Atascadero City Council
Staff Report – Public Works Department

Interchange Operational Improvement Study

RECOMMENDATION:

Council receive report on the Interchange Operational Improvement Study

DISCUSSION:

Background:

Atascadero has eight interchanges that were built with the construction of US 101 in the 1950's. The Bridges and underpasses for the interchanges were constructed with one travel lane in each direction and no left hand turn pockets at the US 101 onramps. Frontage roads, at the interchanges, were left very close to the freeway onramps. US 101 bisected Atascadero, creating bottle necks for vehicles at the interchanges.

These interchange designs worked well in the 60’s and 70’s when traffic volumes were low. Now with much higher traffic volumes, some of the interchanges operate at a very low level of service during peak times.

The City of Atascadero and the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments jointly funded a study of interchanges in Atascadero to investigate cost effective solutions to improve circulation on them. The City hired Whitlock & Weinberger Transportation, Inc. (W-Trans) to complete the study. W-Trans provides professional traffic engineering and transportation planning services to both public and private entities. Their staff has extensive experience applying traffic engineering and transportation planning techniques to projects with themes of traffic calming, livability and smart growth.

The following interchanges were chosen to study.

1. Santa Barbara Road
2. Santa Rosa Road
3. Curbaril Ave
4. Traffic Way
The limit of the study of the interchanges is from El Camino Real to the frontage roads on the west side of US 101. To obtain an understanding of the current operational problems with the interchanges, the following information was obtained:

- Topographic mapping of the interchanges
- Traffic counts and turning movements
- Investigate the operations of all traffic signals
- Visited all interchanges to study the actual operation of them
- Interviewed staff to identify and understand problems in the operations

From this information W-Trans produced the Interchange Operational Improvement Study. This study identifies specific short and long term improvements that will increase the level of service and improve the operations of the interchanges.

One of the main long term solution W-Trans has indentified for the interchanges are roundabouts at the intersections of the ramps, bridge and frontage roads. These will mitigate delay and blocking of the bridge by vehicle trying to turn onto US 101.

The City Council has budgets $290,000.00 in the current budget to implement some of the short term improvements, as listed below:

- Improve signal timing and phasing
- Advanced signal loop installation
- Striping
- Sight distance improvements
- 4 way stop at the south bound ramps on Curbaril Ave
- Begin planning long term improvements

Staff will seek funding opportunities to implement the long term improvements.

Staff and W-Trans presented the studies recommendations and information on roundabouts at a workshop on February 7, 2008. We will do the same at this City Council meeting.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** None.

**ATTACHMENT:**

Attachment A: Interchange Operational Improvement Study