

Demand for SR 152 exceeds capacity, as the two-lane undivided highway has a volume of over 27,000 vehicles per day traveling the route between SR 156 and US 101 in Gilroy and peak hour directional volumes of over 1200 vehicles. Due to the sharp curves, steep grades and trucks making up 12% of the total volume, the existing highway operates at level of service F during peak hours. SR 152 has an accident rate of 1.45 accidents per million vehicle miles, almost 60 percent higher than the statewide average accident rate of 0.92 for the facility type. In a three-year period, there were 324 total accidents that resulted in 17 deaths.

Widening of the existing SR 152 alignment would be challenging due to challenging vertical and horizontal alignments. It would also have an impact to the various communities that reside along the corridor. Approximately 140 driveways and 11 local roads (all but one unsignalized) intersect the highway and right of way would need to be acquired from various businesses and residences to widen SR 152.

DISCUSSION:

VTA, together with the California Department of Transportation, is currently undertaking an assessment for upgrading SR 152, including analyzing deficiencies, determining upgrade criteria and requirements, and evaluating issues and feasibility. The assessment is also evaluating alternative alignments to determine the most likely new alignment(s). The result of this assessment will include a more detailed concept of potential alignments, order-of-magnitude cost, right-of-way and utility considerations, and environmental and construction impacts.

The next step in the project development process will be conceptual engineering and environmental clearance. These activities are estimated to cost \$2 million. VTA is requesting \$1 million in TCSP grant funds, and would be required to provide a \$1 million non-Federal match.

If VTA is successful, TCSP funds will be used to:

- Finalize evaluation of alternative alignments to determine the most likely alignment(s) for a new highway and begin conceptual engineering;
- Undertake preparation of an environmental document identifying impacts and mitigations consistent with San Benito County's desire for a road improvement that does not encourage growth;
- Continue to coordinate with and solicit input from stakeholders including government agencies, members of the public, private businesses, and community groups.

The TCSP grant application was due to Caltrans by April 13, 2007. In order to meet this deadline, VTA staff has already submitted the request. If the Board declines to authorize this submittal, VTA staff will immediately withdraw the application.

The TCSP funds are administered by FHWA through Caltrans, and it is anticipated that the announcement of selected projects and the allocation of funds will occur in July 2007.

ALTERNATIVES:

The Board can elect not to pursue this funding opportunity and utilize other as yet unidentified funds to proceed with conceptual engineering and environmental clearance. The Board may also choose not to fund these activities. Both of these actions will result in delays in addressing the issues associated with the current alignment of SR 152.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There will be no impact to the VTA Transit Enterprise fund. If the grant application is successful, staff will return to the Board with a request for \$1 million in matching funds and an amendment to VTA Capital Budget. The matching funds will come from the State Transportation Improvement Program or Local Program Reserve.

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