Atascadero City Council
Staff Report – Public Works Department

Proposition 1B Funding Application
for Proposed Atascadero Transit Center

(If successful, this funding would bring $2,500,000.00 to the City
for the design and construction of a Transit Center.)

RECOMMENDATION:

Council approve the attached Draft Resolution authorizing the submission of an application to the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) for $2,500,000.00 from Proposition 1B funding for an Atascadero Transit Center.

DISCUSSION:

Background: A Transit Center is a centrally located facility that connects buses, commuters, bicycles, and other forms of transit. Regional and local buses meet there with coordinated schedules to connect passengers to routes throughout the County. Transit Centers may contain parking, information and ticket kiosks, public bathrooms, bike lockers, landscaping, coffee and sandwich shops, and may provide retail opportunities. They are typically a hub of activity.

Staff has been working with RRM Design Group and their transit partner Fehr & Peers on a Transit Center Site Selection Study for the City since January. The Study will ultimately present a preferred site to the City Council. A site plan will also be produced laying out the site configuration and amenities.

As a first step, two public workshops were held to identify potential sites and what amenities would be needed at the site. The workshops were advertised in the Atascadero News, signs were placed on the buses and at major stops, a display and flyers were available at the “Just Listening” Open House, and free transportation was provided upon request.

Below is a summary of the meetings:
Workshop #1 -- August 27th

This workshop started with a description of what a transit center is. Pictures and drawings of other small transit centers were presented. The group discussed how transit centers help bring life and energy to an area by bringing people into the vicinity. Discussion then focused on other uses transit centers can support such as parking, shops and restaurants, and bathrooms. Other items discussed were:

- **Suggested sites.** The consultant presented potential sites that have been identified for the Transit Center and asked for additional suggestions. Several suggestions were given.

- **Transit operations.** The current transfer point between the regional Route 9 service and the local North County Shuttle is at the Templeton Park and Ride, resulting in out of direction travel for some riders. It is important that this new facility become the timed connection point of transfer for these services.

- **Park and Ride.** Many felt it was important to only have a small number of parking spots for Park and Ride at the new Transit Center, if it was located in the Downtown. This is because it might compete with Downtown visitors. It was discussed that Route 9 must stop at another Park and Ride lot, outside Downtown, to pick up the majority of the riders.

Workshop #2 -- September 18th

The sites that were suggested at Workshop #1 were displayed with aerial photographs and ranked by the participants. Based on these rankings, five sites were identified by the participants as sites to explore further. All the selected sites are within approximately ¼ mile of the center of downtown as delineated by the Sunken Gardens fountain.

Workshop participants were then provided with an Amenity Survey to determine which of 13 different features were most important to incorporate into the design of the Transit Center. The results, in order of preference were: Shelter, Ease of Access, Safety, Benches, Lighting, Bathrooms, Proximity to Services, Aesthetics, Phone, Ticket Machine, Kiosk, Bicycle Storage and Parking.

**Route 9 Passenger Survey**

Route 9 is operated by the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) and carries riders from Paso Robles to San Luis Obispo, with transfers to all parts of the County and Santa Maria. Riders were asked a variety of questions including how often they use transit, by what mode they arrive at the bus stop, recommendations for siting a Transit Center, and preferred amenities.

Of particular importance was a question posed regarding how far from the downtown a Park and Ride facility could be located before it was no longer useful to riders. This
question was designed to guide the siting of park and ride facilities, which could be incorporated into the Transit Center design. A Transit Center could bring additional parking and amenities to Downtown, and such a center would only be considered if it ultimately added Downtown parking.

The amenity portion of the Route 9 survey results in order of preference were: bathrooms, bike facilities, phones, shelter, lights, water fountain, benches, parking, snacks, trash cans, smart sign, and clock.

**Conclusion:** Staff is now working with the Consultant and the information provided from the workshops and surveys to select 3 sites to further explore. This will be completed in two months.

SLOCOG will be programming an estimated $12.5 million of Proposition 1B funding for transit capital projects over the next 5 years and have set a deadline of November 1st for the first round of applications. Due to the detailed evaluation process required to select the preferred site, this deadline is impossible to meet with a selected site.

Staff is seeking Council authorization to apply for the Transit Center funding and to return to Council with a specific site recommendation at a future meeting.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Staff is requesting authorization to apply for $2,500,000.00 in Proposition 1B funds to build an Atascadero Transit Center. This amount was selected based on approximate costs of a small transit center.

Matching funds may be a criterion for 1B Funding application that will be available on October 10th. This may be an opportunity to leverage other City funds for redevelopment in Downtown Atascadero. Staff will report back when more detailed information is available about the application criterion.

**ATTACHMENT:** Draft Resolution