

Transportation Solutions Defense and Education Fund

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March 13, 2015
By E-Mail

Dianne Steinhauser, Executive Director
Transportation Authority of Marin
781 Lincoln Avenue
San Rafael CA 94901

Re: Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Third Lane

Dear Dianne:

Thank you for the informative presentation your staff gave at Monday's Executive Committee meeting. TRANSDEF is pleased to hear that a categorical exemption is being considered for the project. We believe one would be appropriate for the Interim Plan we offer herein. It successfully addresses each of the bullet points on the "Issues with Immediate Opening" slide in the presentation, which was apparently created in response to Assemblymember Levine's Marin Voice OpEd.

The Interim Plan

1. Encourage EB traffic entering I-580 from Sir Francis Drake Boulevard to remain in the auxiliary lane, using signage and/or lane striping.
2. Because that traffic would not enter the freeway, it would not interfere with the construction of stronger shoulders, the staging of construction of shoulders, or cause damage to inadequately strong shoulders.
3. This would eliminate most of the merge at the EB I-580 SFDB on-ramp, thereby smoothing traffic flow.
4. Station a traffic control officer at the Main Street on-ramp, with the power to wave vehicles past the existing stop signs. By eliminating the need to modify the stop sign or add temporary signalization, funds would be available to pay for the officer, whose primary function would be assure good access to the Bridge for San Quentin traffic.
5. The Main Street on-ramp would lead directly into the Bridge's third lane, eliminating the need for a merge and again smoothing traffic flow.

These five Plan elements would fully address these identified Issues:

- Main Street On-Ramp merge length
 - Shoulder weight capacity in Marin (not that in Contra Costa)
 - Staging of construction by losing shoulder
 - Pavement stripping [sic] to encourage use
6. Restripe the lanes between the west approach to the Bridge and the Richmond Parkway exit. Other than needed to be scheduled to get it done, it does not appear that the following is an obstacle to opening the third lane:
 - Trestle to truss section stripping [sic] and CC side
 7. Changeable Message Signs along the right shoulder and/or attached to vertical members on the Bridge would indicate whether the third lane was open or closed. Preferably, they would be controlled wirelessly, making it unnecessary to send an employee into a potentially unsafe condition in traffic on the Bridge.
 8. Like the S-Curve on the Bay Bridge, the toll plaza would have flashing signs, rumble strips, a lower speed limit and speed enforcement. This would address:
 - Sight distance before Richmond Parkway (enforcement of unexpected Speed Limit)
 9. A bike shuttle would carry the cyclists displaced from the shoulder:
 - Contra Costa Bike Shuttle
 10. The painting contractor would receive a change order to create a work plan that did not require a barricaded staging area. This would address:
 - Painting contractor is allowed to install barricades (K-Rail) on shoulder until Mid-2016 (\$29 M contract)
 11. Caltrans' commitment to its Policy for Long-Term Implementation would not be threatened, because the Main Street detour (items 1-5) would be short-term. Construction of the shoulder on the Marin side should proceed rapidly, especially as it would be able to proceed without interference. This would address:
 - Caltrans Policy for Long-Term Implementation

TRANSDEF is convinced that an interim solution could be put in place quite quickly, to the great relief of the travelling public. The elimination of the backup on the EB approach to the Bridge would not only improve traffic on I-580, it should improve congestion on the segment of Highway 101 between San Rafael and Corte Madera. Because additional roadway capacity already exists in this corridor, we distinguish this project from capacity-increasing projects, and urge it be treated differently from congestion relief projects in other corridors.

In order to move this project forward expeditiously, we urge the release of a CEQA document so that environmental concerns can be resolved quickly. We request that an informative webpage on TAM's site be created for this project, and updated frequently.

Sincerely,

/s/ DAVID SCHONBRUNN

David Schonbrunn,
President
David@Schonbrunn.org

Copies

Steve Kinsey, MTC Representative
Stephanie Moulton-Peters, TAM Chair
Bijan Sartipi, Caltrans District 4 Director
Marc Levine, CA Assembly