



Date: January 29, 2007
 Committee Meeting Date: February 8, 2007
 Board Meeting Date: March 1, 2007
 ACTION X DISCUSSION INFO

BOARD MEMORANDUM

TO: Policy Advisory Committee
 Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
 Board of Directors

THROUGH: Michael T. Burns *Michael T. Burns*
 General Manager

FROM: Carolyn M. Gonot *Carolyn M Gonot*
 Chief Development Officer

SUBJECT: Review and Screening of Candidate Locations for Noise Mitigation

RECOMMENDATION:

Review and recommend that the VTA Board of Directors authorize a countywide review and screening of candidate locations for noise mitigation projects on freeways and expressways, and authorize the General Manager to enter into consultant contracts for up to \$500,000 for technical work necessary to implement the program.

BACKGROUND:

The passage of Senate Bill 45 (SB-45) in 1997 delegated responsibility to the regional agencies for prioritizing 75% of State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funds. VTA, in its capacity as Congestion Management Agency (CMA) for Santa Clara County, is responsible for setting STIP priorities in Santa Clara County, subject to Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) approval. As a result of SB-45's funding delegation, Caltrans also passed the responsibility for prioritizing State funding for retrofit freeway and state highway noise mitigation projects to the regional agencies, including VTA.

Valley Transportation Plan 2020 (VTP 2020) and its successor, Valley Transportation Plan 2030 (VTP 2030) established a Sound Barrier Program, intended to provide grant funding for retrofit noise mitigation projects on the freeways and expressways. The VTA Board of Directors adopted noise mitigation standard, a process and criteria for the program on November 6, 2003. The VTA Sound Barrier program requires sound barrier projects to be submitted by the Cities,

location meets the VTA standard, and by a preliminary engineering study called a Noise Barrier Summary Scope Report (NBSSR) that conforms to Caltrans methodology.

DISCUSSION:

VTA and Caltrans receive multiple noise complaint calls from residents throughout the year. As per the VTA policy, these residents are referred back to the cities and County. Very few of these citizen complaints appear to result in tangible action due to difficulty and expense of dealing with each complaint on a case-by-case basis. VTA staff has determined that this is partially due to member agency's inability to screen these complaints to determine which should be developed further for actual grant proposals.

To assist residents and member agencies, VTA staff is proposing that VTA review and screen candidate locations for sound walls. This program is intended to fill the gap between the noise complaint calls that the cities and VTA get on a regular basis and preparation of Noise Barrier Scope Summary Report (NBSSR) documents for actual, fundable sound barrier projects.

Staff is proposing the following:

1. VTA to issue a 90-day "Request for Candidate Locations" to potential project sponsors. The sponsors would include Caltrans, the cities and the County.
2. Sponsors to collect and submit nominations for potential study locations.
3. VTA to hire a consultant to screen the nominations and evaluate each location as follows:
 - a. Perform an initial "Windshield Survey" to determine if the complaint qualifies based on location, land use, site characteristics, and age of development.
 - b. Conduct a second Level "Preliminary Technical Study" and determine if the complaint has merit based on a general analysis of current traffic volume, distance from roadway, topography, noise-sensitive receptor characteristics, and projected noise barrier benefits.
 - c. Complete final "Field Measurements and Detailed Analysis". The consultant will take noise measurements and perform a quantitative evaluation of noise reduction, cost-effectiveness, and construction feasibility.
4. Consultant to prepare a report on each request that provides a technical basis for member agencies to decide whether to continue pursuing the project by preparing a NBSSR and submitting it to VTA for programming. The report would be available to VTA, the member agency, and Caltrans.

If the Board approves this program at its March meeting, VTA staff will issue the "Request for Candidate Locations" shortly thereafter, and complete the final consultant reports in December 2007.

VTA staff estimates the average cost per screening to be \$5,000 to \$10,000. Based on informal requests VTA has received over the past five years and the Caltrans soundwall list, VTA staff recommends budgeting an amount not to exceed \$500,000. Funds would come from the VTA

Congestion Management Program's STTP Planning Programming and Monitoring (PPM) funds and Member Agency dues. VTA will use its active list of pre-screened noise engineering consultants to perform the work.

ALTERNATIVES:

The Board could elect not to authorize this study

FISCAL IMPACT:

STTP Planning, Programming & Monitoring (PPM) money and CMP dues will fund the study for an amount not to exceed \$500,000. Sufficient funds are available in the FY'2007 CMP budget to initiate the program. The balance will be included in the upcoming 2008 CMP budget proposal. No funding from the VTA Transit Enterprise Fund will be used for this work.

