



Council Meeting: December 16, 2008

SUBJECT: Endorsement of Comprehensive County Expressway Planning Study and Implementation Plan

REPORT IN BRIEF

The County of Santa Clara (County) has released for review and comment an updated draft Comprehensive County Expressway Planning Study and Implementation Plan. There are two County Expressways in Sunnyvale, Central Expressway and Lawrence Expressway that are owned and operated by the County. The County is requesting that cities take formal action to endorse the updated Plan. The original plan was completed in 2003 and endorsed by the Sunnyvale City Council at their May 13, 2003 meeting (RTC 03-163.) The current plan update was initiated in December, 2007 for the purpose of updating project lists and priorities. A particular focus was made on pedestrian improvements along expressways and incorporating south county improvements. The Plan update comprehensively identifies improvements and policies necessary to maintain traffic flow, provide for bicyclists and pedestrians, install landscaping and soundwalls, and maintain and operate the system over the next 20 years.

The Plan would affect expressways in Sunnyvale by providing for short and long term roadway capacity and operation needs to maintain levels of service, providing policy direction and selected improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists, and identifying soundwall and landscaping goals and needs. The plan for the most part is consistent with City policy and plans. Then Vice Mayor Tim Risch and Councilmember Manny Valerio served on a Policy Advisory Board (PAB) for the original study to give local and regional perspectives, and Councilmember Chris Moylan served on the PAB for the current Plan update. Staff is recommending endorsement of the updated Plan.

BACKGROUND

In 2003, the County of Santa Clara, in cooperation with local and regional agency representatives, prepared a Comprehensive County Expressway Planning Study and Implementation Plan. This Plan serves as a long range strategic plan for the improvement and maintenance of the expressways. The need for the study became apparent during the development of the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) Valley Transportation Plan (VTP) 2020 plan. Prior to development of the Comprehensive Expressway Planning Study, planning for County Expressways had been done on a piecemeal, project-by-

project basis, resulting in an incomplete and disparate assessment of expressway needs in the VTP 2020 regional plan. Because there was no project list or priorities for the entire expressway system, projects and funding were allocated largely as a result of specialized or outdated study efforts. The County and VTA jointly agreed that the Study was needed to identify projects and priorities for the entire expressway system in time for the VTP 2020 Update. Supervisor Beall was a leading advocate for the Study.

The study process involved the retention of a consultant team, augmentation of County staff, and formation of policy and technical groups. The Board of Supervisors established the Expressway Study Policy Advisory Board (PAB) on October 9, 2001. PAB membership consists of two County Supervisors, one councilmember each from twelve cities, two Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) Board members and two County Roads Commissioners (ex-officio).

A Technical Working Group (TWG) was also formed to facilitate interaction with local agencies and Caltrans staff. Transportation and Traffic Manager Jack Witthaus represents the City to this Group.

The first phase of work on the Expressway Study began in September 2001. The purpose of the first phase was to develop a complete understanding of the current conditions and deficiencies for each expressway. Activities included data gathering; public outreach, including workshops and a public opinion poll; meetings with staff from each city, Caltrans, VTA, and the California Highway Patrol; and formation of policy and technical groups to advise County staff and the consultants on the progress of the work and to coordinate local input.

The first phase was completed in May and June, 2002. A significant conclusion from the first phase of work is that each expressway has its own unique character, function, and community relationship. Therefore, the ultimate build-out of each expressway must vary to meet community needs. All subsequent work has proceeded with that in mind. Primary characteristics determined for the two expressways in Sunnyvale, Central Expressway and Lawrence Expressway, were to serve volumes of through traffic at higher speeds.

Second phase work to identify improvement elements resulted in the assembly of the proposed improvements and strategies into a Draft Implementation Plan in March, 2003.

The Sunnyvale City Council endorsed the original Comprehensive County Expressway Planning Study and Implementation Plan at its May 13, 2003 meeting (RTC 03-163.)

In December, 2007, the County began the process of preparing a Comprehensive County Expressway Planning Study Draft 2008 Update (Draft 2008 Update). The 2008 Update Work Plan included the following tasks:

- Develop a pedestrian access plan for expressways within each jurisdiction
- Hold TWG and PAB progress meetings
- Review the performance of expressway high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes
- Report on expressway intersection levels of service
- Update Capacity and Operations Improvement Tier 1A/1B project lists
 - Tier 1A projects focus on improving level of service (LOS) F intersections
 - Tier 1B projects would construct interchanges at LOS F intersections
- Compare the County's Tier 1A/1B project list with the VTP 2035 project list
- Review updates to all elements of the study

Attachment A is the Executive Summary of the Draft 2008 Update. Of particular interest are the Capacity and Operational Improvement Element, the Finishing Program (that addresses sound walls), and the Pedestrian Element. Attachment B is a summary of the status of projects along Lawrence Expressway and Central Expressway in the City of Sunnyvale.

EXISTING POLICY

Land Use and Transportation Element Goal R1, Protect and sustain a high quality of life in Sunnyvale by participating in coordinated land use and transportation planning in the region.

Land Use and Transportation Element R1.2, Support coordinated regional transportation system planning and improvements.

Land Use and Transportation Element R1.3.1, Participate in intergovernmental activities related to regional and sub-regional land use and transportation planning in order to advance the City's interest.

Land Use and Transportation Element R1.3.3 Monitor significant land use and transportation decisions pending in other communities to ensure that Sunnyvale is not adversely affected.

DISCUSSION

Comprehensive County Expressway Planning Study Overview

The Comprehensive County Expressway Planning Study serves as a long range strategic plan for the improvement and maintenance of the expressways. The

Study Implementation Plan includes seven elements devoted to describing the project, operations, and maintenance needs and improvement recommendations. An eighth element recommends a funding strategy. Other elements of the plan address and quantify needs related to signal operations and Traffic Operations System (TOS) improvements, High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes, bicycle accommodations, pedestrian facilities, frontage finishings with landscaping and sound walls, and maintenance and operations at a recommended level of effort.

A key to the success of the expressway study has been the strong collaborative planning process used. All elements of the plan have been developed in full partnership with the PAB and the Technical Working Group (composed of city and Department staff), and the original plan process involved an extensive public outreach process.

Changes From The 2003 Expressway Study For The 2008 Update Within The City Of Sunnyvale

Capacity and Operational Improvement Element

- Lawrence Expressway: Deleted conversion of HOV lane to mixed flow north of US 101 to relieve operational and safety concerns, as the project is now complete.
- Central Expressway Tier 2: Removed the “at-grade improvements or interchange at Mary” project because there is no LOS need for it.
- Lawrence Expressway Tier 2: Removed the “interchange at Tasman” because there is no LOS need for it, and there are feasibility problems in implementation.
- All other Tier 1A, 1B, 1C, and 2 projects on Lawrence and Central Expressways within Sunnyvale remain unchanged in the 2008 Update.

Bicycle Element

- Deleted project for re-striping and widened shoulders on Central and Lawrence as needed to better accommodate bicyclists, as the project is now complete.

Pedestrian Element

- Developed Pedestrian Route Plans for all expressways using a combination of existing sidewalks, parallel routes, and recommended new sidewalks. Within the City of Sunnyvale:
 - Central Expressway: Provide new sidewalk on south side from Bernardo to Mary Avenue ramp to connect with parallel pedestrian facility on California; provide sidewalk on north side from Middlefield ramp to Mathilda square loop interchange of Soquel/India/San Bernardino to

connect with parallel pedestrian facility on Arques. Also recommends that the Tier 1A Central Expressway Auxilliary Lane project provide sidewalk on both sides of Central from Santa Elena to Lawrence and the Tier 1A 6-lane widening project between Lawrence and San Tomas Expressways, include building sidewalks on both sides of the expressway.

- Lawrence Expressway: Close sidewalk gaps on west side north of Sandia and on east side north of Palamos and north of Elko.
- Recommended that crossing enhancements be provided at all signalized intersections whenever opportunities arise for these improvements through roadway capital projects and land development mitigations.

Finishing Program and Operations and Maintenance Elements

There are no changes from the 2003 Update except to increase the cost to 2008 dollars.

In Sunnyvale, locations along the Central Expressway “trench” are included for the installation of new walls. Other locations in Sunnyvale have adequate walls or are commercial/industrial frontage or vacant land. The plan assumes that these walls would be provided as part of a Central Expressway auxiliary lanes project, which is proposed as a Tier 1A high priority capital improvement in the Plan.

Landscaping recommendations of the draft Plan are based on a 2000 *County of Santa Clara Expressway Master Landscape Plan*. This Plan established an interim policy whereby new landscaping would only be installed if it could be properly maintained. Currently, the County Roads and Airports Department budget does not allow for maintenance of landscaping other than the most basic nuisance and safety abatement. The County has in several cases, however, approved cooperative agreements with local jurisdictions or private developers for maintenance of landscaping, allowing for upgraded landscape medians and shoulders.

The Expressway Study and Implementation Plan formalizes a County policy of new landscape construction only with assurance of maintenance, with the additional caveat that the County will fully cooperate with any public or private entities seeking to improve expressway landscaping.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with the staff recommendation.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City’s official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall, in the Council Chambers lobby, in the Office of the City Clerk, at the Library, Senior Center, Community Center, and

Department of Public Safety; posting the agenda and report on the City's Web site; and making the report available at the Library and the Office of the City Clerk.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Endorse the draft 2008 Update of the Comprehensive County Expressway Planning Study and Implementation Plan and recommend approval by the County Board of Supervisors.
2. Endorse the 2008 Update of the Comprehensive County Expressway Planning Study and Implementation Plan with alternative conditions.
3. Do not endorse the 2008 Update of the Comprehensive County Expressway Planning Study and Implementation Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends Alternative No. 1: Endorse the draft 2008 Update of the Comprehensive County Expressway Planning Study and Implementation Plan and recommend approval by the County Board of Supervisors.

The 2008 Update of the County Expressway study identifies additional beneficial improvements to the expressway system in Sunnyvale, and updates information on planning and construction of the system. This is a positive planning effort by the County for Sunnyvale residents and travelers.

Reviewed by:

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Prepared by: Jack Witthaus, Transportation and Traffic Manager

Approved by:

Gary M. Luebbbers,
City Manager

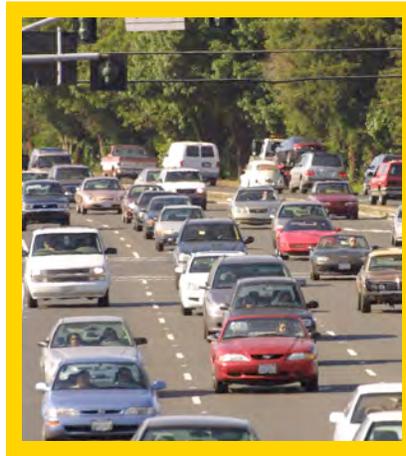
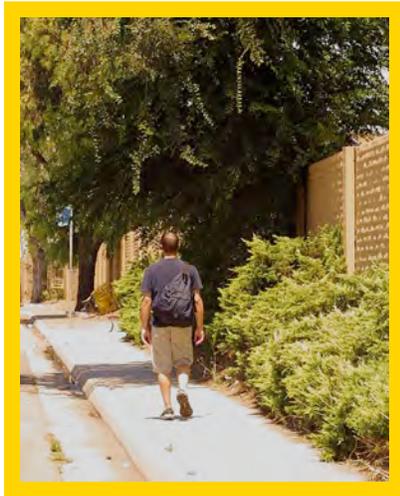
Attachments

A. 2008 Update Executive Summary

B. Expressway Improvements in Sunnyvale

Comprehensive County Expressway Planning Study

DRAFT 2008 UPDATE



**COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA
ROADS AND AIRPORTS DEPARTMENT**

OCTOBER 9, 2008

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Ted Brown – ex-officio
Chairperson
County Roads Commission

Steven Levin – ex-officio
Member
County Roads Commission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Adopted in 2003, the Comprehensive County Expressway Planning Study provides a long-term plan for the improvement and maintenance of the County Expressway System. It includes all areas of need: capacity and operational improvements, signal operations, high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and finishing elements such as landscaping and sound walls. It also includes a summary of ongoing operating and maintenance needs and funding strategy recommendations.

The 2008 Update is the first update of the 2003 Expressway Study. While it is primarily an administrative update to reflect new conditions, it also tackled some key issues unresolved in the 2003 Study. These issues included developing an expenditure plan for the highest priority expressway capacity and operational improvements, integrating South County's Santa Teresa-Hale Corridor's needs into the project lists, and developing a plan to more completely accommodate pedestrians on all expressways.

The same collaborative planning process used to develop the 2003 Expressway Study was used for the 2008 Update. Elected officials and staff from twelve cities and the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), representatives from the County Roads Commission, and the County Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) participated in the development of the Update. Public comments will be solicited during the circulation of the Draft Update document.

Accomplishments Since 2003

The benefits of having the 2003 Expressway Study have been substantial and systemwide. The Study has brought a greater understanding of the value provided by the expressway system as part of the transportation system in Santa Clara County. It has also increased awareness of what is needed to keep the expressway system functioning well, thereby, helping the County take advantage of every possible opportunity. The highest priority expressway capacity and operational improvements (Tier 1A) became the Expressway Program in the VTA Valley Transportation Plan 2030 (VTP 2030), laying the groundwork for grant allocations and federal earmarks. In addition, the comprehensive list of expressway needs has been a resource for cities in conditioning developers to provide improvements.

Specific project delivery accomplishments include:

- ❖ **Capacity and Operational Improvements** – Twelve of the 28 highest priority expressway capacity and operational improvements (Tier 1A at-grade projects) have been completed or funded by various grants, County funding sources, and city contributions through developer mitigations. In addition, six of the seven next highest set of priority projects (Tier 1B grade separation projects) have full or partial funding commitments from city development impact fees.
- ❖ **Bicycle Improvements** – Nine of the eleven projects listed in the 2003 Study have been delivered or funded. These improvements involved widening shoulders at pinch points and improving delineation of shoulder areas for bicycle use.
- ❖ **Pedestrian Improvements** – Some progress has also been made in providing pedestrian improvements as identified in the 2003 Pedestrian Element including constructing new sidewalk segments along five of the expressways, providing crossing enhancements at several high demand locations, and installing pedestrian countdown timers at 39 intersections.

Little or no progress has been made in providing new and higher replacement sound walls or installing new landscaping due to a lack of funding sources. In addition, no progress has been made to increase levels of effort for expressway operations and maintenance. Rather, the annual operations and maintenance shortfalls were exacerbated by the declining value of the gas tax and the year-by-year uncertainty whether the State would borrow roadway maintenance funds, making it a challenge to sustain current levels of effort.

Capacity and Operational Improvement Element

As in the 2003 Study, the 2008 Update capacity and operational improvements include the following types of projects:

- ❖ Capacity Projects – Roadway widening, new turning lanes at intersections, and new or reconfigured interchanges/grade separations.
- ❖ Operational and Safety Improvements – Auxiliary lanes, median/access closures, and bridge replacements.
- ❖ Signal Operational Improvements – Traffic Operations System (TOS) equipment using advanced technologies to monitor and improve traffic flow, replacement of outdated equipment, and expanded coordination with city signal systems.
- ❖ High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) System Projects – Recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the HOV system, including corrective actions dealing with high violation rates and removing a little-used peak-hour queue jump lane on Central Expressway.

The total roadway capital program includes 74 projects at an estimated cost of \$2.2 to 2.6 billion. To determine priorities for funding and implementation, the projects were divided into tiers using slightly modified criteria from the 2003 Study. Table ES-1 provides a summary of the tiers and Figure ES-1 maps the highest priority projects (Tier 1A and 1B).

Table ES-1: Roadway Projects Tier Summary

Tier	Tier Criteria	# of Projects	Cost (2008 \$/millions)
1A	Improves 2001 and 2006/07 LOS F intersections, provides operational improvements, or conducts feasibility studies	25	\$166
1B	Constructs interchanges at 2001 LOS F intersections	5	\$253
1C	Improves 2025 projected LOS F intersections	20	\$76
2	Provides other expressway capacity improvements or new technologies	15	\$875-930
3	Reconstructs major existing facilities or constructs new facilities	9	\$861-1,126
Totals		74	\$2,231-2,551

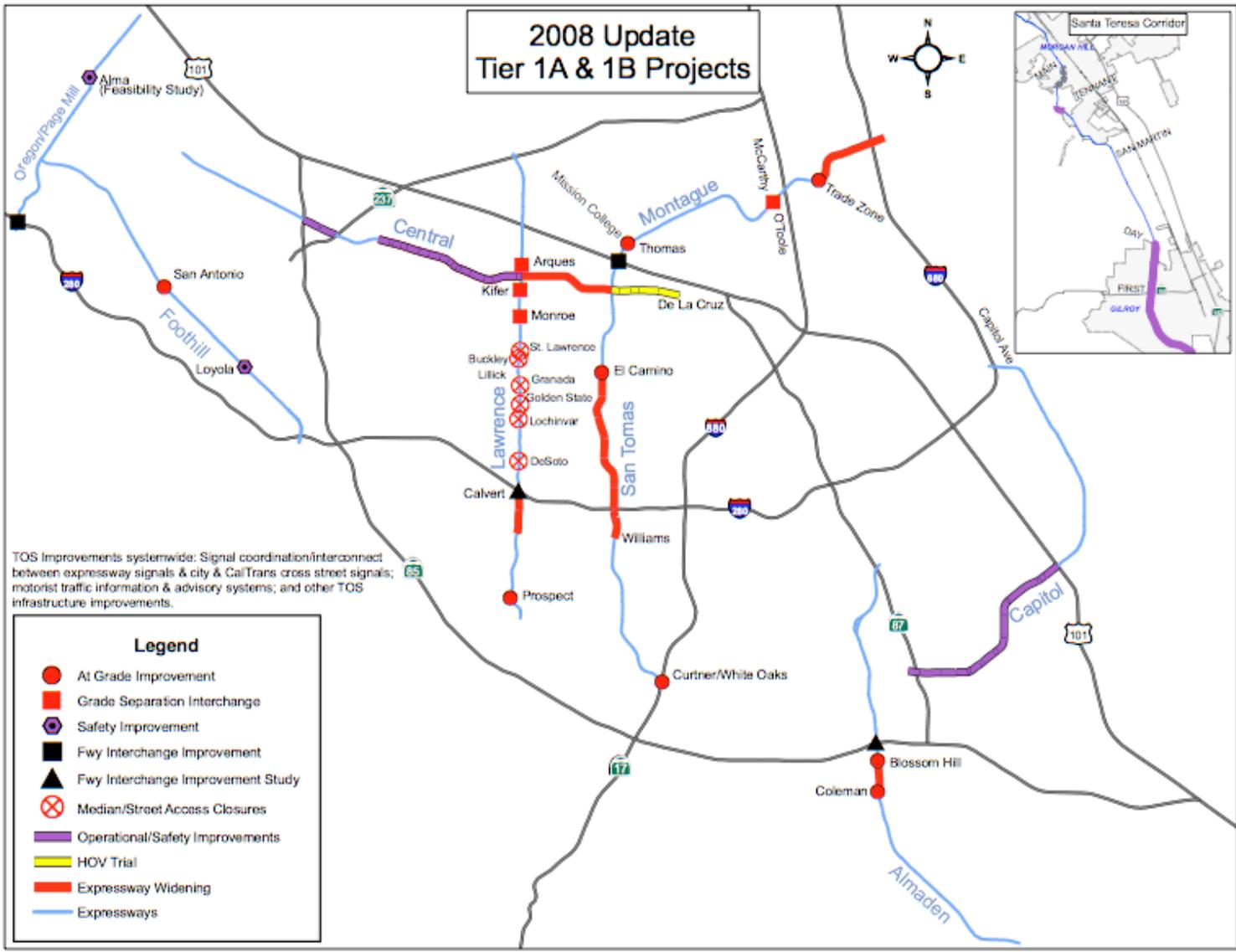


Figure ES-1: 2008 Tier 1A and 1B Projects

Bicycle Element

Bicycles are accommodated on all expressways and along the Santa Teresa-Hale Corridor. The 2003 Bicycle Element focused on bringing all expressways into compliance with the Expressway Bicycle Accommodation Guidelines. No changes in policy or approach are made in the 2008 Bicycle Element. A total of six projects are shown in the Bicycle Element. Included are projects from the 2003 Bicycle Element that have not been completed, a systemwide bicycle signal detection improvement project, and an improvement for the Santa Teresa-Hale Corridor.

Pedestrian Element

In line with the County's belief that the safest way to accommodate pedestrian use of expressways is on improved sidewalks behind the curb or on parallel routes off the expressway, the 2008 Update has taken a far more proactive pedestrian route planning approach than the 2003 Study. The goal of the 2008 Update was to identify continuous routes, either in the right-of-way or along alternate parallel routes, providing for pedestrian travel along both sides of the expressways wherever possible. The 2008 Update Pedestrian Element completely replaces the 2003 Expressway Study Pedestrian Element, including all policies, project lists, and recommendations.

The net results of this proactive approach for pedestrian route planning are recommendations for 38 miles of new sidewalks, a comprehensive signage program to help guide pedestrians along parallel routes, and a recommendation that all expressway intersections should include design considerations for pedestrian crossing enhancements whenever opportunities arise for these improvements.

Finishing Element

The Finishing Program Element involves improvements to expressway medians and edges. These improvements include sound wall, landscaping, and street lighting. The 2008 Update carries forward the 2003 Study recommendations for 63,500 feet of new sound walls and replacing 36,000 feet of existing walls with higher sound walls. In addition, the basic level of landscaping recommended continues to be trees and limited shrubs, median finishes (such as decomposed granite), sound walls covered with ivy, and automated irrigation systems. Due to a lack of adequate annual funding for landscape maintenance, the Update also continues to support the County's policy to only allow installation of new landscaping if full recovery of capital and maintenance costs can occur.

New to the Finishing Element for the 2008 Update is the consideration of pedestrian scale lighting to support the ambitious pedestrian access plans. Because the utility and maintenance costs of street lighting are high and beyond the means of the expressway system's operating budget, the Update includes a policy similar to the landscaping policy, where installation of pedestrian scale street lighting along the expressways is only allowed if full recovery of capital and maintenance costs can occur.

Annual Operations and Maintenance Costs

Operations and maintenance (O&M) include all activities and material necessary to keep the expressways functioning safely and effectively while looking presentable. It includes signal operations, sweeping, pavement maintenance, landscape maintenance, enforcement, and aging infrastructure replacement. As part of the 2003 Study, target levels of effort were developed. The 2003 Study also indicated that the annual costs for these target levels of effort exceeded existing available revenues.

Since the 2003 Study, the annual O&M costs for the target levels of effort have grown 51% (from \$18 million to \$27.2 million) due to increased labor and material costs as well as an expanded Traffic Operations System that must be maintained. With an annual cost estimate of \$27.2 million in 2008 dollars and only \$10.8 million expected to be available for expressway O&M in 2009, there will be an annual shortfall of \$16.4 million to achieve the target levels of effort. This shortfall is expected to grow as real gas tax revenue declines.

Funding Strategy

With approximately \$2.5 billion in capital needs (see Table ES-2) and an annual \$16.4 million shortfall for operations and maintenance, some innovative and aggressive strategies are needed. In reviewing all known and potential capital funding sources, the net result through 2035 is likely to be:

- ❖ All Tier 1A projects and half of the Tier 1B projects will be funded over the next 25 years. In addition, most of the bicycle needs and some of the pedestrian needs will be funded.
- ❖ The following needs will not be funded: the remainder of the Tier 1B projects; the roadway projects in Tiers 1C, 2, and 3; most of the pedestrian needs; and the sound walls and landscaping needs listed in the Finishing Program.

Table ES-2: Capital Program Funding Needs ¹

Element	Total Cost	Committed Funds ²	Potential Funding ³	Net Needs
Capacity & Operational Improvements	\$2,244-2,564	\$106.3		\$2,138-2,458
Bicycle	16.5		10.9	5.6
Pedestrian	76.3-84.3		23.3	53-61
Finishing: Sound Walls	76.6		13.7	62.9
Finishing: Landscaping	24-29			24-29
			Total	\$2,284-2,617 million

¹ All costs are in millions of 2008 dollars.

² Committed sources include grants (Federal earmarks, VTA Bicycle Expenditure Program, other sources) and city commitments, including development impact fees.

³ Other potential funding sources include funded, Tier 1A, and Tier 1B roadway projects (project costs include appropriate bicycle, pedestrian, and sound wall needs) and land development conditions.

⁴ Includes San Tomas Expressway Culvert project.

It will be a challenge to maintain the current O&M levels of effort, and it will not be possible to expand the levels of effort to reach any of the targets without an increase in sustainable revenue sources. O&M efforts necessary to maintain the safety of the expressway system will continue to be the highest priority for the limited funding. However, the forecast is that pavement conditions will decline, the County will be less responsive to signal timing requests, there will be less sweeping and more weeds/litter, and most other non-critical maintenance will be deferred.

The County will continue to take the following actions: pursue all possible grants and partnerships for expressway improvement and O&M needs; work with the cities to acquire traffic mitigation fees and new development conditions to support the expressway system; and, support all state efforts to index the gas tax to inflation and to increase the gas tax to help fund the O&M needs of the expressway system. However, these actions are not likely to be enough to deliver all the high priority capital needs or increase O&M levels of effort.

Acquiring new revenue sources for both capital and O&M needs is very difficult in the current economic environment. However, some opportunities do exist and the following strategies are recommended to meet the needs identified in the 2008 Update:

- ❖ Request full funding for the Tier 1A Capacity and Operational Improvements in VTP 2035 with Tier 1B projects also listed should additional funding become available.
- ❖ Seek \$52 million from the 2010 STIP for the first set of Tier 1A projects with follow up requests of \$25 million and \$12 million from the 2012 and 2014 STIPs, respectively, to fund a little over half of the Tier 1A projects by 2015.
- ❖ Seek funding from VTP 2030's Pavement Maintenance Program to cover the next round of expressway pavement maintenance needs to come due between 2010 and 2012 at a cost of approximately \$12-15 million annually.
- ❖ Advocate for a commitment from future High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lane revenue to help improve and maintain sections of expressways and Santa Teresa-Hale if determined to be within HOT lane corridors.
- ❖ Explore, through State liaison, opportunities for opening a State maintenance revenue stream for expressways.
- ❖ Support initiatives for vehicle registration fees or vehicle miles traveled fees to help fund expressway and local road improvement and maintenance needs.
- ❖ Advocate that MTC institute a return-to-source policy for its 10-cent gas tax authority giving the cities and County local control to meet high priority O&M needs, or continue to pursue new local funding sources for expressway O&M needs, taking advantage of partnerships with other local agencies facing annual deficits in road O&M budgets and pursue a 10-cent gas tax as a local initiative.

Next Update

The County will update the Expressway Study every four years in conjunction with the regular updates of VTA's VTP plans to reflect changing traffic and financial conditions. Special tasks recommended for the 2012 Update include conducting new traffic modeling to project future conditions, evaluating the HOV performance targets, updating the sound wall needs list, and assessing where pedestrian crossing improvements are needed at expressway intersections. Similar to the 2003 Study and 2008 Update, a collaborative process involving elected officials, local agency staff, and the public will be used to develop the 2012 Update.

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Attachment B**Comprehensive Countywide Expressway Study Implementation Plan
Projects Located in Sunnyvale**

Project	Plan Category	Status
Central Expressway – Auxilliary Lanes between Mary Avenue and Lawrence Expressway	Capacity and Operational	Unfunded
Lawrence Expressway – close median at Lochinvar Way	Capacity and Operational	Unfunded
Lawrence Expressway – grade separation at Reed/Monroe	Capacity and Operational	Partially funded
Lawrence Expressway – grade separation at Kifer Road	Capacity and Operational	Partially funded
Lawrence Expressway – grade separation at Arques Avenue	Capacity and Operational	Partially funded
Lawrence Expressway – add a eastbound left turn lane	Capacity and Operational	Unfunded
Lawrence Expressway – new traffic signal and roadway realignment at Wildwood Avenue	Capacity and Operational	Unfunded
Central Expressway – new sidewalk, Mary to Soquel, Mathilda Avenue square loop ramps, Santa Elena to east City limits	Pedestrian	Unfunded
Central Expressway – replacement soundwalls, south side between Mary and Potrero, southwest of Pastoria	Finishing	Unfunded
Central Expressway – new soundwalls southeast of Pastoria, northeast of Mathilda, south side between Mathilda and Fair Oaks	Finishing	Unfunded