

**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
BOARD AGENDA LETTER**



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Agenda Number:
Prepared on: 1/28/05
Department Name: Public Works
Department No.: 054
Agenda Date: 2/1/05
Placement: Administrative
Estimate Time:
Continued Item: NO
If Yes, date from:

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Phillip M. Demery- Director
Public Works

STAFF CONTACT: Scott D. McGolpin- Deputy Director
Transportation

SUBJECT: Old San Marcos Road Storm Repairs and Traffic Control System
Second Supervisorial District

Recommendation(s):

That the Board of Supervisors:

- A. Authorize Chair to sign a letter requesting that Caltrans re-open State Route 154 as soon as possible to minimize the impacts to Old San Marcos Road;
- B. Authorize Chair to sign a letter requesting continued California Highway Patrol law enforcement support on Old San Marcos Road until State Route 154 re-opens;
- C. Approve the interim traffic control plan for Old San Marcos;
- D. Find that for the foreseeable future, periodic closures of Old San Marcos Road as deemed necessary by the Road Commissioner for the protection of the public due to road washouts, for the protection of the county highway from further damage during storms, and for the purpose of construction, improvement and maintenance operations.

Alignment with Board Strategic Plan:

The recommendation(s) are primarily aligned with Goal No. 1. An Efficient Government Able to Respond Effectively to the Needs of the Community. Goal No. 2. A Safe and Healthy Community in Which to Live, Work, and Visit. Goal No. 3. A Strong, Professionally Managed County Organization.
Old San Marcos Road Storm Repairs and Traffic Control System

Executive Summary and Discussion:

Old San Marcos Road (OSM) sustained significant damage during the winter storm events in early January. The County's initial response during and after the event included damage assessment and the removal of soil material, which crossed the traveled way. The County then transitioned into a major portion of the restoration work at various locations along the roadway. Public Works will complete five significant slip out repairs, one major landslide will be stabilized and landslide debris removal including large boulders (up to 8 foot diameter) have been removed. We have also cleaned out numerous storm drains, re-graded roadway shoulders; pothole patched and implemented erosion control measures up and down OSM. If these damaged areas were not repaired prior to additional rain this winter season the entire width of roadway could have been in jeopardy. During these emergency response construction operations the County provided controlled vehicular access for the residents in the area through a piloted traffic control system between the hours of 7:00 am and 4:30 pm.

During this time frame one of the challenges for the County has been the closure of State Route 154 (SR154). With this vital commuting route no longer available to the community, OSM has become the detour for daily commuter trips. This significant increase in traffic volumes has increased the County's liability, accelerated the degradation of the pavement and structural section of the roadway and impacted the progress the County has made with emergency response construction operations. At this time the County's construction efforts to protect the roadway from future storm events will be completed on February 12, 2005 provided the weather is favorable. Caltrans stated on January 25, 2005 that "State Route 154 will remain closed while repairs are made for the next 4-8 weeks, weather dependent." When the County completes its efforts on OSM on Saturday the 12th, with SR154 still closed for an undetermined period of time, there will be an interim period where OSM will become the route of choice for commuters to and from Santa Barbara. This creates four issues of concern for the County:

- ✓ Future inclement weather may require closure of the roadway
- ✓ Length of time of the interim period
- ✓ Traffic Control on OSM for the interim period
- ✓ Law Enforcement support for the interim period

Public Works recommends a Traffic Control System be implemented similar to the one we are currently utilizing on OSM during our emergency response construction operations. The goal of which is to handle the high volumes of traffic that we are currently experiencing during both the morning and evening peak hours. The Department proposes traffic control between SR154 and Via Parva. The tentative starting date is February 14, 2005 and the job will last through the interim period. The Traffic Control System will be operated Monday thru Friday from 6:00am to 10:00am and 3:00pm to 7:00pm. Adjustments in the hours of traffic control operations may be required and can be made at additional cost to the County. During inclement weather traffic control may be required from 6:00am to 7:00pm or later if the roadway does not warrant closure.

The Department anticipates that road closures of OSM will be required at various times throughout this winter season. This will be required for the protection of the public, the protection of such county highway from damage during storms and during construction, improvement or maintenance operations of the facility. The Department requests that the Board make this finding pursuant to Streets and Highways Code Section 942.5 and that the Road Commissioner be given discretion to make the decision as to the timing of the closures.

Without a firm date to re-open SR154 from Caltrans the County and the commuters who utilized this route on a daily basis have no idea as to the length of neither this interim period nor how long the Traffic Control system for OSM should be operated. The recent press release Caltrans made does not shed any light on this issue as it contains a similar length of closure time as was released over two weeks ago. The Department recommends that the chair sign the attached letter to the Caltrans, District 5 Director requesting this information. Once this information is received the Department can plan accordingly and the costs associated with the Traffic Control plan will be better known. Most importantly this info would be extremely helpful information to the thousands of commuters inconvenienced by the closure of this state facility on a daily basis.

Throughout the County's emergency response operations, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) has been outstanding in providing law enforcement at the South and North OSM closures. The Sheriff's Department was instrumental in making this a reality. The efforts of the CHP have been focused primarily in communications with the drivers of vehicles delayed during the morning and afternoon commute peak hours. Prior to their involvement in the above, the County's contractor experienced numerous verbal altercations with motorists upset with any delay to their trip. Unfortunately one of these altercations escalated into a physical confrontation when a motorist assaulted a flag person working for the County. The Department recommends that the chair sign the attached letter to the CHP thanking them for their effort to date and requesting that they continue to support our traffic control operations in the interim period.

Mandates and Service Levels:

The Public Works Department is responsible for the safe operation of the Transportation Infrastructure within our County. As such, with the anticipated high volumes on OSM during the interim period peak hours due to the closure of SR154, a traffic control system is recommended. These high volumes of traffic will accelerate the degradation of the pavement and structural section of the roadway and reduce the service life of this facility.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

The Department will request reimbursement for the costs of the Traffic Control system from Caltrans. We will also seek compensation for the premature degradation of the pavement and structural section of the roadway which will result in a reduced service life of this facility.

Currently the County has a State declaration for the emergency. If this remains to be the case the local match required for this effort could be as high as 25%. If the County were to receive a Federal declaration of emergency and/or FHWA participation then the local match could possibly be reduced to nothing in the first 180 days after the event.

Special Instructions:

Once the Board action is approved please forward a Minute Order to Public Works, Transportation Division, Attn: Cecelia Barnes. After letter is executed by the Chair please send an original copy with attachments to the State of California, Department of Transportation, San Luis Obispo Division and the California Highway Patrol, Santa Barbara.

Concurrence:

County Counsel

Attachments: Letter to Caltrans for the Chair's signature
Letter to CHP for the Chair's signature
Interim Traffic Control Plan

January 28, 2005

Mr. Gregg Albright, Director
Caltrans District 5
50 Higuera Street
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Subject: SR 154 (San Marcos Pass) Closure

Dear Mr. Albright:

As you know, the recent storms in the southerly section of Santa Barbara County have created numerous landslides and slip-outs on local roads as well as State Routes. This has resulted in emergency clean-up as well as road closures at numerous locations. We appreciate the efforts of you and your staff during this storm event in our county.

Of particular concern to the County is the closure of SR 154. Unfortunately, although not unexpectedly, Old San Marcos Road has become the impromptu detour for commuter traffic attempting to bypass SR 154. Old San Marcos received substantial damage during the storms. We are currently cleaning up the slides and expect to complete the operation on February 12, 2005. We would then enter into an extended interim period during which permanent repairs will be completed as we are able to. In hopes to manage the commuter traffic in a safe manner, we have prepared an interim traffic control plan, a copy of which is attached. As you can imagine, the restrictive geometrics and frail condition of Old San Marcos are going to make this operation a real challenge, even with the excellent assistance we have received from the CHP.

It is the volatile nature of this interim period which we are about to enter that makes it imperative that we get an accurate date of the anticipated re-opening of SR154 and ask that you expedite this process. We will also be requesting funding assistance for the substantial cost we have incurred and will continue to experience while Old San Marcos is used as a bypass by commuter traffic. We urge you to investigate funding sources available to the State which could then be used to reimburse the County. Our Transportation Division will continue to coordinate with you on these critical details.

Gregg Albright, Director
Caltrans District 5
1/28/05
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Thanks in advance for your anticipated cooperation in getting us the information we need to manage our resources.

Sincerely,

Susan J. Rose, Chair
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

c: Tom McClintock, Senator District 19
Pedro Nava, District 35 Assemblymember
Salud Carbajal, 1st District Supervisor
Brooks Firestone, 3rd District Supervisor
Joni Gray, 4th District Supervisor
Joe Centeno, 5th District Supervisor
Michael Brown, County Administrator
Jim Anderson, County Sheriff
John Michael Scherrei, Fire Chief
Phillip Demery, PW Director
Scott McGolpin, PW Deputy Director

January 28, 2005

Commander Jeff Sgobba
California Highway Patrol
6465 Calle Real
Goleta, CA 93117

Subject: Recent Assistance on Storm Response Issues

Dear Commander Sgobba:

If I can provide further information in regard to this matter please feel free to contact me at 568-3232 or BStewart@cosbpw.net .

Sincerely,

Bret A. Stewart, P.E.
Transportation Division Manager

BAS:kd

c: