

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Committee Reports

MEETING DATE: February 19, 2008

AGENDA ITEM: 13

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive a summary of the LOSSAN Policy Board Meeting held in Los Angeles on February 11, 2009

STAFF CONTACT: Michael Powers

DISCUSSION:

Mayor Marty Blum represented SBCAG at the LOSSAN Board meeting on February 11. Also attending were Michael Powers and Scott Spalding, SBCAG staff, and Rob Dayton, City of Santa Barbara staff.

The policy board meeting was preceded by a visit to the Amtrak Maintenance Facility in Los Angeles. Mayor Blum and Michael Powers joined other board members on a site visit to see the facilities that are available to wash, service, and make minor repairs to the Amtrak Pacific Surfliner Intercity trains and the long distance trains such as the Coast Starlight and Desert Wind. All were impressed by the diversity of services that are provided at this facility and the flexibility needed by the maintenance personnel in responding to train schedule changes.

The board approved the Overall Work Program for the 2009-10 Fiscal Years and the member dues, which are unchanged from last year.

The board received a status report on state funding from Bill Bronte, Division of Rail:

- The Division of rail worked with Metrolink, BN&SF, and UP to identify “shovel ready” projects on the LOSSAN corridor. Apparently (since staff has not seen the project list) there are no projects north of LA Union Station; however, many listed projects will benefit the entire corridor. For example adding track capacity at LA Union Station, which is a major hub and point of congestion, will improve on-time performance of all intercity trains throughout the corridor.

Member Agencies

Buellton ■ Carpinteria ■ Goleta ■ Guadalupe ■ Lompoc ■ Santa Barbara ■ Santa Maria ■ Solvang ■ Santa Barbara County

- All Prop. 1B Rail Projects are on hold, while there are no Prop 1B rail projects in our area, the purchase of the new rail cars has been delayed.
- Governor's FY 09-10 proposed budget maintains the subsidy for intercity rail; however, diesel fuel cost and other cost increases are requiring Caltrans to cut costs and they may eliminate underperforming routes to keep revenues in line with costs.
- He reported that the American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials (ASHTO) have requested that the reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU, the national transportation legislation, include a substantial authorization for rail projects.

The Board received a status report from Jonathan Hutchinson, Amtrak:

- The Stimulus package is expected to benefit Amtrak. There are capital grants for Amtrak and Capital Assistance for Intercity Passenger Rail Service. Funding for Amtrak is directed at rehabilitating existing rail cars. As new equipment is made available nationally new services can be added nationally.
- The stimulus bill also includes funding for a capital rail program, administered by Federal Rail Administration that continues funding for a program which was just instituted last year. This program is a competitive program for the states. We will have to work through LOSSAN and CT. Div. of Rail to benefit from this program as the state is the applicant.
- Ridership has declined about 4% from a year ago.

The Board discussed the implications of the Federal Stimulus package to rail. The board voted to send a letter to the House/Senate Conference Committee to support a provision in the Bill that makes rail capital projects an eligible use of Surface Transportation Project (STP) funds. SBCAG currently receives Federal STP funds.

The Board discussed the need to have a California representative on the Amtrak Board. Two vacancies exist. Staff was directed to compile a list of names for circulation.

The board received an update on the strategic assessment, rider and non-rider surveys. The survey found that among non-train riders there is a low awareness of travel by train options. Next month the board will hear a report on service alternatives.

The board discussed train station parking capacity and directed the TAC to examine this issue and report back to the board.