

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

50 HIGUERA STREET
SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA 93401-5415
PHONE (805) 549-3111
FAX (805) 549-3329
TDD (805) 549-3259
<http://www.dot.gov/dist05>



*Flex your power!
Be energy efficient!*

Staff Report

SUBJECT: Intelligent Transportation Systems

MEETING DATE: October 21, 2004

Agenda Item: 13

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive report from Caltrans on Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) strategies to improve highway operations and management.

BACKGROUND:

In March 2000, the SBCAG adopted an Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Strategic Plan for the Central Coast. This Plan was developed through a consortium of agencies in the Central Coast and identified ITS projects and strategies to improve the efficiency of the transportation system. The Strategic Plan also included a listing of the highest priority ITS projects for Santa Barbara County. A range of ITS improvements is envisioned for the county's highways to provide travelers with notification of major incidents, road closures, slides and weather conditions.

In conjunction with this Strategic Plan, SBCAG programmed in 2002 changeable message signs (CMS) at the 101/154 junctions in both North County and the South Coast. This project is currently programmed for construction in the 2007/2008 fiscal year with environmental work and design expected to get underway in July 2005.

DISCUSSION:

In June 2004, a devastating fire along the Gaviota coast burned thousands of acres and caused the closure of Highway 101 for many hours over the weekend and intermittently during the week until the fire was under control. Information regarding the exact status of the fire and whether or not the highway was closed was sporadic at best leaving travelers and commuters stranded and/or caught in traffic jams for hours. At the June 17, 2004 Board meeting Supervisor Marshall requested that the Department of Transportation (Department) provide the SBCAG Board with information regarding how to enhance communication along the 101 corridor in both the short and long term.

At the September 16, 2004, SBCAG Board meeting Mayor Weinberg of Carpinteria brought up a similar issue regarding traffic congestion on Highway 101 the morning of September 14, 2004, after the peak commuting hours. Department staff was on Highway 101 in the vicinity of Olive Mill Road in the morning on that day investigating a fatal traffic accident. Even though investigators were only out there for an hour, traffic was backed up for miles. If there had been a way to communicate to the traveling public the nature of the incident and the expected duration of delay, the impact of this incident could have been reduced.

Department staff from District 5 will present to the Board strategies for improving the dissemination of traveler information to the public using ITS.

COMMITTEE REVIEW: None

STAFF CONTACT: Scott Eades, Caltrans District 5
(805) 549-3612