February 5, 2013

Marin County Board of Supervisors
3501 Civic Center Drive
San Rafael, CA 94903

SUBJECT: California Scenic Highway Program

Dear Board Members,

RECOMMENDATION:

Accept the report and provide direction on timing for future implementation.

SUMMARY:

This report has been prepared at the request of Supervisor Susan Adams and in response to a proposal from residents in the Lucas Valley area to designate Lucas Valley Road as a Scenic County Highway.

The requirements of the California Scenic Highway Program are established in state law (Streets and Highways Code Sections 260-263) and implemented by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). The goal of the Scenic Highway Program is to protect and enhance the natural scenic beauty of the state’s highways and adjacent corridors through special conservation treatment. Scenic corridors consist of land that is visible from the highway right-of-way, and is comprised primarily of scenic and natural features. In Marin County, Highway 1 along the coast has been designated as an eligible state scenic highway, but to date, has not been officially designated. Highways near Marin that have been designated as scenic highways include portions of Highways 12 and 116 in Sonoma County. Of the 1,337 miles of scenic highways in the state, about 6% are comprised of county scenic highways located in the counties of Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Sacramento, Shasta, and Los Angeles.

The benefits of having a county roadway officially designated as a scenic highway include increased community identity and pride, official recognition of an area’s outstanding scenic quality and values, protection of the adjoining scenic corridor from incompatible land uses and visually impactful activities, and strengthening of the local government’s ability to ensure that land use and development activities do not detract from the scenic qualities of the corridor. Some communities seek the scenic highway designation to increase visitor traffic and promote local tourism and economic development activities.
Marin Countywide Plan

The 2007 Countywide Plan (CWP) contains a number of policies and programs that share a common goal of protecting the county's scenic beauty, including protection of views from adverse development impacts. One of the strategies identified to preserve and enhance the county's scenic highway corridors is through potential participation in the state's Scenic Highway Program. (See CWP Program DES-4.f.) This program was identified as a Medium Priority with a Long-term (7+year) timeframe for implementation by CDA jointly with the Transportation Authority of Marin.

Implementation of CWP Program DES-4.f to consider participation in the Scenic Highway Program is one of a number of CWP programs that have not been implemented since adoption of the CWP in 2007. To date, there are a number of CWP programs with a higher priority rating and shorter implementation time frame that have not been initiated or completed. These include Development Code amendments to expand the stream and wetlands conservation area ordinances, update agricultural development standards, and refine the ridge and upland greenbelt boundaries. In addition, completion of the amendments to the Local Coastal Program, initiation of community plan updates, and development of a climate action plan have been identified as priority items in the Agency's work program for the next few years.

FISCAL/STAFFING IMPACT:

The Scenic Highway Program is not scheduled in the Agency's performance plan for the existing or following fiscal year. Should the Board wish for this work to be added, you should direct staff to either make adjustments to the Agency's current performance plan to reprioritize the initiatives, and thereby delete or defer existing work commitments, or to return to your Board with a schedule and budget to implement the initiative.

REVIEWED BY: (These boxes must be checked)

[ ] Department of Finance  [ X ] N/A
[ ] County Counsel  [ X ] N/A
[ ] Human Resources  [ X ] N/A

SIGNATURE:  

Thomas Lai
Assistant Director

Reviewed by:

Brian C. Crawford
Director

Attachments: (1) Scenic Highway Program Frequently Asked Questions
(2) Liz Dale Memorandum and Synopsis (12/16/12)
(3) Mike Paulick (Scenic Lucas Valley Road) Memoranda,
(11/9/12 and Undated)