

**Air Quality Conformity Task Force  
Summary Meeting Notes  
May 26, 2011**

Attendance:

Ginger Vagenas – EPA  
Rodney Calvalos – Caltrans HQ  
Eddie Barrios – Fehr & Peers  
Amin AbuAmara - CCTA  
Marcella Rensi – VTA  
Stephen Haas – ACTC  
Lynn McIntyre – URS  
Jeffrey Zimmerman – URS

Chadi Chazbek – MTC  
Robert Reber – City of Hercules  
Serge Stanich – HDR  
Jesse Harder – HDR  
Ashley Nguyen – MTC  
Grace Cho – MTC  
Adam Crenshaw – MTC  
Ross McKeown – MTC

- 1. Welcome and Self Introductions:** Grace Cho (MTC) called the meeting to order at 9:35am. See attendance roster above. She went immediately into the agenda items for discussion.
- 2. March 7, 2011 Air Quality Conformity Task Force Meeting Summary:** The Task Force approved the meeting summary via consensus.
- 3. PM<sub>2.5</sub> Interagency Consultations:** To begin the interagency consultations for PM<sub>2.5</sub> project level conformity Grace Cho (MTC) asked each project sponsor give a brief overview of the project prior to opening up the project for questions by the Task Force.

***POAQC Status Determinations***

***Alameda County Transportation Commission (ACTC): I-580 Corridor – Eastbound HOV/HOT Lanes***

Steve Haas (ACTC) described the project as a two-lane express lane project on I-580 from Hacienda east to Greenville. The first HOV lane is complete and there was pavement set-aside for the 2<sup>nd</sup> express lane. This project includes an auxiliary project, so when this is complete, then the 2<sup>nd</sup> express lane will be striped and tolling equipment will be installed, and both lanes will be converted to express lanes. Jeffrey Zimmerman (URS) added that the environmental process for this project is underway and is expected to complete by September 2011. Any PM<sub>2.5</sub> project conformity level requirements will be addressed as part of the environmental process.

Lynn McIntyre (URS) distributed a handout that shows recent analysis of the traffic volumes for the No Build and Build scenarios comparing two different scenarios. Scenario #1 represents an analysis of traffic for the 2030 horizon year for the No Build and Build and uses traffic data derived from 2005 ACTC travel model and Projections 2005. Scenario #2 focuses on the 2035 horizon year and uses traffic data from the 2009 ACTC travel model and Projections 2009. The purpose of this analysis was to see what would change with a 2035 horizon year and more recent traffic data. If the traffic data for peak period under the No Build for Scenario #1 is at least as great as Scenario #2, then we can assume traffic data used in Scenario #1 reasonably represents 2035 traffic conditions. They found that

Scenario #1 has 9 percent higher traffic volumes than Scenario #2, and therefore, they concluded that the original traffic data does reasonably portray future traffic conditions. Caltrans District 4 staff concurs with this finding.

In response to Ashley's question, Chadi Chazbek said that they don't expect to see change in truck traffic under either scenario irrespective of the horizon year used. Ashley noted that the data used in Scenario #2 does reflect decline in job growth, and therefore there's likely to be decrease overall in traffic volume and truck volume.

Stephen Haas added that the express lanes are exclusive lanes; they do not accommodate additional truck traffic. Lynn McIntyre noted that the express lanes improve efficiencies in the corridor and traffic congestion and network speed (which results in reductions in emissions).

Ginger Vagenas (EPA) asked for clarification on the increase in truck traffic in certain segments from the No Build and Build scenarios; she's not clear as to why there's truck volume increases but there's a conclusion of no impact.

Lynn McIntyre said that they assumed a 20% increase in truck volume in both the Build and No Build scenarios. She noted that the Build scenario does not account for economic recession. She explained that the corridor would see increase in truck activity (with or without the project) but because the project improves through-put the trucks are moving through the corridor more efficiently.

Ginger pointed out the purpose of the project is not as relevant as the effects that happen. The increases in truck volume are significant on certain segments. There's no documentation that explains this further. She also noted that OTAC flagged this project as a potential POAQC; but they didn't state the specifics. She requested more information.

In response to Grace's inquiry, Rodney (Caltrans) said that they had no comments on this project.

Grace shared written comments submitted by Stew Sonnenberg (FHWA) and Dick Fahey (Caltrans). Stew stated that this project is not a POAQC. Dick stated that the project doesn't generate any new diesel truck traffic but doesn't feel comfortable stating that this project isn't a POAQC because of the increases in AADT and truck volumes.

There was additional discussion on truck traffic and how truck traffic moved through certain segments of the corridor more efficiently than other segments.

***Final Determination TBD:*** EPA, MTC, FHWA and Caltrans and ACTC staff and consultants will continue the consultation in a follow-up meeting.

#### *City of Hercules: Hercules Intercity Rail Station*

Robert Reber (City of Hercules) introduced Jesse Harder (HDR), long-time project manager for the Hercules to present project overview. Jesse Harder (HDR) summarized that this is an intermodal transit center in Hercules, positioned along waterfront San Pablo Bay at the intersection of Highway 4 and I-80. He noted that the transit center sits at the center of

planned transit-oriented development, and will bring together train, ferry and bus service. The Capitol Corridor runs through here, and the project will consist of a new platform with realigned track to accommodate train service. The transit center also brings in WestCat buses that run from John Muir Parkway, and there will be bridge access from the transit center to a ferry terminal with ferry services to be provided by WETA. He noted that they've completed preliminary design and environmental document and plan to proceed with the certification of the environmental document soon.

Serge Stanich (HDR) added that FTA is the lead federal partner on this project. They held scoping/public notices in 2009 and circulated the EIR/EIS for public comment. EIR/EIS was anticipated to be completed in 2010 but there has been some delays. He also noted that EPA commented in the public review process that this project may need to undergo PM2.5 project level conformity. In his review of the regulations, Stan said that because this is a new intermodal facility and there will be buses congregating, they assumed that this project would be a POAQC and that a hot-spot analysis would be needed. A project assessment form and qualitative hot-spot analysis was submitted to initiate consultation.

Grace noted that this project took advantage of streamlining the process by seeking concurrent task force concurrence on the POAQC determination and review of the qualitative hot-spot analysis.

Ginger (EPA) commented that OTAC was not particularly concerned about this project as being a POAQC. She did ask for clarification about whether the 35 buses mean the number of buses to use the transit center or the number of bus arrivals per day in the No Build condition. Neither Jesse nor Serge could confirm definitively but they believed that WestCat assumed that there's no new service (as in new routes) rather, there will be more bus arrivals at the transit center. Ashley agreed that there would be 35 bus arrivals at the new transit center. Ginger then said that assuming that assumption, then EPA would determine that this project is not a POAQC.

Ginger suggested that it might be worth having the Task Force review this qualitative hot-spot analysis and hear comments.

Rodney (Caltrans) said that Mike Brady did not express any concerns about this project.

Grace shared Stew's written comments where he stated that this project is a POAQC and his review of the hot-spot analysis concluded that this project does not cause or contribute to a PM2.5 exceedance. She also read Dick's comments, which concluded that this is a POAQC and that a hot-spot analysis is appropriate. He noted that the assumptions and methods in the hot-spot analysis appear reasonable. Dick commented that it would be helpful to know if there are future plans to convert the diesel buses. He suggested that the ferry project be submitted separately for evaluation.

Ashley noted that the Task Force had previously discussed the need for guidance on what constitutes a minor fleet expansion. She asked if projects, like this Hercules Transit Center project where there's only 35 bus arrivals a day, would be fairly small-scale operations with low bus arrivals and that maybe such project would not be determined as a POAQC.

Ginger added that it would be good to ask the question first if this project was a POAQC and then decide if an analysis was required.

Ginger stated that we should consider the comments of the Task Force members and conclude that this project is a POAQC, but based on the review of the hot-spot analysis, determine that this project does not cause or contribute to PM<sub>2.5</sub> exceedance.

Ginger noted that EPA headquarters has previously stated that the preference is to not establish thresholds as to what constitutes a minor fleet expansion, but rather look at projects on a case by case basis.

**Final Determination TBD:** EPA, MTC, FHWA and Caltrans and the remaining Task Force concurred that this is a POAQC and that the hot-spot analysis shows that the project does not cause or contribute to PM<sub>2.5</sub> exceedance.

#### **Exempt Project List from PM<sub>2.5</sub> Project Level Conformity**

The Task Force approved the exempt project lists via consensus.

**Final Determination:** FHWA, EPA, Caltrans, CARB and the remaining Task Force members concurred the list of projects as exempt from PM<sub>2.5</sub> project level conformity.

#### **4. Proposed TIP Administrative Modification 2011-08: Revisions to Air Quality Exemption Code**

Adam Crenshaw stated that MTC staff reviewed the air quality exemption codes for projects in the 2011 TIP, and noted that there was an inconsistency in the exemption code identified for 10 projects. Staff would like to revise/correct the exemption codes, and seek agreement on those revisions by the Task Force. In addition, staff is also looking for confirmation that the revisions do not require a new conformity determination.

Ginger asked for clarification on the Del Norte Area TOD project (CC-070046). Grace explained that this project is about improving access to the transit-oriented development project; this project does not involve building the TOD project or capacity improvements in this area. Ginger requested more detailed and clear project descriptions. Ashley agreed that project descriptions can be better written to explain the transportation improvement. In response to Ginger's question, Ashley confirmed that this project is not about building the TOD development, but rather implement access improvements to the area.

Ginger asked for clarification on the Marin County Bus Stop project (MRN070001) – regarding whether this project is a new bus service. Grace clarified that this is about improving the stop itself (perhaps improving the stop with a bench), rather than adding new service.

Ginger inquired about the Roseland Route 19 project (SON070021); she said that this project may constitute a minor fleet expansion but it's difficult to tell based on the project description. Ashley said that MTC can pull this project from the list and get clarification on the project details to determine whether this is a minor fleet expansion.

Ashley summarized that based on the comments staff will clarify the project descriptions for the Del Norte Area TOD and Marin County Bus Stop projects and remove the Roseland Route 19 project from this list. The Task Force agreed to the revisions with the modifications noted by Ashley.

Ashley asked for the Task Force's direction on whether MTC staff could move forward with technical correction or would staff need to go through a more formal TIP administrative modification process to make these kinds of revisions. Ginger responded that she would check with EPA about the process. So Ashley said that staff will go ahead and make the technical corrections, and wait to hear back from EPA and other Task Force members as to whether a more formal process is needed.

## **5. Progress Report on Plan Bay Area**

Ashley presented the latest work on the proposed alternative scenarios analysis. Staff wants to keep the Task Force apprised of key developments in the Plan Bay Area process, particularly since the work will affect the modeling, land use and transportation assumptions to be used in the regional conformity analysis. There were no comments from the Task Force on this item.

## **6. Other Business/Adjourn**

Grace stated the Contra Costa Transportation Authority staff is seeking Task Force review of the I-80/Central Avenue Interchange Project. Eddie Barrios, traffic consultant, presented a short summary of this project. Amin Abuamara (CCTA) added that this project is intended to reduce congestion. This project will be added to the next month's agenda for Task Force discussion and deliberation.

With no other business, Grace adjourned the meeting at about 11:00 a.m.

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