

**California  
Rural Counties Task Force**

**July 16, 2021, 12:30 pm**

**Teleconference/Webcast**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**A. Introductions All**

The meeting was called to order at 12:33 p.m.

**B. Approve Minutes of May minutes W. Deloria**

The May minutes were not available.

**C. Information Sharing/Topics of Significance All**

No members commented on this item.

**D. CTC Update Various**

STIP – Teresa Favilla gave a STIP update. They are currently recommending approval of the guidelines and fund estimate. Workshop will be held on Monday to review the Fund Estimate and some of the proposed changes to the guidelines.

Teresa explained that the PPM amounts in CRRSAA were published at the time of commission adoption in March.

Local Partnership Program – Anja Aulenbacher gave a brief update. She noted that leftover incentive funding from 20/21 will be redistributed. The amount to the formulaic program will be \$6 million. Eligible agencies should note the new distribution in the book item.

Solutions for Congested Corridors Program – Hannah Walter noted that there will be an SB 1 guidelines kickoff on August 24 at 1:00. They will be sending a link for registration by email within the next week. Matthew will be providing oversight now that he's at the deputy level and Naveen will be managing SCCP.

Trade Corridors Enhancement Program – Hannah Walter noted there was no update.

CAPTI Hannah reported that the final CAPTI was published July 12 and is available on the CalSTA website. Update will be provided at the August CTC meeting. Questions can be directed to Matthew Yosgott.

Local Streets and Roads – Zack Taylor reported that there are currently 518 confirmed eligible cities for the year.

**E. Caltrans Update Various**

Planning - Erin Thompson explained that the RPA carryover is limited to 25% again for this FY. Invoices are due August 30 for the end of the fiscal year.

Sustainable Transportation Planning grants were awarded last month. The next call for projects is anticipated in September.

She reminded the group to submit final OWP packages with certs and assurances.

Rural Planning Assistance Project - Erin noted that there is about \$121,000 available in carryover. RCTF needs to let her know if they want to move forward with the group project, such as VMT hosting and CARL scholarship. Amber Collins explained that there was concurrence at the last meeting, but details needed to be confirmed. Erin noted that in the past the CARL scholarship has been \$25,000.

Erin will be providing a new org chart following a major reorganization. There have been several staffing changes. Mike suggested that the Air Quality and Climate Change chief come to the next meeting.

**H. Draft Caltrans Federal Affairs Working Group M. Twomey**

Maura Twomey reported that Caltrans has a Federal Affairs working group. The purpose is to come up with overarching principles that California would want to support. The department distributed a draft letter and received input from the group. They are revising the letter to reflect input. Maura suggested sending comments to Allison Nealon at Caltrans.

**E. Caltrans Update (continued) Various**

Local Assistance and Obligation Authority Sujaya Kalainesan reported OA is around 61%. They've been working with regions to address this. They're hoping that they can use all of the OA this year.

Inactive Projects - FHWA released a notification for projects over 24 months inactive.

Project End Dates – Districts can now track project end dates. If a project end date lapses, expenditures are no longer eligible for reimbursement.

State Budget Update – No one from Caltrans was present to give an update.

**D. CTC Update (continued) Various**

Active Transportation Program – Laurie Waters reported that the 2023 ATP cycle was coming up. They will be starting with engagement soon. They're proposing a schedule of workshops similar to last cycle with branch and centralized workshops. They're also available to do site visits. If anyone is interested in hosting a branch workshop, let Elika Changizi know. They're trying to be more efficient with their scheduling. First kickoff meeting will probably be in October and run through March when the call for projects comes out.

She suggested that members should think about changes and comments they would like to see.

Rachel Moriconi asked if there would be other workshops for potential applicants after the call for projects comes out. She felt this would be easier for applicant agencies. Laurie thought that Caltrans could provide that type of assistance through the ATRC. Laurie suggested a branch workshop.

Laurie confirmed that site visits could be done even if they don't correspond with a branch workshop said yes, but its best if they do.

Laurie commented that a lot of things surfaced last cycle that need to be discussed last cycle. It will be critical for small and rural agencies to participate. She noted that there was no cap on projects last time. Many projects were over \$20 million.

Nephele Barrett commented that it has become harder for small projects to compete now that the ATP has such a focus on large, innovative and "transformative" projects.

Tamera Leighton noted that Crescent City funded an unsuccessful ATP project with CDBG funds as part of a storm drain project. She commented that it would be helpful to be able to fund application development with RPA.

Teresa explained that one reason the smaller programs were eliminated was that the delivery rate for those programs was very low.

Woody suggested a rural ATP workshop. RCTF will follow up with CTC staff to set it up.

Legislative Update/State Budget - Paul Golaszewski explained that the budget as a whole is up in the air. The \$500 million ATP augmentation, \$400 million for new climate adaptation program, and transit and intercity rail programs are not currently accessible until additional legislation has passed. The legislature just went on recess and won't be back until August 16. Negotiations on the overall transportation funding package continue, particularly around high speed rail. Until that's resolved, the overall package will be delayed.

The group discussed the legislative process. There's a deadline of October 10 for bills to be signed.

Laurie explained that they had an initial schedule for the ATP augmentation, but the budget issues have impacted that. As the next cycle approaches, there may be more interest in doing other things with the funds than originally planned.

The group discussed timing of the potential federal infrastructure bill.

Rachel mentioned AB 43 which provides more flexibility for establishing speed limits. She recommended members reach out to legislators to express support.

ITSP Update - Scott Sauer gave an overview of the outreach efforts to date. Workshop materials and a public survey are currently available on the website. They're working with internal divisions to update modal sections and working with districts for information on strategic interregional corridors. They're also developing a goals and objectives matrix. Goals will be the same as the CTP, and objectives will be the adjusted to fit the interregional focus.

#### **F. Innovative Projects**

**J. Ward-Waller**

Jeannie Ward-Waller was not yet present to discuss the item.

Woody explained that they recently received notification that Caltrans is requesting proposals for Innovative Concepts. The deadline has been extended to July 23. A PSR or prior planning is not required for concepts. These can be "pipe dream" type projects. It's an opportunity to illustrate unique needs.

Mike Woodman commented that their transit agency was considering submitting a micro transit project and a plan for service alternatives for a small, outlying community.

Gerry LeFrancois with Mono County commented that they submitted a wildlife crossing project. He noted that the application was pretty easy.

Woody said they've worked directly with district staff and SACOG to develop proposals.

#### **G. ITSP Update**

**S. Sauer**

Mike explained that it's critical to make sure the interregional corridors with previous investments aren't left abandoned as a result of the ITSP update. Many of the rural corridors are crucial for wildfire evacuation and safety. It's important to finish those corridor improvements with existing investments.

Scott Sauer noted they are still working on the draft plan. They hope to have it released soon. Draft scoring criteria are currently being developed. It will be presented at the next CTC meeting and the draft will be out by August 18. They plan to have the plan finalized by the end of the year.

Scott said that he would provide an overview at the next RCTF meeting.

## **I. Truck Parking Study**

**E. Fredricks**

No one was present at the meeting to discuss the truck parking study.

## **Miscellaneous**

The group discussed the ability to meet in person at the Caltrans building. Erin explained that they haven't yet discussed large group meetings. Employees that have been vaccinated and don't want to wear a mask have to complete a form. Caltrans is still 100% teleworking. They are discussing a partial return starting in August to October. There are new staff without stations. Some stations will be shared.

Nephele noted the importance of offering a reliable option for remote participation if the RCTF goes back to in person meetings.

The group discussed pros and cons of in-person meetings and options for hybrid meetings, including the need to have multiple people run a hybrid meeting. Teresa noted that upcoming CTC meetings are planned to be in person, but will have virtual capability.

Mike commented that they've been talking with CalFire and a coalition of counties with high fire risk to advocate for increased funding for vegetation management and evacuation routes. A study may be needed to identify top priority highways and local facilities needed for evacuation. It seems that there's no traction regarding critical evacuation routes at the state level. Additional funding is needed to make improvements. The same focus for wildfire evacuation is needed as there was for levy failure.

The group discussed this need and the overlap of responsibilities between transportation agencies and emergency services. Laurie noted that there will hopefully be a new climate adaptation program. It's expected to be \$250 million. Mike noted that emergency responders plan for evacuations but it's not their arena to pursue funding for improvements.

## **F. Innovative Projects (continued)**

**J. Ward-Waller**

Jeanie Ward-Waller joined the meeting at 2:00 p.m.

In preparation for potential federal infrastructure money that may be coming, Caltrans wants to start the discussion about potential project concepts. They're open to all ideas. The concept submission form is online. It is anticipated that the submissions will at a minimum create discussion. The deadline has been extended to July 23.

Woody asked that the reviewers remember that innovation is relative. Innovative projects in rural areas might be considered standard in more urban areas.

Rachel encouraged Caltrans to be open to innovative concepts that might be common in other countries.

Mike described a concept to extend rail beyond Roseville to the Truckee/Tahoe/Reno area. He participates in the Truckee North Tahoe Transportation Management Association, which is considering how to get people to the basin without their vehicles.

Woody noted that many rural agencies have contacted him to ask what degree planning or design needs to be done. Jeanie confirmed that planning is not a requirement for project concepts.

Jeanie described next steps. They will likely publish the list of concepts and send out an acknowledgement of submittals. Projects will likely be grouped by project types. They may have an ongoing process to allow proposals in the future.

**J. Adjourn**

**W. Deloria**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:18 p.m.

**Chat Panel Discussion:**

From Jessica Riske-Gomez to Everyone: 12:31 PM

Eating and it is not pretty :)

From Elika Changizi OOO (she/her) CA Transportation Commission to Everyone: 12:59 PM

elika.changizi@catc.ca.gov

From Me to Everyone: 01:22 PM

I really appreciate how helpful CTC staff has been! My comments on the ATP weren't meant to be criticism of staff at all But I'm glad we'll be able to discuss those things at workshops.

From Tamera Leighton to Everyone: 01:39 PM

I totally agree, Nephele. The reality of the ATP is totally NOT a CTC staff problem.

Idea: Perhaps RCTF can have a guidelines pre-meeting 30 minutes before the State meeting (example), so we're queued up with a unified message.

From Laurie Waters to Everyone: 01:40 PM

I totally understand Nephele and Tamera! We'll keep trying to make the program as fair as possible.

From Gerry LeFrancois Mono County to Everyone: 01:49 PM

Innovative Concepts deadline is COB July 23, 2021

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/82998c67ec534f738afa42fac542bc41>

From Rachel Moriconi, SCCRTC to Everyone: 01:51 PM

I like the idea of meeting in person a few times a year with a call-in option, then by zoom other times.

From Me to Everyone: 01:58 PM

I absolutely agree!

From Sujaya Kalainesan to Everyone: 01:59 PM

Jeanie will join in 2 min

From Erin Thompson to Everyone: 02:00 PM

I sent Woody the news release for the new climate change funding in the budget

From Jessica Riske-Gomez to Everyone: 02:02 PM

Tehama put in for a Planning grant as well through CALFIRE. We had to work closely with the County Fire Committee.