

**Air Quality Conformity Task Force
Summary Meeting Notes
July 28, 2011**

Attendance:

Ginger Vagenas – EPA

Jeff – EPA

Mike Brady – Caltrans

Dick Fahey – Caltrans

Ted Matley – FTA

Stew Sonnenberg– FHWA

Michele Bellows – NV5/CCTA

Sasha Dansky – Mark Thomas and Company

Jon Tamimi – URS

Lynn McIntyre – URS

Rob Rees – Fehr and Peers

Dawn Cameron – Santa Clara County Roads
and Airports

Mike Griffiths – Santa Clara County Roads
and Airports

Scott Steinwert – Circle Point

Karin Bouler – Caltrans

Yolanda Rivas – Caltrans

Kelly Hirschberg – Caltrans

Glen Kinoshita - Caltrans

Ashley Nguyen – MTC

Brenda Dix - MTC

Sri Srinivasan - MTC

Glen Tepke - MTC

Earl Kaing - MTC

- 1. Welcome and Self Introductions:** Brenda Dix (MTC) called the meeting to order at 9:35am. See attendance roster above. She went immediately into the agenda items for discussion.
- 2. PM_{2.5} Interagency Consultations:** To begin the interagency consultations for PM_{2.5} project level conformity, Brenda Dix (MTC) asked each project sponsors to give a brief overview of the project prior to opening up the project for questions by the Task Force.

POAQC Status Determinations

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans): Napa 29/221 Soscol Flyover Project

Kelly Hirschberg (Caltrans) is working with NCTPA on the environmental documents for this project. She explained that the project is located in Napa with SR12/Jameson Avenue to the South and Loma Avenue to the North. Currently there is an at grade intersection at the project location. The proposed project would construct a flyover, thus eliminating the intersection. Another option for the project includes keeping, but reworking the signalized intersection. The flyover would be 700 feet long and would allow SR29 to be a throughput with no stops. The project is in its draft environmental stage and funding sources are being sought to complete the project.

Glen Kinoshita (Caltrans) handed out a new fact sheet for the project. He stated that the regional model for Napa was used for the traffic projections and 2009/2010 truck counts were used for current conditions. He commented that the project is not a POAQC since truck volumes are below the 8% or 10,000 AADT threshold and the levels are not expected to change due to the project. The project is needed because the intersection is currently saturated and there are higher than average rear-end accidents. The project itself will not increase heavy duty truck traffic. The current intersection is LOS F and with the project, in the opening year, it will increase to a LOS D. In the horizon year, the LOS is still F but the minutes of delay at the intersection are approximately half of what it would be in the no-

build scenario which equates to a significant reduction in emissions. The project is not a bus or rail project and there is no current SIP for PM 2.5 so the project does not qualify as a POAQC for those reasons.

Dick Fahey (Caltrans) and Ted Matley (FTA) had no questions and did not believe this project to be a POAQC.

Ginger Vagenas (EPA) stated that EPA does not think this is a POAQC but reminded everyone that the truck thresholds are not hard lines and should not be viewed as such.

Mike Brady (Caltrans) stated he did not see anything in this project that would be contributing to truck traffic. Since this project is not completely funded the NEPA documents cannot be approved but the project can move ahead as long as one of the two alternatives presented to this Task Force are what is finally adopted. If the project substantially changes then it will have to come back to the Task Force again.

Stew Sonnenberg (FHWA) believed that this is a good project and that it is not a POAQC.

Final Determination: EPA, FHWA, FTA, Caltrans, MTC and the remaining Task Force members concurred that this project is not a POAQC.

Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA): I-680 Auxiliary Lanes

Rob Rees (Fehr and Peers) presented the project summary, noting that this project was environmentally cleared with a categorical exclusion in 2002. The complete project is a set of 3 auxiliary lanes with the segment before the task force being the middle, 2 mile segment between Crow Canyon and Sycamore Valley on Northbound and Southbound 680. The project cost is \$37 million including replacing sound walls and retaining walls. The construction cost is about \$25 million. It is funded through CCTA Measure C funds and should receive interstate maintenance discretionary funds. Truck volumes were 6% in 2009, are now down to 5%, and a continued reduction in truck volumes is anticipated. Under the no build conditions the LOS in the peak directions at the intersections affected by this project would be a D and F and the project will maintain those levels since the bottlenecks are outside of the corridor. In the non-peak direction the LOS would improve from D to C since bottlenecks do not exist in this direction.

Dick (Caltrans) asked why the truck volumes should continue to decrease over time? It was clarified that the truck decreases are due to the slightly greater increase in auto trips. Dick does not view this project as a POAQC.

Stew (FHWA) believes the project is not a POAQC. He asked if the auxiliary lanes are between consecutive interchanges, and the response is yes.

Mike (Caltrans) does not believe the project to be a POAQC but asked for better documentation in the future. He requested future documentation of why the truck traffic is decreasing. He also asked MTC if a 2 mile auxiliary lane would show up in their model as capacity increasing. Ashley (MTC) responded that MTC would code auxiliary lanes if they

were regionally significant. She was unsure about whether this specific project was coded in our model.

Ginger (EPA) stated that more documentation should be provided in the future regarding the horizon year conditions and the assumption of decreasing truck traffic. She asked if the length of the auxiliary lane would make it capacity increasing.

Rob (Fehr and Peers) clarified that the design year was 2025 and the original growth through the design year was assumed to be 38% from 2000 through 2025 but the trending percent is about 11-12% growth. The AADT from 2000 was 155,000 and is now 160,000 vehicles. The truck percentage is decreasing because the design year AADT is still based on the design year forecast. So the decline in truck traffic is based on the fact that truck traffic is trending lower than originally expected. With regards to the capacity increasing potential of the auxiliary lanes, he stated that the project is a local project that will not induce new trips. Also, there are high levels of congestion to the north and south so the corridor travel time will not be reduced. The project will reduce the high levels of rear-end collisions that occur in this road segment.

Mike (Caltrans) stated that if the auxiliary lane could be used as a passing lane then that would change the highway operations. The sponsor clarified that they did not see any improvements in travel time in the segment so it is not capacity increasing.

Ashley (MTC) suggested that the project be deemed not a POAQC pending additional documentation from the project sponsor. The federal agency representatives agreed to this approach.

Final Determination: FHWA, EPA, Caltrans, FTA, MTC and all of the members of the task force tentatively concurred that the project is not a POAQC pending additional documentation from the project sponsor.

Santa Clara County: Oregon Expressway Improvements

Dawn Cameron, and Mike Griffiths from Santa Clara County Roads and Airports presented this project. Dawn (SCC) stated that the project is primarily a safety and operational improvement project in Palo Alto. It does not affect intersections with LOS D, E, or F and it is not capacity increasing. The project does include upgrading traffic signals, providing pedestrian and bike crossings at the 7 intersections, and adding channelization within the existing ROW to separate left turning traffic from through traffic at 5 intersections. The main purpose of the project is to reduce bike and pedestrian conflicts with vehicles. At three unsignalized intersections vehicle left turns and crossings will be restricted as a safety measure. There is very little truck traffic in the area since the City of Palo Alto does not permit through traffic trucks in the area, only trucks making deliveries.

The task force had no questions related to this project.

Final Determination: EPA, FHWA, FTA, Caltrans, and MTC and the remaining Task Force members concurred that this project is not a POAQC.

Hot Spot Analysis Consultation

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

Lynn McIntyre (URS) representing Alameda CTC stated that the project was originally brought to the task force in May after which additional information was provided to the task force by the project sponsor. Upon receipt of this information, two follow-up calls were arranged with the task force members and project staff on June 10 and 29th. After those calls there was still no consensus on whether or not the project was a POAQC so the project sponsor decided to move ahead with a qualitative hot-spot analysis.

The project before the task force is both ACTC's HOT lane project, which consists of re-striping the road and installing tolling equipment, and ACTC's I-580 Eastbound auxiliary lanes project which is in the same area between Isabel Ave and North Livermore Ave and between North Livermore Ave and First St. The pavement will also be widened in some locations to accommodate the later construction of the express lanes. The two projects are environmentally separate because the schedule for adding the auxiliary lane project to the environmental documents for the HOT lanes is a little behind the express lane project schedule. The auxiliary lanes are being provided for safety purposes.

The two projects are under the same TIP number and would eventually have to come to the task force so the project sponsor has combined them in the hot-spot analysis to streamline the process with the task force.

Jon Tamimi (URS) presented the qualitative hot-spot analysis for the projects. He stated that PM 2.5 shows a decreasing trend at the Livermore monitoring station and in 2010 was below the daily standard. The project area is also well below the annual PM 2.5 standard. With the project there will be an increase in speeds and an increase in VMT in the build year leading to an increase in PM 2.5 emissions. However, in 2030 there is a decrease in emissions from no build to build conditions.

Jeff (EPA) reviewed the analysis and emphasized the conservative approach built into the assumptions. He stated that the project is about improving flow and speeds, not linking to other truck traffic routes. In 2030 there will be a decrease in emissions due to the fact that there are stricter regulations governing trucks at that time. The EMFAC 2007 model (which was used for the hot spot analysis) does not take the existing California truck rule into account which will decrease truck emissions even further so overall PM 2.5 levels will be lower than estimated even in the 2015 time horizon.

Stew (FHWA) asked why the 24 hour PM 2.5 measurements vary so between the years, he questioned if it was the weather or something else? Jon was not sure what led to the variations.

Mike (Caltrans) believed the hot-spot analysis to be a good analysis. He pointed out that in part of the analysis the sponsor did not have daily VMT and speeds so they multiplied peak hours by 24 which overstates the emissions. This contributes to the conservative approach taken in the analysis.

Dick (Caltrans) pointed out that ACTC was mentioned as the MPO for the region, which should be amended to MTC.

Lynn (URS) and Ashley (MTC) asked if the task force needed to determine if the project is a POAQC now that they had reviewed the hot-spot analysis?

Mike (Caltrans) clarified that by default the project will be considered a POAQC but the hot-spot analysis indicated that the project will not cause or contribute to a local violation of air quality standards.

Final Determination: EPA, FHWA, FTA, Caltrans, MTC and the remaining Task Force members concurred that this project meets the hot spot requirements in 40 CFR 93.116 and 93.126 for PM_{2.5} and that the project will not cause or contribute to a new violation of the federal PM 2.5 air quality standards.

PM_{2.5} Conformity Exempt List Review

Ginger stated that EPA has concerns about 3 of the safety projects. These include SM-110048, SM-110051, and MRN110026. She stated that the projects would be better listed as channelization or signalization projects. The fact that they are funded through HSIP should not automatically qualify them as exempt from air quality conformity since they may be at LOS D, E, or F intersections and the traffic levels may be too high.

Sri Srinivasan (MTC) confirmed that these three projects are HSIP projects.

Mike (Caltrans) stated that the task force has permitted HSIP projects to have a free pass from conformity before.

Ginger (EPA) does not believe that the source of the project funding should permit an exemption from conformity.

Per Mike's request, Sri (MTC) stated that they would clarify in the future if a project is funded through HSIP when it is placed on the exempt list.

Ginger (EPA) said she would verify from the EPA perspective and will collaborate with FHWA to determine if the safety exemption can apply to signalization and channelization projects.

Mike (Caltrans) believes that MRN110026 should be exempt due to the fact that they are not adding signals or channelization, they are simply modifying it. The left turn phasing, and signal upgrades should not count as a new signal.

Ginger (EPA) referred to an email from OTAC that said that "adding a signal or changing a signal (changing a signal timing, adding a left turn signal at a specific intersection) constitutes a signalization project." Ashley (MTC) stated that this interpretation is too broad since signal timing is changed on a daily basis. Mike (Caltrans) stated that he believes a project should only trigger an assessment form if there is actually a new signal or channelization.

Sri (MTC) asked for clarification on how this issue is handled throughout the state, especially for projects listed in a group listing. Mike stated that projects still have to go

through a POAQC determination on a project by project basis when they are ready for NEPA.

Ashley (MTC) requested that offline consultation occur on this topic between EPA, FHWA, and Caltrans to clarify how to address HSIP projects especially those related to signalization and channelization projects. Ashley (MTC) feels that all of these projects will have limited adverse local air quality impacts and therefore we should not subject these projects to a more rigorous look. The three agencies agreed to the offline consultation.

Final Determination: EPA, FHWA, FTA, Caltrans, MTC and the remaining Task Force members reached consensus that all projects except for MRN110026, SM-110048, and SM-110051 (which will be revisited at a later time) are exempt from regional and project level conformity.

- 3. Defining Minor Fleet Expansion (40 CFR 93.126) Discussion:** Sri (MTC) reviewed her memo which shows that there are 7, 186 transit vehicles in the Bay Area with large variations in the quantity of vehicles owned by any one transit operator. Previous conversations with FTA had provided a rough guideline that an expansion of less than 25% would qualify as a minor expansion, however, it is unclear whether the 25% should be applied to the total quantity of transit vehicles in the region or just the fleet of that specific operator or to the total fleet of a certain type of vehicle, etc. Sri argued that all rail cars, cable cars, trolley cars, and other zero emission or electrified vehicles should be exempted from regional and project level conformity since there are no emissions from these vehicles.

Ted (FTA) had no problem with this approach.

Sri (MTC) requested that for all other types of vehicles a 40% threshold or \$10 million (whichever is more restrictive) be used on an individual operator basis to define the maximum for a minor fleet expansion. This would be consistent with the threshold set for TIP amendments. Ted (FTA) agreed with this approach to minimize the number of standards being used.

Ginger (EPA) informed the Task Force that EPA is uncomfortable with setting any threshold for minor fleet expansions. OTAC would prefer to deal with all projects on a case by case basis to determine if the project is a minor fleet expansion. She questioned what problem the task force is trying to solve by defining a minor fleet expansion?

Ashley (MTC) clarified that this would be useful since we have an exemption code that allows for exempting minor fleet expansions and without a definition of what that is the exemption code can never be used. For the TIP amendment she clarified that being able to exempt a minor expansion changes what type of TIP amendment has to be done. If the exemption can be applied then the amendment process is much shorter for some sponsors.

Mike (Caltrans) raised the concern that if all electrified/zero-emissions vehicles are exempt then it no longer fits the exemption code as a "minor fleet expansion".

Ted (FTA) pointed out that the Bay Area is penalized by not being able to use the exemption and for having lots of small transit operators where even one bus would exceed the 25% threshold of being a minor expansion. FTA hopes to come up with something that is a reasonable exemption while remaining within the language of the exemption code.

Ginger (EPA) questioned how often these projects come up in order understand how burdensome this problem is. Sri clarified that these issues do come up often and the time delay for projects if they have to go to the task force is very significant.

Ted (FTA) expressed his concern that if a standard is not determined then as task force members change, different opinions about minor expansions will arise and the process will be inequitable to project sponsors. There use to be an informal, verbal guideline to use a 25% expansion of up to 10 vehicles with was consistent with the TIP process at that time. He advised that we remain consistent with the TIP process and adopt the 40% or \$10 million threshold as a standard for the region. Sri stated that this would only really bring Muni and AC Transit to the task force which is appropriate since those are the operators that the task force would really like to review.

Ginger (EPA) requested that Ted provide a written statement regarding why a threshold is needed in order to clearly explain the issue to EPA. She requested that that be followed up with a call between EPA, DOT, and FTA. Ted agreed to provide a write up on why this definition needs to be set. Per Mike's request he also agreed to see if there are other examples around the state of thresholds that have been adopted in other regions.

Mike (Caltrans) requested that this item be taken to the statewide conformity group to achieve a state wide definition of the threshold.

- 4. Progress Report on Plan Bay Area:** In the interest of time, Brenda (MTC) moved this to an informational item and advised the task force to review the memo that was included in the packet.

5. Consent Calendar

Brenda (MTC) asked for questions on any items on the exempt calendar.

Proposed TIP Administrative Modification 2011-11: Revisions to Exemption Codes

Ginger (EPA) requested that in the future, more information be provided for linked documents (REG00904 and REG00905) especially since these specific projects specifically state that not all projects in the grouped listing match the exemption code provided.

Ginger (EPA) stated that EPA is fine with Caltrans's ruling that conversions of one lane bridges to two lane bridges be exempt as long as they meet the requirements indicated by Mike in his statewide conformity email. As such, Sri stated that she would remove project SON070026 from this administrative modification.

Final Determination: All items on the consent calendar were approved by FHWA, FTA, EPA, Caltrans, MTC and the remaining Task Force members with the exception of removing project SON070026 from item 5c.

1. Other Business/Adjourn

With no other business, Brenda (MTC) adjourned the meeting at about 11:10 a.m.

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