

SOLANO TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

Guiding Principles for the SR37 Corridor Project



2nd Revised Draft

Environmental Task Force

March 5, 2017

BACKGROUND

State Route 37 is recognized as the North Bay's most heavily used east/west highway serving commuters and visitors. The roadway experiences



significant travel delay and is also impacted by uneven subsidence and intermittent storm-related flooding in several areas.

Nearly the entire length between Novato and Vallejo is predicted to become permanently submerged as sea levels rise if modifications are not made. The result would be additional traffic on distant roadways that are not equipped to handle it, economic loss and reduced opportunity for disadvantaged Solano community residents who commute from to Marin and Sonoma counties.

Much of the route traverses one of the Bay Area's largest remaining tidal marsh environments, known as the San Pablo Baylands. Federal and state agencies, as well as numerous non-profit environmental conservation organizations, have invested concerted effort on ecosystem planning, wetland acquisition, and habitat restoration for over three decades, guided since 1999 by the comprehensive science-based *Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Report* and its 2015 update.



To address these concerns, in 2012 Caltrans contracted with the University of California/ Davis to prepare a *Highway 37 Stewardship Study*, followed in 2016 by the *Route 37 Integrated Traffic Infrastructure, and Sea Level Rise Analysis*. In 2015, Caltrans issued an *SR37 Transportation Concept Report*, further refining understanding on a range of issues.

In 2015, Marin, Sonoma, Napa, and Solano transportation agencies approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that committed them to cooperatively guide the intentions and strategies for the overall framework and funding strategy for the entire SR 37 Corridor. Oversight and policy direction is provided by a 12-person 4-County Policy Committee, comprised of 3 representatives from each county.

At the request of the 4-County Policy Committee, the regional Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), the four county transportation agencies and Caltrans agreed to prepare a Corridor Plan which includes Design Alternatives Assessment (DAA) for the priority segment. The Corridor Study will evaluate the challenges corridor-wide, while the DAA will provide a more detailed analysis for the highest priority section.

At its November, 2017 meeting, the 4-County Policy Committee approved Segment B, the only 2-lane segment of the corridor that stretches 10 miles from the Mare Island Interchange in the east to SR 121 Interchange to the west, to be the focus area of the DAA.

The Corridor Study will integrate goals and environmental principles in consideration of multi-modal mobility, wetlands conservation, Sea Level Rise adaptation, recreation, and social and economic equity into several alternatives. The DAA should reflect the specific principles. It is scheduled to be completed in mid-2018, and will be the basis for extensive environmental review to follow when funding becomes available.

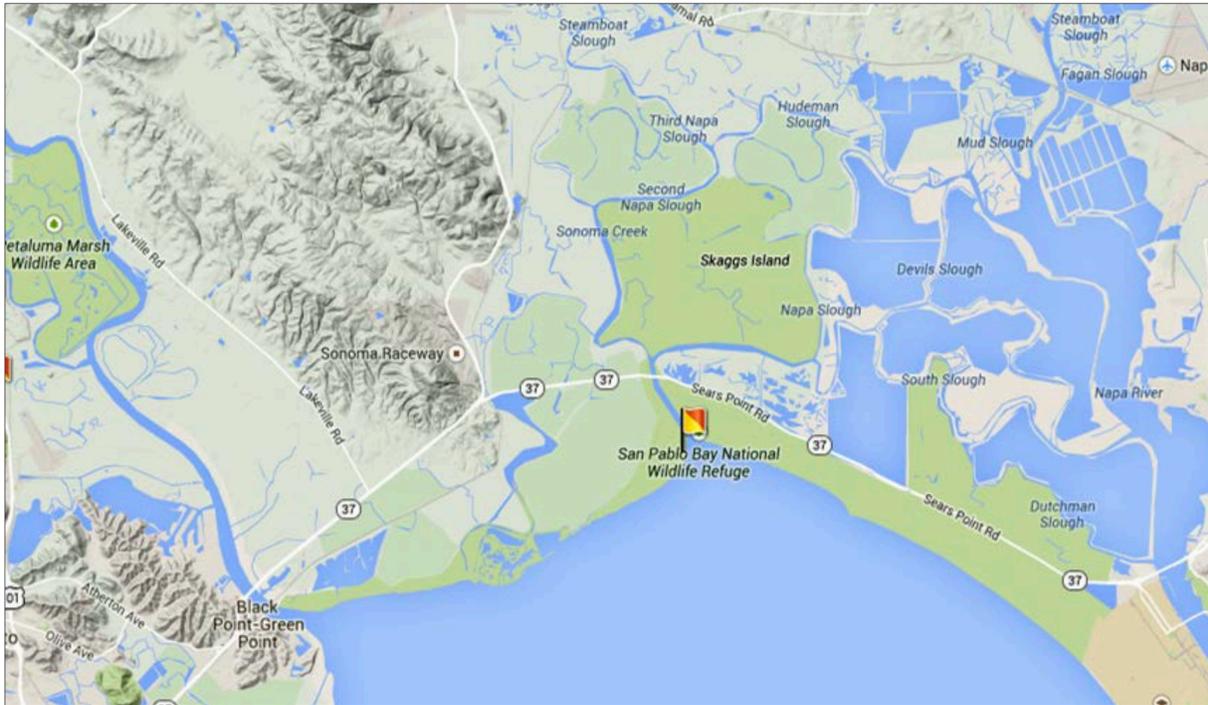


The Solano Transportation Authority (STA) is committed to working with the other 3 county transportation authorities, and its regional partners Caltrans and MTC to address the multitude of issues facing SR 37 corridor-wide, while primarily focusing on improvements within Segments B. Near-term operational improvements that are compatible with the long-term direction will be pursued in partnership with Caltrans.



Photo: Chris Riley, Vallejo Times-Herald

Given the diverse issues and complexities associated with the Highway 37 corridor, it is useful to adopt a set of Guiding Principles that reflect Solano County community values and priorities. These Principles are intended to assist and guide STA and various Solano County agencies as planning and implementation moves forward.



Guiding Principles

State Route 37 traverses four counties through a variety of environmentally sensitive habitats, connecting the region and providing direct access to numerous existing private and public land uses. The existing roadway is deficient in its carrying capacity and vulnerable to both current and future flooding.

The scale of the challenges within this corridor, including funding, will take many years to fully resolve. Given that, the following Principles are intended to guide planning and implementation of improvements for the duration of the project.

Principle 1- The SR 37 San Pablo Bay Corridor Plan will be multifunctional in its design and operation.

Principle 2- The implementation of the SR 37 San Pablo Bay Corridor Plan will proceed with urgency and continuing effort until completed.

Principle 3- The SR 37 San Pablo Bay Corridor Plan will be advanced through active, committed partnerships.

Principle 4 - The SR 37 San Pablo Bay Corridor Plan will rely upon counties focusing on local elements while also collaborating on corridor-wide improvements.

Principle 5 - The SR 37 San Pablo Bay Corridor Plan will identify the financial resources necessary to build, operate, and maintain future improvements.

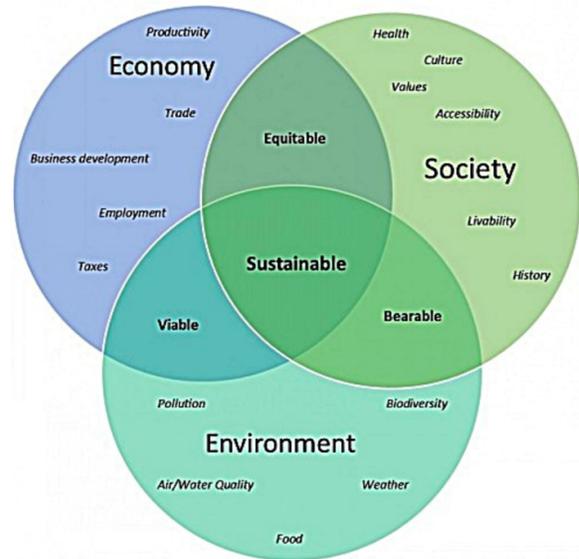
These Principles are further described below.

Principle 1

The SR 37 San Pablo Bay Corridor Plan will be multifunctional in its design and operation.

The improvements will benefit the entire SR 37 San Pablo Bay Corridor, with the SR 37 mobility improvements serving as the keystone for the work. The corridor improvements' Purpose and Need statement will recognize that many interests require inclusion in the solution, including:

- **Mobility** – Auto, transit, and active transportation improvements that reduce greenhouse emissions and vehicle mileage. Transit-related information is needed and should be gathered early in the planning process.



Climate Adaptation– The project will help to support the Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program (SB 246, Wieckowski, 2015) to “develop holistic strategies to coordinate climate activities at the state, regional and local levels, while advancing social equity” improvements, will be sufficiently elevated, based on Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) recommendations. “Existing privately maintained levees will not be relied upon to protect future public mobility investments, therefore publicly owned bridge, causeway, and living levee concepts will be evaluated.”

- **Economic Development**- The SR37 Corridor is critical for the viability, growth and sustainability of north bay economic activity. Plans should maintain improve access for existing businesses and be designed to attract new ones. Solano County should pursue opportunities for local residents to be hired for jobs associated with mobility and ecosystem improvements.



- **Recreation** – Expanded, safer access for water-based recreation, outdoor education, and safe walking and biking, including Bay Trail implementation. The corridor currently provides opportunities for bird watching, walking, duck hunting, fishing, kayaking, and canoeing; however, public access is limited and fragmented.

Ecosystem – Protect and improve watershed habitat, species, tidal and riverine water quality, stormwater pollution and hydrologic connectivity. Existing natural features and ecosystem processes, or the restoration of such historic features and processes will be included in future alternatives. The improvements will draw upon existing studies, plans, and restoration experience of environmental scientists to guide ecosystem integration. Substantial restoration that has been completed will be recognized and integrated with future changes.



- **Existing land Uses** – Improvements that respect current land uses and their access, unless modifications are fairly determined through the design process. A long list of land uses occur along SR 37, including suburban development in Novato and Vallejo, agriculture, wineries, hunt clubs, Sonoma raceway, Six Flags Discovery Kingdom, outdoor recreational facilities, utilities, and a municipal wastewater biosolids disposal facility.

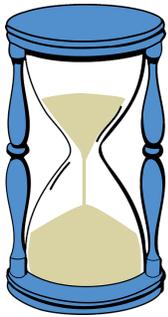
- **Equity** – Full and fair participation of all potentially affected communities, insuring that benefits of the Plan will be fairly allocated and minimize negative impacts, recognizing that periodic closures of the corridor currently affect disadvantaged communities disproportionately.

environmental justice—the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws and policies (California Senate Bill 115 – Chapter 690, Statutes of 1999)

Principle 2

The implementation of the SR 37 San Pablo Bay Corridor Plan will proceed with urgency and continuing effort until completed.

Project partners will act with the urgency that the situation demands without sacrificing thoughtful deliberation and comprehensive, life cycle-based decision making. Partners will commit to addressing multifunctional needs across the entire length of Highway 37 between U.S. 101 and Interstate 80, with near-term emphasis between SR 121 and Mare Island.



- Operational improvements between and including Highway 121 and Mare Island intersections will be addressed first.
- Plan elements outside Segments B should be implemented concurrently as coordinated planning is completed and funding is identified.
- Ready-to-go improvements will not be delayed solely to provide short-term balance between diverse aspects of the Plan. Early phase improvements should not preclude integration of long-term objectives.

Principle 3

The SR 37 San Pablo Bay Corridor Plan will be advanced through cooperative, collaborative, committed partnerships.



The multiple purposes of these improvements, as well as the substantial financial requirements associated with all elements of the corridor improvements, make it essential that federal, state, regional, and local public agencies and private organizations work together along with the broader public, during conceptual design and continuing through funding, construction, monitoring, and maintenance of improvements in the corridor.

- The 4-County Policy Committee will provide strategic leadership throughout the Corridor Plan’s design and implementation.
- Partners will seek to reach consensus, while recognizing the need to act in a timely manner.
- Partners will work to equitably fund and deliver the various Plan elements.
- Individual agencies and organizations will publicly support adopted Plan elements being managed by other partners.
- Partners are committed to engaging all stakeholders, including those who are not traditionally involved in the public process due to economic or cultural factors.
- Partners will assume stakeholders’ good faith, encouraging behavior that enables collaborative decisions.
- Rail and ferry service may be able to reduce the traffic load on SR 37. Both options will be studied separately, but as options that may be integrated into the larger SR 37 San Pablo Bay Corridor plan.



Principle 4

The SR 37 San Pablo Bay Corridor Plan will rely upon counties focusing on local elements while also collaborating on corridor-wide improvements.



Each county will have specific improvements that will need to be planned, evaluated, and implemented. Those individual elements should receive the highest local priority.

- The four County transportation agencies will jointly seek to leverage local, regional, State, Federal and private funding

Principle 5

The SR 37 San Pablo Bay Corridor Plan will identify the financial resources necessary to build, operate, and maintain future improvements.

The cost to fully implement the Corridor Plan will be substantial, requiring fiscally responsive solutions and a variety of funding sources. Cost estimates for specific elements of the Plan have not yet been finalized, and funding for the Plan remains to be identified.

- All aspects of corridor improvement funding and financing, including tolling and private investment, will be evaluated.
- Budgets to design, construct, monitor, and maintain these facilities should be based on a life cycle approach. The improvements that cost the least over the long term may cost more in the short term. Investment decisions should lean towards long-term rather than short-term affordability.

- Any aspects of financing or tolling must reflect fair treatment of low income users.
- The four county Transportation agencies will work with the regional partners to develop a financial plan to fund operations and maintenance of the priority project improvements.



END OF STA GUIDING PRINCIPLES