmerman (URS) explained the project will reconstruct the interchange at US 101 and Broadway in Burlingame. Jeff explained the existing interchange is a horseshoe ramp which the project proposes to replace the ramp to a more conventional overcrossing to help improve operations. The project does not make any changes to US 101. The project will help remove inefficiencies with entering and exiting interchange and under the build scenarios level-of-service (LOS) all improve. On the freeway, weave and merge movements are improved as well. The project looks to complete the environmental document by March 1, 2011 and during the public review and comment period the project did not receive any comment regarding the air quality.

Lynn McIntyre (URS) then explained how the project did not meet several of the general criteria for a POAQC. Of the POAQC criteria met, Lynn countered the project would result in improvements in air quality because LOS improves and there is a large reduction in idling time.

Dick pointed out the project's traffic count and truck volumes are well below the EPA thresholds and the project does not affect the mainline, setting up the determination the project is not a POAQC.

Seeing there was no further discussion regarding the project, Ashley asked the Task Force take action on making a tentative determination. All agencies present at the Task Force, including Caltrans, EPA, and MTC agreed that this project is not a POAQC subject to confirmation and concurrence from FTA and FHWA.

Lynn asked about the public notice requirement once a POAQC determination has been made. For this project, SMCTA and URS plan to issue a 15-day public review and comment period once the POAQC determination has been made because of scheduling constraints. From her understanding of reviewing the $PM_{2.5}$ regulations regarding public notification, the body which conducts interagency consultation has discretion if this period of time is acceptable. SMCTA and URS asked the Task Force if a separate 15-day public review period is acceptable.

Mike responded by saying that the review period is suppose to parallel and be consistent with the NEPA review period. If the two actions are occurring at the same time, then the $PM_{2.5}$ project level conformity public review requirement can be combined with the NEPA public review. Since the project has already completed the review and after some debate, the Task Force agreed that a separate 15-day public review period is acceptable based on what has been seen done with other projects throughout the State.

Final Determination: MTC followed up with FHWA and FTA regarding the project after the Task Force consultation. FHWA and FTA concurred with the tentative Task Force determination that this project is not a project of air quality concern.

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA): I-880/I-280/Stevens Creek Interchange Improvements

Lauren Bobadilla (VTA) explained the project would make modifications to three interchanges which are all in very close proximity to each other. The three combined interchange modifications would improve operational efficiencies, improve traffic circulation, and is not projected to increase traffic. The purpose of the project is to help relieve congestion in the corridor, which can get very high at certain times of the year. The interchange between Stevens Creek and I-880 would modify the existing clover leaf interchange into a partial clover leaf. The project will build a direct connector between northbound I-280 and northbound I-880. Currently this connection is made by going southbound on I-280 and merge and weave between traffic trying to make the northbound connection onto I-280 and I-880. At Winchester off I-280, VTA also looks to construct another off ramp from I-280 on to Winchester. Surrounding land uses include a regional shopping center at Stevens Creek and I-880, mixed use development, commercial uses along Stevens Creek and Winchester, schools, churches and a hospital in the northeastern section. The traffic report which was completed in June 2010, illustrated the truck traffic count is 2.8% along the main corridor and 3% on local streets. Lauren also noted the traffic volumes between the no build and the build scenarios remain the same.

Dick asked Lauren if the purpose of the project is to improve traffic circulation. Lauren responded that is correct. Ashley further asked that since the project improves circulation, if the traffic volumes and truck volumes will remain the same. Lauren also confirmed the traffic and truck volumes would remain the same.

Mike mentions he is very familiar with the project area and the congestion experienced in the corridor. He asked Lauren if the total traffic volume in the horizon year is above the threshold set in EPA's guidance. Lauren responded yes that is the case, but the truck volumes are well below the threshold. Mike followed up by asking the Task Force if the fact the existing freeway volumes are above the threshold despite the truck volumes and other criteria are below the threshold make the project a POAQC. Mike felt the project is very borderline POAQC with many similar projects he has seen over time go either way. He also felt this project was not reducing congestion enough that it would increase capacity. Ashley stated she believed the project would not be a POAQC because the other criteria are below the EPA guideline thresholds and will remain unchanged. Ginger also mentioned EPA is really looking for the air quality impacts as a result of the changes in the construction of the project. David Kobayashi (VTA) stated the truck volumes were prepared by consultant help and the project has been approved by Caltrans and therefore VTA is very confident the volumes only change slightly between the build and no build scenarios. After discussion between the Task Force members, and noting the small degree of change in truck traffic volumes between the build and no build, the Task Force agreed that this project is not POAQC subject to confirmation and concurrence from FHWA and FTA.

Final Determination: MTC followed up with FHWA and FTA regarding the project after the Task Force consultation. FHWA and FTA concurred with the tentative Task Force determination that this project is not a project of air quality concern.

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA): US 101 Auxiliary/HOV Lanes from State Route 85 to San Mateo County Line

Christina Jaworski (VTA) explained the project completed the state environmental review process in 2009, but are in need of a conformity determination because the project will need an Army Corps of Engineers section 404 permit. The project is located in Mountain View and Palo Alto and looks to make modifications to US 101 in order to improve traffic operations along the congested corridor. The project will add auxiliary lanes in various locations along the north and southbound freeway to allow for more room for merging to occur. There are some large interchanges along US 101 fairly close together, which with the high volume of traffic, additional room is need to help facilitate merging and interchange to interchange trips. The project will also widen three bridges along the corridor, which is why VTA needs an Army Corps permit. Additional features include extending direct HOV connectors and some ramp improvements, such as converting an HOV lane to a mixed flow lane on a ramp.

One the project was opened up for questions, Joseph asked Christina to confirm that VTA was seeking consultation in order to receive an Army Corps section 404 permit. She confirmed that was the case because Caltrans had advised VTA the project was seeking a federal action that triggered project level conformity. Joseph followed up asking if the Army Corps had specifically asked for project level conformity determination and Christina responded saying she did not believe the Army Corps specifically asked for the conformity determination. Mike then asked if any NEPA documentation was completed for the project, Christina and Ashley both clarified the project did not use any federal funds and at the time and only federal action being sought is a Army Corps section 404 permit so therefore only a CEQA document was necessary.

Mike was concerned that general conformity may be necessary since transportation conformity was completed for this project. Ashley clarified saying that the Army Corps had not asked VTA for a general conformity determination, but Caltrans had believed project level transportation conformity applied to the project and therefore the project needed to undergo interagency consultation. .The Task Force continued to discuss the type of conformity the project is subject to based on knowing the project does not use federal funds, only needed to produce a CEQA document, and the project is only seeking an Army Corps section 404 permit. The Task Force suggested VTA schedule a conversation with Caltrans, FHWA, EPA, and the Army Corps to determine whether a conformity determination is needed and which type of conformity. No action was taken on this project.

Caltrans: Jameson Canyon Road Widening Project/Napa SR 12/SR 29 Interchange
Kelly Hirschberg (Caltrans) explained the project will widen six miles of road between SR 29 to Redtop road from a two lane to a four lane highway. Additionally, the project will upgrade the SR 12/SR 29 interchange, which will increase the function and operations of the existing interchange and will construct a median barrier and add a median opening. The environmental document was completed in January 2008, but Caltrans seeks an updated project level conformity determination to get an E-76 for the STIP funding. The traffic analysis for this project was completed in 2007 and was incorporated into the environmental document. Based on the traffic study, the volumes are fairly low. At the opening the AADT for the Build/No Build remain the same at 41,000 and in the horizon year the AADT goes up to 59,000, but does not change between the Build/No Build. In terms of surround land uses, the project is set in a very rural environment. There are a few golf courses around the area, so improvements along this corridor are not likely to encourage increased capacity, especially of trucks. Based on the traffic analysis, the truck traffic volume is at 7.7%, which does not change. The total truck volume at the opening year is 3,180 and for the horizon year is 4,580 which both remain well below the EPA guidance threshold.

Ginger asked if the interchange and road are conduits between places. Glenn Kinoshka (Caltrans) responded by saying that the project would serve as a conduit between I-80 and SR 37. After some discussion, Ashley outlined the information presented to the Task Force and asked if the project was deemed as a POAQC. Dick felt the project is not a POAQC. Ginger, Ashley and Mike also agreed. The tentative determination agreed upon was that the project is not a POAQC subject to confirmation and concurrence from FHWA and FTA.

In a follow up question, Shannon Hatcher (IFC) asked if there was a public noticing requirement for projects determined not a POAQC. Mike responded by saying there is a public notice requirement because this is still a conformity consultation. Therefore public notice must occur and needs to be consistent with the public notice procedures of NEPA.

Final Determination: MTC followed up with FHWA and FTA regarding the project after the Task Force consultation. FHWA and FTA concurred with the tentative Task Force determination that this project is not a project of air quality concern.

POAQC/Hot-Spot Analysis Consultation
Solano Transportation Authority (STA) : EB I-80 Cordelia Truck Scales Relocation Project

Janet Adams (STA) started by mentioning STA took a two pronged approach with the project because STA had reason to believe the Task Force may determine the project to be a POAQC. In running under this assumption STA decided to complete both the documents for a POAQC consultation and hot-spot analysis to reduce having to come to the Task Force multiple times. Janet then began to explain the project is a reconstruction of an existing facility, which is currently located between Suisun Valley and SR 12. The project proposes to move the truck scale facility a 1/2 mile to east. A NEPA document was completed and approved for the project in October 2009. There are some minor operational improvements being made as part of the project by braiding the I-80 to SR 12 ramps with the truck scale ramps as they come on to SR 12. The truck scales were originally built in the 1950s and they are no longer able to handle the current volume of trucks. For this project, the volume and percentage of truck are going to remain the same because it is not meant to generate more truck traffic, but rather to handle the current volume of trucks coming through. Based on 2007 truck volumes produced by Caltrans, the truck volumes in the project vicinity are below the EPA recommended threshold of 10,000 trucks with the current facility seeing 5,000 trucks. This 5,000 remains unchanged in the Build/No Build scenarios. Additionally, using the qualitative hot-spot analysis methods outlined in EPA guidance, STA came to the conclusion the proposed project will not result in new violations of $PM_{2.5}$ air quality standards. The environmental analysis also illustrated a slight decrease in emissions in the horizon year which is due to the improved operations from less weaving to get to the facility and less idling on the ramp and waiting to be processed. The new facility will be able to process the trucks more efficiently and move the trucks through with less idling.

Dick asked for clarification if the truck volumes and numbers given were for the truck facility or the mainline of I-80. Janet answered by saying the volumes are expected volumes through the facility at peak hour. Following Mike asked if Janet knew the mainline ADT volumes. Shannon answered by saying it varies from 6,700 to 8,200 depending on which year is being evaluated and that is for total trucks which include non-diesel trucks. Mike then also points out in looking at the location the surrounding are looks to be pretty rural which Janet confirmed the county updated the general plan and designated the area an agricultural use.

In hearing all the information Janet provided, Mike opened up that the Task Force need to make a POAQC determination for the project. In Mike's assessment he believed the project not to be a POAQC. Dick and Ashley also followed suit mentioning he agreed with Mike. After a bit more brief discussion about the project, EPA also agreed and the Task Force tentatively agreed the project is not a POAQC.

Final Determination: MTC followed up with FHWA and FTA regarding the project after the Task Force consultation. FHWA and FTA concurred with the tentative Task Force determination that this project is not a project of air quality concern.

Exempt Project List from $PM_{2.5}$ Project Level Conformity

Due to time constraints, Ashley asked for the Task Force to review the exempt project listing and note any which would not be exempt from conformity. Ashley said MTC will bring the projects back to the Task Force at the next meeting.

However Ashley did want to bring light to one project, which is the US 101 Marin-Sonoma Narrows which is being completed by the Transportation Authority of Marin. Based on a previous consultation with Mike, he saw there was not a transportation conformity nexus since there are no federal funds or federal actions needed despite being a regionally significant project. The conformity is covered through the regional conformity because the project is included in the regional transportation plan (RTP) and transportation improvement program (TIP). Ginger wanted to confirm and follow-up with technical advisors at EPA that regionally significant projects included in the RTP and TIP, which have no federal funds or seek no federal actions are not subject to project level conformity and is covered under the regional conformity analysis. MTC will also review and follow up to assure the project does not have any federal funds or need any additional federal actions which would require a conformity determination.

Ginger followed up with MTC after the Task Force meeting and confirmed what Mike had said regarding regionally significant projects included in the RTP and TIP that use no federal funds or seek no federal actions. MTC followed up with the project sponsor and clarification was received that the project is using federal funds and the project will undergo interagency consultation at the next Task Force meeting.

3. **Defining "Minor Fleet Expansion" Project Level Conformity Exemption (40 CFR 93.126) for PM2.5 Interagency Consultation:** Due to time constraints, Ashley asked the Task Force table this item for the next meeting. Task Force members, including Ted Matley (FTA) who joined in later in the meeting, agreed to table the item.

4. **Air Quality Updates:** Ashley mentioned Grace had compiled list of air quality and conformity related news that may be of interest to the Task Force.

5. **Other Business:** Due to the lack of time, the meeting was closed prior to addressing other business.