

**Air Quality Conformity Task Force
Summary Meeting Notes
February 23, 2012**

Attendance:

Mike Brady – Caltrans	Kevin Chen – Kittlelson/Dowling
Dick Fahey – Caltrans	Adrian Levy - Caltrans
Ginger Vagenas – EPA	Glenn Kinoshita - Caltrans
Ted Matley – FTA	Val Ignacio - Caltrans
Stew Sonnenberg– FHWA	Lester Lee - Caltrans
Stefanie Hom – MTC	Alan Chow - Caltrans
Ross McKeown – MTC	Raymond Odunlami - MTC
Brenda Dix - MTC	Michael Jacinto – San Francisco Department of Planning
Lynn McIntyre - URS	Sri Srinivasan - MTC
Jon Tamimi - URS	Ken Spillman – San Francisco Department of Public Works
Gary Sidhu – Alameda CTC	Adam Crenshaw - MTC
Stephen Haas – Alameda CTC	

- 1. Welcome and Self Introductions:** Brenda Dix (MTC) called the meeting to order at 9:30 am. See attendance roster above.
- 2. PM_{2.5} Interagency Consultations:** To begin the interagency consultations for PM_{2.5} project level conformity, Brenda Dix (MTC) asked the project sponsors to give a brief overview of their projects prior to opening up the projects for questions by the Task Force.

POAQC Status Determinations

City of Brentwood: Traffic Signal on American Avenue near Heritage High School

Ginger Vagenas (EPA) asked if there were diesel traffic counts for the intersection in question. There was no project sponsor representative who could respond to the question. Mike Brady (Caltrans) pointed out that ADT was provided and with such a low ADT the truck traffic numbers could not be very high. Ginger requested that in the future truck traffic information be provided if it is at all possible to do so.

Brenda Dix (MTC), Stew Sonnenberg (FHWA), Ted Matley (FTA), Mike Brady (Caltrans), and Dick Fahey (Caltrans) all determined that the project is not a project of air quality concern (POAQC).

Final Determination: FHWA, Caltrans, EPA, FTA, and MTC concurred that this project is not a POAQC.

Alameda County Transportation Commission: I-580 Westbound HOV Lanes

Brenda Dix (MTC) explained that the project sponsor does not believe this project is a POAQC and would like a determination on that; however, in the event that the Task Force determines the project is a POAQC ACTC prepared a hot spot analysis and would be seeking approval of the hot spot analysis.

Stephen Haas (ACTC) described the project as the combination of two TIP projects, one resurfacing project and one HOV lane project. The HOV lane would add an additional lane to the 580 between Greenville Road and San Ramon Road/Foothill Road. Although the project is capacity increasing since it adds an additional lane it is not capacity increasing for diesel truck traffic since they would not be permitted to use the lane. The HOV lanes are being constructed so that they could be converted to HOT lanes in the future.

The repavement portion of the project is using SHOPP funds to rehab pavement in the project area and add a westbound auxiliary lane and HOV preferential on-ramps at several locations.

Mike Brady (Caltrans) stated that the project is a fairly straight-forward HOV lane project that would not add truck capacity. More often than not these projects are determined to not be a POAQC but the total truck traffic on the freeway should be looked at. Mike stated that he is leaning toward the project not being a POAQC.

Dick Fahey (Caltrans) agreed with Mike and added that there is a high level of diesel truck traffic but there is not any substantial increase with the project. The hot spot analysis that the sponsor prepared backs up this information.

Stew Sonnenberg (FHWA) agreed with Mike and Dick and was leaning towards the project not being a POAQC.

Ginger Vagenas (EPA) commented that this project is in the gray area and requested additional time to be able to consult with other EPA staff before making a determination.

Brenda Dix (MTC) and Ted Matley (FTA) agreed with most other Task Force members that the project is acceptably on the side of not being a POAQC.

Stephen requested that the Task Force make a final determination quickly since his last day at the agency is February 29, 2012.

Brenda requested that EPA make a final determination on the projects POAQC status quickly so that the project can meet funding obligations. In the event that EPA determines the project is a POAQC then she will conduct an online review of the hot spot analysis.

Following the meeting, on February 28th Ginger Vagenas sent an email to the Task Force indicating that EPA would like the project to be considered a POAQC and would begin their review of the hot spot analysis.

Brenda asked that the rest of the Task Force review the hot spot analysis methodology and determine if the project meets the hot spot requirements in 40 CFR 93.116 and 93.126 for PM2.5 and if the project will or will not cause or contribute to a new violation of the federal PM2.5 air quality standards. She reminded the Task Force that the hot spot analysis in question uses the same methodology as the I-580 EB Hot Spot Analysis which was brought before the Task Force in July 2011. At that meeting the Task Force members concurred that the project met the hot spot requirements in 40 CFR 93.116 and 93.126 for PM2.5 and that the project would not cause or contribute to a new violation of the federal PM 2.5 air quality standards.

On February 29th, Dick emailed his hot spot analysis review to the Task Force. He stated that “ I have reviewed the project sponsor's Hot Spot Analysis methodology and assumptions, and I believe the project meets the conformity hot spot requirements in 40 CFR 93.116 and 93.126 for PM2.5, and that the project will not cause or contribute to a new violation of the PM2.5 NAAQS. In fact, I think there were a number of very conservative assumptions used in the analysis, and air quality improvements are likely to be even greater than reported.”

He also noted that the following revisions should be made to the hot spot analysis:

“1. Page 2-2, Section 2.1, bullet #3.

The statement implies that the project will reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The data does not support this, and the text should be modified. Only vehicle hours traveled (VHT) will be reduced.

2. Page 3-1, 2nd Paragraph

The text identifies Alameda CTC as the regional planning organization. This should be MTC.”

On March 2nd Mike emailed the Task Force with his findings:

“Based on the documentation now up on the web site, I would suggest that the project be considered 'Not a POAQC' similar to the determination for the EB HOV lane. I do have some concerns about the traffic analysis -- mainly, it looks like mixed-flow LOS is worse than No Build in most segments. Is that correct? I do note that the mixed flow AADT and trucks are very similar to No Build, and none of the AADTs increase much from 2015 to 2035 (probably a function of limited capacity in the mixed flow lanes). However, the appearance of better LOS in No Build goes against the project purpose of reducing congestion. Perhaps it should be pointed that the "managed" aspect of HOV lanes (operating hours and required vehicle occupancy can be adjusted to maintain reasonable LOS -- and is this corridor part of the planned toll-lane system?) allows sustainable traffic flow improvement and emission reduction in that lane, which is not the case in the unrestricted mixed-flow lanes.

If EPA insists that this is a POAQC I would also concur that the study shows the project will not cause/contribute to new violations in the project area, particularly with regard to diesel emissions.”

Also on March 2nd Ted and Stew emailed the Task Force concurring with Mike and Dick.

On March 7th, Ginger sent the following email to the Task Force:

“EPA has completed its review of the hot-spot analysis for the I-580 WB HOV project. Our reviewer (Jeff Buss) agrees with the report's conclusion that the project would not contribute to further NAAQS violations or interfere with progress toward the NAAQS. He notes that, although the HOV lane is expected to slightly increase VMT and truck AADT, thus slightly increasing direct PM 2.5 from tire wear, it appears this is more than offset by decreases in tailpipe emissions of direct PM 2.5 as the diesel fleet turns over. Additionally, improving traffic speeds and flow should reduce direct PM 2.5 emissions from both tailpipe and brake wear.”

Final Determination: EPA determined the project to be a POAQC thus triggering a hot spot analysis review. EPA, FHWA, MTC, Caltrans and FTA concur that the project meets the hot spot requirements in 40 CFR 93.116 and 93.126 for PM2.5 and that the project will not cause or contribute to a new violation of the federal PM2.5 air quality standards..

Alameda County Transportation Commission: I-880 Southbound HOV Lanes

Gary Sidhu (ACTC) Described the project as an HOV lane addition to I-880 southbound from Marina Blvd. to Hegenbereger Road. The project also includes reconstructing some on ramps and moving some sound walls. Overall the project will see a 15% increase in truck volume from current conditions to 2035.

Mike Brady (Caltrans) expressed surprise that the truck traffic increased so much with the project. Gary then clarified that the increase in truck traffic was the increase between current conditions and 2035. The difference between build and no-build is really only a very small number of trucks.

Mike noted that the surrounding land use is primarily residential but re-building the sound walls could potentially mitigate some of this even though the research is mixed. Mike stated that in his opinion the project is not a POAQC.

Dick Fahey (Caltrans) agreed with Mike's conclusions. He also noted that the total truck traffic includes all axel trucks so the diesel trucks are actually even lower than presented. However, the truck totals presented are only for the southbound direction.

Ginger Vagenas (EPA) commented that this project is only half the size of the I-880 project that was presented and that due to the fact that there were no real truck traffic increases she believes the project is not a POAQC.

Stew Sonnenberg (FHWA), Ted Matley (FTA), and Brenda Dix (MTC) agreed with the other Task Force members that this project is not a POAQC.

Final Determination: FHWA, Caltrans, EPA, FTA, and MTC concurred that this project is not a POAQC.

Metropolitan Transportation Commission: Freeway Performance Initiative (FPI)

Glenn Kinoshita (Caltrans) introduced the project as operational improvements at on-ramps throughout the region including ramp metering and TOS elements. He noted that Phase 1 of the project came before the Task Force last year and was approved. Today's meeting was covering the rest of the potential project locations in the region.

None of the elements of the project would be capacity adding. The truck traffic information that is presented is for 3+ axel trucks so it actually over estimates the number of diesel trucks. The project will affect intersections with LOS D, E, and F but it does not affect the diesel traffic at those locations.

Mike Brady (Caltrans) noted that there are a few intersections where the LOS decreases and asked what the explanation for that was. He suspected that data for the AM peak period traffic may have been substituted in Table 2 for the AADT. However, whatever the case the truck traffic is still low at the ramps. The project sponsor could not respond to why the LOS was decreasing but agreed to look into it and send revised tables and/or an explanation to the Task Force.

Based on questions from Mike the project sponsor clarified that the LOS listed in the tables is the LOS on the ramps.

Mike stated that as individual interchanges the project is not a POAQC.

Dick Fahey (Caltrans) also stated that the low truck volumes indicate that the project is not a POAQC; however, he questioned why there was such a large difference in ADT between build and no-build. The project sponsor offered to correct/explain this via email consultation after the meeting as well.

Mike asked for clarification about the inclusion of the Route 242 connector being included as a metering location. He stated that it is uncommon to meter collectors. The project sponsor clarified that they currently have no plans to meter collectors. The collector metering would only happen in a worst case scenario but the project sponsor did not want to preclude it in case it is necessary to use in the future to make a corridor operate efficiently. All of the ramps that are presented are not guaranteed to be used they are just potential project locations that the project sponsor wanted to clear through the Task Force.

Mike re-asserted his previous assessment that the project is not a POAQC. Ted Matley (FTA), Stew Sonnenberg (FHWA), and Brenda Dix (MTC) agreed with this conclusion. Ginger requested that the Task Force delay making a decision until the revised tables were received from the project sponsor. The rest of the Task Force agreed to this approach.

On March 2nd Brenda Dix sent the project sponsor's revised tables to the Task Force.

Ted, Brenda, Mike, Dick, Stew, and Ginger reviewed the revised tables and emailed the Task Force their determinations that the project is not a POAQC.

Final Determination: FHWA, Caltrans, EPA, FTA, and MTC concurred that this project is not a POAQC.

PM_{2.5} Conformity Exempt List Review

Brenda Dix (MTC) reminded the Task Force that the Phelan Loop project had come before the Task Force in January and the Task Force had requested more information due to the relocation of the bus terminal. The project sponsor prepared a memo for the Task Force with more information on the project including information on the number of diesel trucks and the surrounding land uses. Ginger Vagenas (EPA) reminded the Task Force that the issue is not just the number of diesel busses but the creation of new hot spots which requires looking at several project components. It was clear that the bus terminal was being relocated to a different location on the same parcel of land and that there was no objection to the project using the original exemption code from any member of the Task Force.

Brenda reviewed that the Citywide: San Francisco Street Improvements project had submitted a PM 2.5 assessment form since the project includes the installation of a traffic signal; however, they believe that the Other – planting and landscaping exemption code is most appropriate since that is the bulk of the project. Mike Brady (Caltrans) clarified that the project is street scaping except along Cesar Chavez where the project is really a road diet. He stated that the traffic volumes on the street are low enough that the project should not be a POAQC. Mike, Dick Fahey (Caltrans), Stew Sonnenberg (FHWA), Ted Matley (FTA), Brenda Dix (MTC), and Ginger agreed that because the project included the road diet on Cesar Chavez the entire project is determined to be not a POAQC.

The two Napa county road rehab projects were concurred to be exempt.

Brenda reviewed the Albany – Buchanan Bicycle and Pedestrian Path project which was only submitted to the Task Force for review that morning. Mike pointed out that the project is installing a traffic signal which means that it cannot use the bike and pedestrian route exemption. The Task Force agreed that the project sponsor would have to fill out a project assessment form and come back to the Task Force for a POAQC determination.

Final Determination: FHWA, Caltrans, EPA, FTA, and MTC concurred that projects SF-090037, NAP110009 and NAP110019 are exempt from PM2.5 project level analysis. FHWA, Caltrans, EPA, FTA, and MTC concurred that SF-050042 is not a POAQC. MTC will contact the project sponsor for ALA110030 and request that the sponsor fill out a project assessment form.

- 3. Consent Calendar:** Brenda Dix (MTC) asked for questions on any items on the exempt calendar. There were no questions on any items on the consent calendar.

Final Determination: All items on the consent calendar were approved by FHWA, Caltrans, EPA, FTA and MTC.

4. Other Business/Adjourn

Sri Srinivasan (MTC) asked for an update on road diets and HSIP exemptions for signalization projects which were topics that came up during the January meeting.

Mike Brady (Caltrans) stated that there had been no conclusion on road diets but that he would continue discussing and researching the topic.

Mike stated that in the past signalization projects that were funded under HSIP were able to use the HSIP exemption code to be exempted from PM 2.5 project level conformity. However, he questioned how far reaching the HSIP exemption was and how often it could be used to deviate from standard practice. Sri offered to put together a memo that would highlight examples of HSIP projects that are not usually considered exempt from PM 2.5 project level conformity. This memo will be included in the next packet for further discussion.

Brenda Dix (MTC) reminded that the next meeting will be on March 22, 2012.

Brenda adjourned the meeting at approximately 10:30 am.

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