

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE:	June 6, 2007
SUBJECT:	San Luis Obispo North Coast Scenic Byway Corridor Plan

SUMMARY

Staff is seeking Board adoption of the San Luis Obispo North Coast Scenic Byway Corridor Plan (BCP) Update. At the February SLOCOG meeting, the Board approved release of the Public Review Draft of the BCP. The plan was released for a 30-day review and comment period between February 16th and March 18th. Prior to release of the Draft BCP, an Administrative Draft had been circulated to the Scenic Byway Advisory Committee (SBAC). Comments on the latest draft plan have been limited. At the May 2nd SLOCOG Board meeting the Caltrans requested deferring the adoption of the BCP to allow Caltrans additional time to assure their comments have been adequately addressed. The SLOCOG Board agreed. The attached letter from Caltrans dated May 21st identifies their remaining concerns.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Staff:**
1. Adopt the SLO North Coast Scenic Byway Corridor Plan.
 2. Direct staff to integrate Caltrans District 5 comments into the final Byway Corridor Plan and Appendix L "Response to Comments", and
 3. "whitehole" the BCP recommended policy to use of the existing roadbed for a multi-use trail as part of the Highway 1 Realignment Project at Piedras Blancas and schedule for discussion at the August, 2006 SLOCOG meeting.

TTAC/ CTAC: Concur with staff

DISCUSSION

The byway corridor has seen significant activity in the past four years, which is one of the reasons that the BCP is being updated. As progress continues to be made toward implementing important byway goals, collaboration of the byway's key stakeholders will be critical. SLOCOG has made every effort to prepare a plan that incorporates the goals of the stakeholders in the corridor and prioritizes programs and projects to achieve them. To do that, staff has assembled recent accomplishments in advancing byway goals, and presented recommendations on what should be the thrust of our efforts in the short to mid term.

Comments from the committee members and staff responses on the "Administrative Draft" are included in Appendix L of the draft plan. The draft plan was circulated to the Board members and discussed at the May 2nd meeting. Final Caltrans comments have been received and will be integrated into the final plan. Their comments addressed the following key points:

- 1) Include key provisions of the scenic easement that protects views from Highway 1 along the Hearst Ranch. Response: SLOCOG staff will coordinate with Caltrans to clarify these provisions.
- 2) Coordinate with Monterey County Stakeholders in plan development and implementation. Agreed.
- 3) Editorial comments (pages 24 and 36). Response: SLOCOG staff will integrate suggested wording.
- 4) Accurately reflect the latest Caltrans concerns and response to those concerns as part of Appendix L. Response: Appendix L will be updated to address the latest comments and responses.
- 5) Concerns raised regarding the existing roadbed of Highway 1 at Piedras Blancas. SLOCOG staff recommends deferring policy discussion to August on the Highway 1 realignment issue at Piedras Blancas with regard to the old roadbed's use as Class I multi-use path.

Following BCP adoption, staff will update the plan to address the above and begin implementing a number of projects including a comprehensive corridor signage plan, and two capital projects that have been funded through the National Scenic Byway Program and SLOCOG; the Byway Community Gateway Program, and Byway and Interpretive Signage Program. Staff has developed work plans for these projects and begun initial consultations with key stakeholders.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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May 21, 2007

Ron DeCarli
Executive Director
San Luis Obispo Council of Governments
1150 Osos Street, Suite 202
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Dear Mr. DeCarli:

DRAFT SAN LUIS OBISPO NORTH COAST SCENIC BYWAY CORRIDOR PLAN

Thank you for giving the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) the opportunity to review the draft *San Luis Obispo North Coast Scenic Byway Corridor Plan* (BCP). We would also like to thank your staff for addressing most of our previous concerns in the plan. The following items cover Caltrans' remaining concerns regarding the BCP.

Existing roadbed of Highway 1 at Piedras Blancas

We understand and appreciate SLOCOG's desire to use the old Highway 1 alignment as a Class I multi-use path once the proposed Highway 1 realignment project at Piedras Blancas is completed. However, the lead agency for the California Coastal Trail (CCT) is the California Coastal Conservancy, working closely with the California Department of Parks and Recreation. It is inappropriate for the BCP to specify location decisions for the CCT. Furthermore, two other practical matters must be considered: (1) the realignment is necessitated by bluff erosion; the former road bed will remain in a high erosion-risk area and existing rock armor will be removed and (2) portions of this road segment are likely to be needed as mitigation for this project's specific impacts as required by both the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.

The prospect of the CCT is being fully considered as part of the realignment project. As such, we recommend adding the following statement to the BCP: *The Caltrans Project Development Team, which includes participation from Byway stakeholders, provides the foundation for the decision-making for the proposed Highway 1 Piedras Blancas realignment project.*

Scenic Easement

The plan must include information about the Scenic Easement that protects views from Highway 1 along the property that the State recently acquired along the Hearst Ranch. Key provisions of the easement should be referenced throughout the plan as a foundational element. For clarification, Caltrans retains the Scenic Easement while the State Department of Parks and Recreation owns the property in fee for this area now referred to as the North Coast Acquisition of San Simeon State Park.

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For more information about the park, see http://www.slostateparks.com/san_simcon_plan/default.asp.
For details about the Scenic Easement, please visit the California Resources Agency web site at http://www.resources.ca.gov/hearst_ranch.html.

Other concerns:

- Development and implementation of the plan should include coordination with Monterey County stakeholders.
- **Page 24** – The *Opportunities and Constraints for On-site Interpretation* must mention compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Scenic Easement with regards to signage and trails.
- **Page 36** – In the *Plan Update Process*, please revise the following statement as indicated: “It has been developed in collaboration with the state and local jurisdictions...”
- **Page 36** – In the *Plan Update Responsibilities*, please revise the following statement as noted: “SLOCOG, with input from will serve as the principle decision-making body for the Byway Plan and Program. consistent with its authority and in collaboration with the local and state jurisdictions...”
- Please update the BCP’s *Appendix I* to accurately reflect how Caltrans’ concerns have been addressed.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns and including them in the plan. We value our strong partnership with SLOCOG and look forward to working with your staff on the plan’s implementation. If you have any further questions, please contact Cindy Utter at 805-549-3648 or e-mail cindy_utter@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



RICHARD KRUMHOLZ
District Director

c: Nick Franco, California DPR
Steve Horn, California Coastal Conservancy

bc: Aileen Loe
Steve Price
David M. Murray
Paul Martinez
Bob Carr

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