

# 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:** 2/14/02  
**Department:** Planning and Development  
**Department No.:** 053  
**Agenda Date:** 2/26/02  
**Placement:** Departmental  
**Estimate Time:** 45 minutes  
**Continued Item:** NO  
**If Yes, date from:**  
**Document File Name:** F:\GROUP\COMP\Co-wide  
Programs\Transportation\Trans  
Projects\101DesignGuidelines\Landscap  
e Plan\Bos\BD LTR\_LMP.doc

---

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** John Patton, Director  
Planning & Development

**STAFF CONTACT:** Jeff Lindgren, Planner (x2069)  
Dev Vrat, Supervising Planner (x2022)

**SUBJECT:** Highway 101 Landscape Master Plan

---

**Recommendation(s):** That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Accept the Categorical Exemption pursuant to Section 15308 of the State Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (Attachment A); and
2. Approve the Highway 101 Master Landscape Plan including the Planning Commission condition that Sycamore, Coast Live Oak and Bay Trees be included in both the Goleta and Ellwood Units (Attachment B).

**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 and Goal No. 5. A High Quality of Life for All Residents.

**Executive Summary and Discussion:**

**Background:** During adoption of *the Highway 101 Corridor Zoning Overlay District* in 1999, the Board of Supervisors formally requested that Caltrans work with Planning and Development (P&D) to develop a *Landscape Master Plan* for the Highway 101 corridor (Attachment C). The *Transportation Corridor Zoning District* previously required Board of Architectural Review (BAR) and Development Plan approval for highway-related development in the Coastal Zone,

however no design standards were provided. *Comprehensive Plan Policy 6* and the *Highway 101 Corridor Zoning Overlay District*, adopted in July 1999, added development standards and requires consistency with the adopted *Highway 101 Corridor Design Guidelines*. The 1999 zoning ordinance amendments also require conformity with the *Master Landscape Plan*, when adopted. (The zoning ordinance, development and design guidelines preside over the *Landscape Plan*). The proposed Landscape Master Plan was developed in response to the 1999 Board request.

**The Master Landscape Plan:** Until now, there has been neither a Caltrans nor County comprehensive landscape Plan to guide landscaping along the Highway 101 corridor. The *Highway 101 Master Landscape Plan* provides greater certainty for Caltrans, other public agencies, local citizens, P&D and the BAR concerning the County's local highway design expectations and standards. The Plan is applicable to highway related development in the Highway 101 corridor from the Ventura County line to west Goleta. The intent of the *Master Landscape Plan* is to provide broad planting concepts to assist in preserving and enhancing the freeway's scenic and historic character while allowing for necessary traffic and safety improvements. The Plan addresses the unique character of various areas, including the preservation of mountain and ocean vistas, unique structures, riparian habitat and landscaping by establishing criteria for grading, structural design and landscaping. The Plan would provide a context for decision makers to evaluate individual highway related project landscaping pursuant to existing Comprehensive Plan, zoning ordinance, and design guidelines requirements.

Caltrans, in coordination with County staff, initiated the development of the Plan and produced a preliminary draft in June, 2000. Throughout June and July of 2000, the preliminary draft was discussed at a series public steering committee meetings. Representatives from the City of Santa Barbara, the City of Carpinteria, Caltrans, the public and numerous landscaping professionals participated in refining the preliminary draft. The steering committee comments were incorporated into the revised draft and presented at a public open house held in September of 2000. Public comments generated during the open house were incorporated into the Plan for review by the Highway 101 Design Review Team (DRT). The DRT held three public meetings to discuss the Plan during Fall and Winter of 2001, and forwarded a recommendation for approval to the BAR in May, 2001. The BAR forwarded the Plan to the Planning Commission recommending approval.

The development of the Plan has been a highly collaborative effort among Caltrans, County staff, representatives from the cities of Carpinteria and Santa Barbara, interested members of the public, and landscape professionals. The participation of numerous members of the public and the various agencies was invaluable in development of the Plan and their comments were integrated in the Plan as much as possible. The Plan balances Caltrans safety and economic concerns with goals for adequate landscaping.

A summary of the Master Landscape Plan is included in the attached Planning Commission Staff Report (Attachment D). The plan is organized into four distinct elements: introduction, guidelines, plant lists, and map. The introduction summarizes the regulatory basis and use of the

plan. The guidelines are broken into topical areas: landscape units (“outdoor rooms” along the freeway, planting, and engineering and architecture. The plant list includes recommended California and local natives as well as a listing of invasives and salt sensitive species to be avoided. The map denotes locations of the landscape units and highlights important features and design goals.

**Planning Commission Recommendations:** The Planning Commission was primarily concerned with Median Landscaping, the Goleta plant palette, a proliferation of cell sites in the Highway 101 Corridor, potential for a North County Highway 101 Landscape Master Plan, and a better understanding of which projects are subject to review in the Highway 101 Corridor and how the process works.

On December 5, 2001, the Planning Commission recommended that the Board of Supervisors conditionally approve the *Highway 101 Master Landscape Plan* to serve as the basis for landscape design decisions in the Highway 101 Corridor (Attachment E Planning Commission Action Letter).

The median issue involves zoning ordinance requirements that median landscaping “shall” be included. The *Landscape Plan* provides that median landscaping will be considered on a case-by-case basis and included where feasible (see Caltrans letter Oct 3, 2001, Attachment F). The conditional approval of the landscape plan by the Commission requires Sycamore, Coast Live Oak and Bay Trees to be included in both the Goleta and Ellwood Units addressing Planning Commission concerns for design continuity in Goleta (A Final Plan will be produced following Board approval). The cell sites were subsequently handled in an entirely separate *Telecommunication Ordinance Amendments* process by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. Although Caltrans is pursuing grant funding for landscaping of interchanges in the North County, preparation of a North County Landscape Master Plan is not in the Comprehensive Planning Division Five-Year Work Program.

**Mandates and Service Levels:**

Although there is no state or federal mandate for the *Highway 101 Landscape Master Plan*, the existing Transportation Corridor Zone District and Highway 101 Corridor Zoning Overlay District do require design review consistent with a *Master Landscape Plan*, when adopted.

**Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

Costs associated with reviewing projects subject to the Highway 101 Corridor Design Guidelines and preparation of the *Highway 101 Landscape Master Plan* were budgeted in P&D’s FY 2001/2002 budget: 053 4090 515. Design review in the Highway 101 Corridor was required prior to preparation of the Master Landscape Plan. Use of the plan during design review would not incur new fiscal costs and may actually reduce costs.

**Special Instructions:**

Please forward one copy of the minute order to Planning and Development Hearing Support Section, Attention: Cintia Mendoza.

Attachments

- A: CEQA Categorical Exemption
- B: Hwy 101 Landscape Master Plan
- C. Board Letter Requesting *Master Landscaping Plan* – July 1999
- D. Planning Commission Staff Report
- E. Planning Commission Action Letter
- F. Caltrans Letter Concerning Median Landscaping