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AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 (Action Item and Public Hearing)

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING DATE: December 6, 2017

SUBJECT: North Sierra Highway Corridor Plan, North Sierra Highway Strategic/Specific Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Staff, and the project consultant team, RRM Design Group, have prepared the North Sierra Highway Corridor Plan with funding from a Caltrans Sustainable Corridor Plan grant and have also prepared a Draft Strategic Plan for the North Sierra Highway area. Staff is asking the commission to receive a presentation on both plans, and provide any input on the plans.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Supervisory District: Districts 1, 2 & 3

Applicants: Inyo County

Landowners: Multiple

Address/

Community: Unincorporated Inyo County in Northern Bishop

A.P.N.: Multiple

Existing General Plan: Multiple, to be unchanged by this project

Existing Zoning: Multiple, to be unchanged by this project

Surrounding Land Use: Incorporated City of Bishop and Bishop Paiute Tribal Lands to the South and East, undeveloped land, commercial and residential development to the North, and undeveloped land and commercial development to the West.

Recommended Action: Receive a presentation from staff and the project consultant team, RRM Design Group on the Corridor Plan, which will be submitted to Caltrans, and the Strategic Plan and provide comments on the plans.

Project Planner: Tom Schaniel

BACKGROUND

In April of 2015, Caltrans awarded the County and the City of Bishop a grant to develop a Sustainable Corridor Plan over three years for the North Sierra Highway area that focused on transportation planning issues between the Wye/Main Street/Highway 6 intersection to Brockman Lane. With partnerships formed in the summer and fall of 2015, staff, at the Board's direction expanded the scope of this project to also include a Specific Plan for the land that is adjacent to the corridor in the same planning area. The work was divided into two phases, with Phase I consisting of preparation of a Corridor Plan and a draft Specific Plan. Phase II would consist of creating a final Specific Plan that would include an Environmental Impact Report.

Once the contract with Caltrans was approved in November of 2015, a Request for Proposals for a consultant to assist with the Specific Plan and Corridor Plan was developed and processed in coordination with Caltrans, the City of Bishop, and the Bishop Paiute Tribe, and a contract was awarded to RRM Design Group in April of 2016. RRM Design Group along with County and City staff, have been working on Phase I of this project. A series of stakeholder meetings were conducted in May and July of 2016. A research project, consisting of gathering existing documents and studies that affect the area, along with on the ground research, was conducted through the summer of 2016. An Advisory Committee was formed, with Frank Stewart acting as the representative of the Planning Commission and Rick Pucci acting as the representative of the Board. The committee has acted as a review board, reviewing and providing input on documents such as the Opportunities and Constraints Report, an Infrastructure Report, and an Environmental Constraints Analysis that were the product of the research phases of this project. Also, a strong public outreach component was conducted, primarily by encouraging the public to attend the Advisory Committee meetings. Three major public outreach workshops were held in July and October of 2016 and May of 2017. The consultants began design work in earnest after the October 2016 Charrette workshop on the draft Corridor and Specific Plans.

An administrative draft of the Corridor Plan was released by RRM in February of 2017, and reviewed by County and City of Bishop staff, Caltrans and Eastern Sierra Transit Authority (ESTA). Comments were compiled and used to revise the administrative draft plan into the North Sierra Highway Draft Corridor Plan. The Draft Corridor Plan was released in April of 2017, and was taken to the Advisory Committee and public in May of 2017. Presentations were made to the Inyo County and City of Bishop Planning Commissions, the Bishop City Council and the Inyo County Board of Supervisors.

In the summer and early fall of 2017, staff and RRM worked to finalize the Corridor Plan and prepare the Strategic Plan, with the plans staff is presenting today.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The main objectives of the Corridor Plan are to improve multi-modal transportation, improve public safety, foster vibrant and healthy communities and encourage environmental stewardship. Some of the main recommendations to help promote these objectives are:

- Infill sidewalk gaps along the corridor. The north side of the corridor from Tu Su Lane eastward and the south side of the corridor from Barlow Lane eastward are the major sidewalk gaps that are identified to be filled.
- Infill bicycle lanes and generally upgrade bicycle lanes to buffered Class II bicycle lanes. While much of the corridor has shoulders that nominally meet Class III bicycle route requirements, because of the other uses on the corridor including truck and tourist traffic, upgrading to the more protected Class II bicycle lanes is highly recommended to encourage bicycle use along the corridor.
- Provide multi-use trail systems to encourage off highway pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian travel routes. The North Sierra Highway Corridor area is an ideal hub area for multi-use trails to connect the City of Bishop to the Meadowcreek/Highlands area, with potential trails directly connecting the Fairgrounds, and the City of Bishop Schools to the planning area.
- Provide more protected crossings across the highway. Opportunities for protected crossings exist across the highway at See Vee Lane (in the planning process with Caltrans), Brockman Lane, and midway between See Vee Lane and Wye Road (where the existing bike trail from Sierra Street terminates into Highway 395. These additional crossings can provide a safer corridor for pedestrians.
- Encourage evaluating the Wye and providing a more functional solution for that area. Existing options from previous Caltrans studies of the Wye Road, Highway 395 and Highway 6 intersection were presented at public meetings and input from those meetings is included in the Plan to help encourage any project that will make this intersection more functional.
- Encourage a standardization of highway speeds of 35 miles per hour in the North Sierra Highway Corridor area. Public input identified the varying speeds in the Corridor area as a major factor affecting perception of safety and separation of the Meadowcreek/Highlands area from the rest of Bishop. Strategies for standardization require more than modification of speed limit signs such as modification of factors that will generally decrease speed of travel in the Planning area.
- Expand and modernize public transportation in the planning area. The Plan builds upon strategies already being implemented by ESTA.
- And funding opportunities to realize the above goals.

The Corridor Plan meets these objectives and specifies these recommendations, fulfilling the needs of the County and the City and the requirements of the Caltrans grant.

The Strategic Plan is a foundational document for a possible future Specific Plan. The Strategic Plan looks at some of the issues that would be part of a Specific Plan including mobility (largely built upon the Corridor Plan) and implementation strategies. Regarding Land Use, the Strategic Plan focuses on key Opportunity Sites instead of the entire planning area, as it provides for a more complete, but limited look at opportunity sites, versus a less complete, but more broad look at the whole planning area. At this stage of the overall planning effort, this

seemed to be the best alternative to move forward into the Specific Plan. A more comprehensive evaluation can be conducted during the Specific Plan process if the Board decides to move forward with it.

Next, staff will present these plans, to the Bishop City Council and the Inyo County Board of Supervisors, and receive any comments from those bodies. The Corridor Plan will be submitted to Caltrans, completing the terms of the Sustainable Corridor Plan grant. Staff will also be looking for guidance from the Board of Supervisors on the desire to continue with this planning effort and create a Final Specific Plan for the North Sierra Highway Planning Area. A Final Specific Plan will require evaluation under the California Environmental Quality Act (potentially an Environmental Impact Report). If staff receives direction to pursue a Final Specific Plan, staff will be looking at costs and opportunities for funding the Plan.

ATTACHMENTS

- North Sierra Highway Corridor Plan
- Draft North Sierra Highway Area Strategic Plan