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September 27, 2016

The Honorable Judge Kelly V. Simmons
Marin County Superior Court
P.O. Box 4988
San Rafael CA 94913-4988

Subject: Response to Grand Jury Report "Traffic Congestion in Marin – The Sir Francis Drake Boulevard Project Deconstructed"

Dear Judge Simmons:

The Transportation Authority of Marin Board of Commissioners considered the report issued by the Civil Grand Jury entitled "Traffic Congestion in Marin – The Sir Francis Drake Boulevard Project Deconstructed" at its July 28, 2016 regularly scheduled meeting. The Board appreciated the efforts of the Grand Jury and the opportunity to respond to their findings and recommendations. Attached please find the Board's response.

Sincerely,

Dianne Steinhauser
Executive Director
Transportation Authority of Marin

DS/dmm

Attachment: Response to Grand Jury Report

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

Report Title: Traffic Congestion in Marin:
The Sir Francis Drake Boulevard Project Deconstructed

Report Date: June 30, 2016

Agenda Date: July 28, 2016

Response by: Transportation Authority of Marin Board of Commissioners

FINDINGS

- We agree with the findings numbered: F1, F4, F5, F6, F7, F8, F9, & F13
- We disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: F2, F3, F10, F11 & F12.

F1. “The SFDB project team provided extensive outreach and transparency with many public meetings and workshops, published information, and modified and sharpened direction based on the feedback received.”

Response: Agree.

F2. “There is no statement in the SFDB Project documentation of current congestion levels (except for specific intersections) and no quantified goals for congestion relief.”

Response: Partially Disagree. TAM observed existing conditions traffic data presented during community meetings as well as concepts presented to improve the throughput of vehicles within the corridor.

F3. “The SFDB Project considered only roadway improvements for traffic operation, mass transit, and pedestrian and bicycle access and safety. More comprehensive analysis of traffic and congestion is possible as seen in the Mill Valley Traffic Congestion Task Force Report. This could open the possibility for a wider range of solutions.”

Response: Partially disagree. TAM cooperatively works with project sponsors to identify a series of transportation improvements that address maintenance needs and the mobility for all users of a roadway network.

F4. "The use of 11-foot traffic lane widths on SFDB is safe, will not materially slow traffic flow, is commonly used for roads with much higher traffic volumes and speeds, and abides by standard guidance."

Response: Agree.

F5. "Existing traffic signals are programmed and coordinated for multiple time-of-day and day-of-week schedules across 12 intersections. Adjustment of these programs to account for new and more efficient intersection configurations and new traffic patterns is expected to have moderate payoff."

Response: Agree.

F6. "As demonstrated in the 2011-2012 project to synchronize traffic signals along SFDB, the County has the ability to model Level of Service measures including elapsed time to travel the corridor, average speed, calculated fuel consumption as a function of congestion, cost of time lost, cost of fuel, CO2 emissions, and toxic gas emissions before and after a project."

Response: Agree.

F7. "The cost of all components under consideration for this project is \$19.2M, but the budget is \$13.2M. \$800,000 has been allocated for the work already completed and the upcoming development and filing of an Environmental Impact Report."

Response: Agree.

F8. "Future leadership changes on the Marin County Board of Supervisors, TAM Board of Commissioners, as well as city and town councils during design-approval stages can cause a previously well-conceived and vetted congestion reduction project to fall out of favor and be abandoned or seriously curtailed."

Response: Agree.

F9. "Funding and implementing school bus programs for Bacich Elementary School and Kent Middle School would reduce peak school traffic which makes up an estimated 20-30% of all peak hour morning trips on SFDB."

Response: Agree.

F10. “Measure A funds provide for school bus transportation as part of its transit implementation strategy”

Response: Partially Disagree. Measure A funds are not specifically provided for school bus service. Enhanced school bus service is an eligible expense, and competes for limited funds with other public transit needs. Public transit needs are evaluated every two years by Marin Transit in their Short Range Transit Plan.

F11. “TAM has the authority to change the Measure A expenditure plan with a two-thirds majority vote of the TAM Board of Commissioners and approval of a majority of the towns and cities of Marin County”

Response: Partially Disagree. The Plan may be amended with a two-thirds majority vote of the Commissioners, and a majority vote of 50%+ of the cities representing 50% of the incorporated population as well as a majority vote of the County Board of Supervisors.

F12. “Multi-use pathways constructed along Hwy 101 at a cost of \$35M yielded insignificant conversion of motorized travel to walking and biking.”

Response: Disagree. TAM is supportive of improving the non-motorized transportation network. Portions of the network have been built but “gaps” remain. Closing these gaps will provide connectivity for walkers and bikers for commute and recreational travel. Creation of sidewalks, paths or bike lanes provides a viable alternative to vehicle travel.

F13. “Planning is underway for another bike bridge and pathway with a projected cost of \$19.8M. And further south, studies are underway with vigorous advocacy support for converting the abandoned Alto Tunnel to a multi-use pathway at an estimated cost of \$40M to \$50M.”

Response: Agree.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations R4, R8, and R9 have been implemented
- Recommendation R3 & R6 have not been implemented, but will be implemented.
- Recommendations R1 & R7 require further analysis.
- Recommendation R5 will not be implemented.

R1. TAM and The County should reconcile the \$19.2M in desired work along SFDB with the \$13.2M budget by giving priority to the traffic congestion reduction measures.

Response: There are numerous demands on available funds in Marin County. In the Regional Transportation Plan outreach conducted in 2015 to identify transportation needs in Marin, TAM identified over \$1Billion in needs that are not fundable in the short term to address mobility and ongoing maintenance of our transportation network. In a recent Call for Projects for an available \$10 Million in federal gas tax funds, TAM received nearly \$50M in ready-to-go candidate projects. Additional revenue needs to be identified for this growing list of candidate projects.

TAM and the County of Marin will continue to work together to identify available local funds for closing the funding gap in the project going forward.

The County will be engaging in a prioritization process regarding project elements over the next one-two years.

R3. TAM and the County should include and publish the Level of Service and other actual benefits achieved in the project scope of work.

Response: The County will evaluate traffic as part of the technical studies included in the project's CEQA Environmental Document. That analysis will look at existing conditions as well as projected benefits of the project. The analysis will include Level of Service evaluation in the before and after condition.

R4. Marin County Board of Supervisors and TAM Board of Commissioners should facilitate the identification and publication of project facts and both qualitative and quantifiable benefits to better inform the public and guide their future decision making.

Response: For the Sir Francis Drake Boulevard project as well as all projects funded under the Measure A Transportation Sales Tax program, project sponsors evaluate the needs of the roadway corridor, considering all modes of travel. In all projects that have been developed to date under the Measure A Program, each project phase is brought to the TAM Board for fund approval-environmental, design, right of way acquisition if necessary, and construction. At TAM's public meetings, the project scope, cost, and benefit are presented and public input is invited.

R5. TAM, Marin Transit District and the County should fund school buses for the Bacich Elementary and Kent Middle School populations. Consider overall optimization of Measure A transit funds, including modification of the Measure A Expenditure Plan.

Response: TAM administers the Measure A Transportation Sales Tax Expenditure Plan approved by voters. In that plan, very specific categories of funds for transit needs were spelled out and funding levels assigned- for local, rural, and special needs transit (paratransit). TAM relies on Marin Transit to evaluate and prioritize needs within these categories which they do on a regular basis through updates to their Short Range Transit Plan and related service plans. At this time, there is sufficient demand in the voter mandated categories of transit such that deleting funds in any of the voter- approved categories to make room for expanded school bus service would result in unacceptable hardship for those categories of transit users. TAM cannot support moving funds to a new category of transit funding. A new funding source is necessary.

R6. TAM and the County should negotiate implementation of ramp metering with MTC and Caltrans.

Response: Ramp Metering is planned for Highway 101 in Marin County. TAM recognizes the benefits of ramp metering for regulating traffic flow onto Highway 101, with its benefits of relieving congestion and reducing accidents and incidents where traffic enters the highway. MTC has committed to implementing ramp metering on Highway 101 and has provided funding to Caltrans. A shortfall in funds exists to complete ramp metering. TAM is working closely with Caltrans and MTC to close the funding shortfall and implement ramp metering all along Highway 101 in Marin.

R7. TAM and the County should evaluate the cost/ benefit of adaptive signal improvements in improving congestion and fund once other more cost effective solutions have been implemented.

Response: Local jurisdictions in Marin, who have primary responsibility for managing local roads, bridges, bike-paths and sidewalks, have constructed numerous improvements that reduce congestion, such as additional lanes, additional turning lanes, improved signal equipment, separated bike and pedestrian facilities, or eliminating conflicts such as banning left turning traffic. With limited space to add to our roadways, a good option has been to operate our roadways better. The roadway operations must include the needs of all users, including bicyclists, transit users, and pedestrians.

Operating our signal systems more effectively is an important way to improve traffic operations in a corridor. TAM and the County are considering this option with a pilot project as a first step, examining carefully what benefits would result prior to investing further.

R8. Existing planned but not yet constructed highly expensive bicycle pedestrian pathways should not be built if their only justification and funding depends on traffic relief or mitigation with no evidence indicating that peak traffic relief is reliably predicted to result. Such projects should be funded and supported only if justified on other grounds.

Response: TAM requires all project sponsors receiving Marin's Measure A Transportation Sales Tax and the \$10 Vehicle Registration Fee funding to consider the needs of all users in the development of projects. This policy element was important in the voter's approval of these local revenue measures. A number of travel corridors have bike and pedestrian facilities included when they are improved.

TAM responded to public demand when approving the Expenditure Plan for the Measure A Transportation Sales tax to build a separated bicycle path over Lincoln Hill. The path was included and built with Measure A funds in response to voter demand. As well, public demand directed the TAM Board to redirect Regional Measure 2 funds from the Greenbrae Corridor Improvement Project to bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the Greenbrae area.

TAM local funding along with Non-Motorized Transportation Pilot Program funds have been invested to complete significant segments of the North South Greenway in Marin County.

TAM will continue to consider the needs of all users when assigning funds within Marin County.

R9. TAM should coordinate with other agencies to provide sets of integrated projects prioritizing solutions that have engineered and predicted benefits for areas of the County, not just for individual road segments.

Response: There are numerous examples of TAM coordinating closely with local jurisdictions in projects TAM manages. Likewise, local jurisdictions coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions or with TAM on projects.

When TAM managed the widening of the Westbound I-580 to Northbound Highway 101 Connector in San Rafael, local improvements on Bellam Boulevard and on East Francisco Boulevard were coordinated and built into the freeway project. The improvements on Highway 1 in the Almonte Shoreline area—whether being sponsored and managed by Caltrans, the County of Marin, or TAM—are all coordinated to insure efficiency and effectiveness. These are just a few examples of this practice.

TAM will continue to coordinate on projects it manages.