

Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

CTC Meeting: December 14-15, 2011

Reference No.: 4.11
Information

From: BIMLA G. RHINEHART
Executive Director

Subject: **STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

SUMMARY:

A presentation will be made, at the Commission's December 14-15, 2011 meeting, on revisions to the 2011 Statewide Transportation System Needs Assessment report that was presented as an information item at the October 2011 meeting. The revised report is available at http://www.catc.ca.gov/reports/2011Reports/2011_Needs_Assessment.pdf.

BACKGROUND:

In 2010, the Commission launched the development of a statewide multi-modal transportation needs assessment report through the collaboration with chief executive officers of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), urban and rural regional transportation planning agencies (RTPAs), the Department of Transportation (Caltrans), along with transit agencies, rail, ports and airports. The goal of this assessment is to detail the multi-model needs of our transportation system for the next 10 years and identify possible strategies to respond to such needs.

The report was developed using resources (staff and financial) from several MPOs, RTPAs, Caltrans, and other transportation agencies and stakeholder organizations.

The last needs assessment for California's transportation system was completed by the Commission in May 1999. Senate Resolution 8 (Burton, 1999) requested the Commission, in consultation with the Department of Transportation and the state's regional transportation planning agencies, to produce and submit to the Senate Transportation Committee and the Senate President pro Tempore, by May 10, 1999, a 10-year needs assessment of the state's transportation system.

_CALIFORNIA RURAL COUNTIES TASK FORCE

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November 28, 2011

Ms. Bimla Rhinehart
Executive Director
California Transportation Commission
1120 N Street, MS-52
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: 2011 Statewide Transportation Needs Assessment

Dear Ms. Rhinehart:

On behalf of the 26 Regional Transportation Planning Agencies in the Rural Counties Task Force (RCTF), I would like to thank the California Transportation Commission (CTC) in taking the lead in preparing the 2011 Statewide Transportation Needs Assessment. In general, the group supports the document. The report does a good job of relaying the overall constrained transportation preservation, management, and expansion needs across the State of California and the anticipated funding shortfall. With that said, we would like to address a few concerns that have been brought to light in reviewing the Final document.

The RCTF was under the impression that the Needs Assessment was intended as a data document to make the case that there is a need to increase the level of investment currently being made to transportation in California. It is the belief of the group that the report goes beyond that goal by establishing policy recommendations in Chapter 7. Although most of the recommendations can be supported, there is one particular recommendation that is worrisome to the smaller Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPAs). Policy recommendation #4 suggests Congress create a "Metro Mobility" program, which among other things, would redirect revenues that are now allocated to the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program and the Surface Transportation Program. It would also allocate any new funding in the Federal Transit Administration programs for this new program. This would create yet another hardship for the rural counties who are already drastically underfunded. I am under the impression that the entire policy recommendation (Chapter 7) may be removed from the document. That would be a relief, however, a concern remains that the idea to redirect funds to the "mega-regions" has gained momentum.

The California Consensus Principles, established under the leadership of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, and the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in 2009 were supported unanimously by the RCTF. The recent recommendations included in the 2011 Statewide Needs Assessment mirror some of the Consensus Principles.

Perhaps there have been unintended consequences in developing certain policies in the Consensus Principles, which have been unfavorable to the smaller regions in California. If this is the case, it may be time to review them and how they relate to other documents such as the 2011 Statewide Transportation Needs Assessment and future transportation bills to ensure they support accessibility and mobility for all travelers in California.

It has been pointed out to the RCTF that operational improvements to local streets and roads are not specifically identified as a documented need in this document. Projects such as minor shoulder widening, turn-outs, curve corrections and intersection improvements often consume a large percentage of rural agency budgets, yet this category is not identified in the narrative of the document. These types of projects are very important, particularly in smaller counties where capacity is a minor issue.

Lastly, there is concern that there are only four maps included in the report identifying system expansion and system management projects in San Diego, Los Angeles, the Sacramento Region and the San Francisco Bay Area. It would be beneficial if additional maps were provided to convey the transportation needs for the entire State, not just the four "mega-regions".

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to the Final 2011 Statewide Transportation Needs Assessment. We support the overall purpose of the assessment and feel that it is valuable in expressing the transportation needs in California. I would be happy to discuss the concerns expressed above.

Sincerely,

Lisa Davey-Bates, Chair
Rural Counties Task Force

Cc: Rural Counties Task Force Members