

Air Quality Conformity Task Force
Summary Meeting Notes
July 26, 2012
Revised September 11, 2012

Participants:

Dick Fahey – Caltrans
Ted Matley – FTA
Stew Sonnenberg– FHWA
Brenda Dix – MTC
Stefanie Hom - MTC
Sri Srinivasan – MTC

Dale Dennis – ACTC
Eric Cordoba – SFCTA
Dave Dickinson – WMH
John Schwarz – DJP&A
Meryka Blumer – DJP&A

1. Welcome and Self Introductions: Stefanie Hom (MTC) called the meeting to order at 9:30 am. See attendance roster above. Stefanie noted that Ginger Vagenas (EPA) and Mike Brady (Caltrans) were not able to join the meeting, but would review the agenda items and provide comments later that week. The Task Force members would provide comments and recommendations on the agenda items, but final determinations would be made after Ginger and Mike's comments were received.

2. PM_{2.5} Interagency Consultations
a. PM_{2.5} Conformity Exempt List Review

ALA-050019 – I-880 North Safety Improvements

Dick Fahey (Caltrans) made a comment about ALA-050019 – I-880 North Safety Improvements. The project area was designated as non-attainment for PM_{2.5} in March 2010, although transportation conformity requirements were not effective until December 2010. However, if the project requires additional federal approvals after December 2010, it would still require PM_{2.5} consultation.

Stew Sonnenberg (FHWA) indicated that he talked to Karina O'Connor (EPA) and Mike Brady (Caltrans) about this project. Caltrans submitted a conformity analysis in 2009. FHWA issued a letter in March 2010 indicating that while the area is designated as non-attainment for PM_{2.5}, transportation conformity requirements were not effective at that time and would not apply until December 14, 2010. The determination made in 2010 should be valid for three years. But as Karina noted, if the project needs federal approvals it needs to be evaluated as a project of air quality concern.

Dale Dennis (ACTC) indicated that the project just reconstructs overcrossings. The scope does not include the construction of through lanes. He believes this project is an exempt project.

Stew agreed that the project scope has not changed.

Dale indicated that the exempt and non-exempt criteria were not included until after the project determination with FHWA. Given that the project description and scope have not changed, ACTC is requesting the project be exempt since it meets exemption criteria.

Stew indicated that the PM2.5 fact sheet for this project doesn't include ADT numbers.

Dale indicated that the project is a safety project to improve local circulation. There is no change in the number of mainlines. The project scope just includes extending and lengthening on and off-ramps for safety reasons, and reconstructing overcrossings. The project will not increase capacity and truck traffic is not expected to change.

Brenda Dix (MTC) clarified that projects using exemption codes do not need to provide ADT information. That information is only provided for projects that do not qualify for exemptions under 93.126. The question the Task Force needs to answer is "does this project and the project description fit into the exemption code that the sponsor has selected?"

Stew indicated that he would like to hear comments from Mike Brady and EPA about this project. He believes this is not a project of air quality concern.

Dick agreed with Stew. He would like to hear Mike and EPA's comments and if they are comfortable with this project being exempt from PM2.5 conformity.

On July 31, 2012, Ginger Vagenas (EPA) emailed the Task Force and indicated that she is unsure if the project should be exempt, since it includes the extension of an auxiliary lane. She was consulting with FHWA and OTAQ.

On August 2, 2012, Ginger emailed the Task Force and indicated that she spoke with Stew regarding the project and was comfortable with the project being exempt from PM2.5 conformity.

On August 2, 2012, Stefanie Hom (MTC) spoke with Mike Brady (Caltrans) and he indicated that the project should only be exempt if it complies with one of the three safety exemptions: 1) Highway and Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Implementation; 2) Hazard Elimination Program; or 3) Safer non-Federal-aid system roads.

On August 7, 2012, Stefanie spoke with Sri Srinivasan (MTC) and determined that the project complies with the "Hazard Elimination Program" safety exemption, since the project would improve the flow of vehicles along the mainline and help reduce the rate of congestion-related accidents in the area.

REVISION: At the August 23, 2012 Task Force meeting, Ginger indicated that the exemption decision for this project should not be a precedential determination for similar projects submitted in the future. She had follow-up conversations with OTAC and they indicated that this was not necessarily an exempt project. More details should have been provided on the auxiliary lanes.

SOL-070021 – Travis Air Force Base (AFB): South Gate Improvement Project

Dick Fahey (Caltrans) asked for clarification on the project description for SOL-070021 – Travis AFB: South Gate Improvement Project. What does "eastbound truck stacking" mean?

Would the project adding more capacity for diesel trucks? Would it contribute more diesel emissions?

Brenda Dix (MTC) indicated that trucks are currently stacked on the roadway at the entrance of the Travis AFB. The purpose of the project is to give trucks someplace to pull over instead of blocking the entrance. The project does not add new roadway or capacity.

Other Projects

The Task Force did not have comments on any of the other projects listed on the PM2.5 conformity exemption list.

On July 31, 2012, Ginger Vagenas (EPA) emailed that she did not have any comments on any of the other projects on the PM2.5 conformity exempt list.

On August 2, 2012, Stefanie Hom (MTC) spoke with Mike Brady (Caltrans) and he indicated that he did not have any comments on any of the other projects on the PM2.5 conformity exempt list.

Final Determination: FHWA, Caltrans, EPA, FTA, and MTC concurred that all projects are exempt from PM2.5 project level analysis.

3. Consent Calendar

a. Project Scope and Conformity for Yerba Buena Island (YBI) Interchange Project

Dave Dickinson (WMH) provided an overview of the project changes. Project SF-070027 - The Yerba Buena Island (YBI) interchange at US I-80 (Viaducts Structures) originally combined the I-80 YBI Interchange Ramps project and the Viaducts Structures project. The project underwent interagency consultation on April 5, 2011 and it was determined that it was not a project of air quality concern.

Dave indicated that the two projects approved under SF-070027 were separated as a result of the Highway Bridge Program (HPB) funding protocol. Also, because of the limited construction windows that are available for construction, it was determined that the Viaducts Structures will be constructed under a separate construction contract from YBI Ramps project to ensure that the Viaduct construction does not interfere with the other construction projects within the same vicinity. There is no change in project scope.

Dave is looking for Task Force confirmation that the approval under SF-070027 for the Viaducts Structures project still applies despite the separation of the two projects.

Stew Sonnenberg (FHWA) asked if the separation is for phasing only.

Dave indicated that yes, the separation is for phasing only.

Stew indicated that approval under SF-070027 would apply for the Viaducts Structures project.

Dick Fahey (Caltrans) and Ted Matley (FTA) agreed with Stew.

On July 31, 2012, Ginger Vagenas (EPA) emailed the Task Force and indicated that she agreed that the previous project approval would apply for the Viaducts Structures project.

On August 2, 2012, Stefanie Hom (MTC) spoke with Mike Brady (Caltrans) and he indicated that as long as the funding schedule does not change, the previous approval would apply for the Viaducts Structures project.

On August 2, 2012, Stefanie emailed Meryka Blumer (DJP&A) for clarification on the funding schedule. On August 6, 2012, Meryka emailed that the construction of the Viaducts Structures project would be delayed so that it did not interfere with the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Structure project. The construction start date is likely to be Spring 2014; the MTC Fund Management System (FMS) shows construction funding programmed in the 2014/2015 year, so the funding schedule for construction has not changed.

4. Other Business

The next Task Force next meeting will be held on Thursday, August 23.

Stefanie Hom (MTC) concluded the meeting at 10:00 am.

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