

Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

CTC Meeting: March 5, 2013

Reference No.: 4.17
Action

From: BIMLA G. RHINEHART
Executive Director

Subject: **Comments to the Draft Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan**

ISSUE:

Should the Commission provide comments to the Draft Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan (ITSP) prepared by Caltrans and presented to the Commission at the January 2013 CTC meeting?

The Draft ITSP serves primarily as a status report of the progress made to complete the ten high priority focus routes identified in the 1998 ITSP. The report does not articulate how the interregional transportation system will be impacted by planning considerations resulting from legislation enacted since 1998.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Commission direct staff to transmit the attached letter in response to the Draft ITSP that encourages Caltrans to:

- Through an open and transparent process, refine the interregional transportation strategic plan in parallel with the development of the 2040 California Transportation Plan (CTP).
- Assess whether the focus routes included in the 1998 interregional transportation strategic plan remain the highest priority for funding when aligned with other plans to achieve statewide goals.
- Closely coordinate the various planning efforts underway to meet legislative requirements and increase assurance that the interregional plan supports a balanced and sustainable interregional transportation system.
- Evaluate interregional system priorities utilizing performance measures in addition to the cost effectiveness criteria included in the Draft ITSP.
- Exercise care to ensure that critical interregional priorities, unlikely to be funded by the more rural non-urbanized areas of the state, are identified and prioritized.

BACKGROUND:

California Streets and Highways Code Sections 163-164.56 establish legislative policy for the use of all transportation funds available to the State. The ITSP provides guidance for transportation improvement projects for state highways, intercity passenger rail, grade separations, and mass transit guideways. The ITSP is expected to be updated periodically to reflect major changes, trends of statewide and interregional significance, and evolving transportation policy and strategies.

The most recent ITSP, approved in 1998, was prepared in response to the passage of Senate Bill (SB) 45 and identifies a specific set of highway projects on ten Focus Routes. It informs and is informed by the Regional Transportation Plans prepared by the 18 Metropolitan Planning Organizations and 26 Regional Transportation Planning Agencies in California.

The Draft ITSP, issued December 2012 and presented to the Commission in January 2013, is the first update since 1998. The Draft ITSP was prepared to provide a course of actions and considerations for the Interregional Improvement Program (IIP) for the 20-year planning period of 2012 to 2032. The Draft ITSP does not add new focus routes to the plan. In addition, no routes are eliminated except where sections of the route may have been relinquished by the State to a local jurisdiction.

According to the Draft ITSP, “the concurrent efforts to complete the California Interregional Blueprint (CIB) Interim Report¹ and update the ITSP will result in a statewide vision for an integrated, multimodal transportation system that will complement regional transportation system and land-use plans, as well as assist the State in meeting climate change goals. Updated rail, freight, transit, and aviation plans will also contribute to this statewide planning effort. Both the CTP and ITSP will act as planning tools that can be used to better link intermodal systems, resulting in a more efficient and comprehensive transportation system. Such coordination efforts are crucial to creating balance and sustainable interregional travel.”

Attachment – Draft Letter to Caltrans Director Dougherty

¹ The Interim California Interregional Blueprint was finalized December 2012.

JAMES C. GHIEMMETTI, Chair
CARL GUARDINO, Vice Chair
BOB ALVARADO
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SENATOR MARK DESAULNIER, Ex Officio
ASSEMBLY MEMBER BONNIE LOWENTHAL, Ex Officio

BIMLA G. RHINEHART, Executive Director

CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

1120 N STREET, MS-52
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
P. O. BOX 942873
SACRAMENTO, CA 94273-0001
FAX (916) 653-2134
(916) 654-4245
<http://www.catc.ca.gov>

March 5, 2013

Malcolm Dougherty
Director
Department of Transportation
1120 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Director Dougherty,

The Commission considered the draft interregional transportation strategic plan (interregional plan) at its January 2013 meeting. Given the importance the interregional plan has to future funding decisions, it is critical that the interregional plan contributes to the statewide vision for an integrated, multimodal transportation system that furthers statewide mobility, safety, air quality, housing, economic, and other goals.

The Commission encourages Caltrans, through an open and transparent process, to refine the interregional plan in parallel with the development of the 2040 California Transportation Plan (CTP). This refinement should include an assessment as to whether the focus routes included in the 1998 interregional plan remain the highest priority for funding when aligned with other plans to achieve statewide goals.

Regional transportation, freight, rail, transit, and other plans are likely to influence future interregional plan priorities. Therefore, the Commission encourages close coordination between the various planning efforts underway to meet legislative requirements and increase assurance that the interregional plan supports a balanced and sustainable interregional transportation system. As evaluations of interregional system priorities are prepared, performance measures in addition to the cost effectiveness criteria included in the draft interregional plan should be utilized. Care should also be exercised to ensure that critical interregional priorities, unlikely to be funded by the more rural areas of the state, are identified and prioritized.

The Commission looks forward to working with Caltrans and other interested stakeholders as the interregional plan is refined and a broader range of modes and approaches is considered to

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address the state's interregional mobility needs. Please be assured that the Commission will continue to utilize those resources that are within its purview to assist Caltrans and the regions in developing transportation investments that will enable California to meet its mobility, economic and environmental objectives.

If you have questions or concerns related to these recommendations, please contact Bimla Rhinehart, Executive Director, at (916) 654-4245.

Sincerely,

JAMES C. GHIELMETTI

Chair

c: Commissioners, California Transportation Commission
Brian P. Kelly, Acting Secretary, Business, Transportation & Housing