

DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL

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SUBJECT: SR-166 TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES FOR FEBRUARY 17, 2010

On February 17, 2010, the SR-166 Task Force held a meeting at the City of Santa Maria Community Development Department. Those in attendance were:

Matt Olson, Lieutenant	California Highway Patrol, Santa Maria Area
Deborah Wyatt, Office Supervisor	California Highway Patrol, Santa Maria Area
Courtney Kienow, District Director	Assemblyman Sam Blakeslee's office
Linda Williams, Administrative Assistant	4 th District Supervisor Joni Gray's office
Mike Cordero, Councilmember	City of Santa Maria
George Mitchell, Chief	Guadalupe Police Dept
Jack Owen, Jr., Chief	Guadalupe Fire Dept
Fred Luna, Transportation Engineer	SBCAG
Bob Snoddy, Planner	KernCOG
Jessica Berry, Planner	SLOCOG
David Beard, Project Manager	Caltrans
Amy Donatello, Project Manager	Caltrans
Frank Flores, Supervisor	Caltrans Maintenance, Santa Maria
Aaron Henkel, Engineer	Caltrans Traffic Safety
Christian Childers, Battalion Chief	Santa Barbara County Fire
Emiliano Enriquez, Fire Prevention	Santa Maria Fire Department
Darci Buliavac, Office Manager	Auto Club of Southern California
Gene Zannon, Citizen	Cuyama Valley Conservancy

1. Introductions

- The meeting began with Lieutenant Olson welcoming everyone in attendance and thanking them for their presence. All members introduced themselves.

Lieutenant Olson expressed his thanks to everyone for their flexibility with the last minute postponement and rescheduling of the Task Force meeting from January 13th to February 17th. He also thanked everyone for their kind thoughts in the passing of a close family friend.

2. Old Business

- Lieutenant Olson gave an update on the Safety Grant Corridor Application for SR-166. The CHP has not yet received approval of the 2010-2011 corridor proposal. We will continue to “wait and see.”
- Fred Luna discussed Measure A funding. Currently, SBCAG is working on a strategic plan for the future. There will be possibly \$3 million available for use on SR-166. They are looking at Caltrans projects on the corridor that SBCAG could possibly fund. In addition, some \$30,000 in Measure A funds are being considered for use as annual allowance to pay for augmented enforcement on the corridor.
- A discussion took place regarding passing lane locations on SR-166. Lt. Olson asked consideration to be given to turnouts as an alternative.

3. Subcommittee Report

- CMS sign boards have been deployed and proven to be quite effective. Caltrans has deployed the Task Force-purchased sign near their Cuyama maintenance yard during holiday periods and during certain special events on the Central Coast. CHP, in conjunction, regularly deploys their CMS board on SR-166 East, just east of US 101. With the two signs, all travelers on the east corridor are exposed to these safety messages.

4. New Business

- A discussion took place regarding lane striping and safety issues. Caltrans will meet with a member of the California Highway Patrol to determine where passing lane striping should be changed.
- Gene Zannon spoke at length regarding safety issues on Hwy 33 and SR-166. Speeding motorcycles, gravel and produce trucks have become a serious safety issue. The Hwy 33 and SR-166 intersection is poorly lit. He would like to see lighting added and a speed zone through the intersection area. Moreover, the citizens of Ventucopa feel its design is unsafe and would like to see it eventually become a “T” intersection. He also discussed other safety improvement ideas for SR-33, and he will provide more information on this to Aaron Henkel of Caltrans.
- There is a gravel pit operation in the Cuyama River south of SR-166. That plant is seeking final approval to greatly increase its operations. In addition, more plants are in the planning stages. The resulting increase of operations in the area would create higher truck traffic on SR-33 and SR-166.

Regarding collisions in the area of SR-33 through Ventucopa and the intersection area of SR-166 and SR-33, Lt. Olson provided a handout to everyone. The statistics show traffic collisions in that area (Beat 66) are very low in numbers over the last four years.

5. Caltrans Report

- David Beard reported on the following projects.
 - The Russell Street traffic signal project is scheduled to begin in June and be completed this year.
 - The Gifford Curve Correction (the final 40 mph curve on the highway) near milepost 40 is scheduled to commence in 2012.
 - Soft barrier projects (centerline and edge line rumble strips) are scheduled for installation in the following areas of SR-166:
 - 1) West side: between Santa Maria and Guadalupe in 2011
 - 2) East side: between mileposts 25.1 and 32 in late 2010
 - 3) East side: between mileposts 42.5 and 48.9 in 2011
 - The Guadalupe ditch realignment project is currently in environmental review. These ditches along the north and south sides of SR-166 would be moved 30 feet farther back from the roadway. Due to the budget crunch, the project could be delayed until 2014.
 - SR-166 at Black Road: Caltrans looked at the possibility of installing a traffic signal. However, review of this location's collision statistics did not meet the safety trigger for construction. Therefore, installation of the signal would have to fall on another entity (SBCAG, or a county housing developer mitigation requirement, etc).
 - Measure A funding (\$3 million) could be used for roadway improvements on SR-166. He suggested the area possibly between mileposts 27.00 and 40.00.

6. CHP Report

- Lt. Olson discussed the three fatal collisions that occurred on SR-166 during 2009. He did imply the overtime that has been granted for extra patrol has been effective.
- Due to an increase in officers, CHP has officers routinely patrolling SR-166. Lt. Olson would still like to see additional overtime for SR-166 patrol.
- Currently, 10 miles of SR-166 East are marked for aerial enforcement. CHP is working with Caltrans to increase the miles of air markings on SR-166.
- "Operation Snowflake" was discussed by Lt. Olson. It's an operation plan for when I-5 closes due to weather conditions and alternate routes are used. It seems that Caltrans District 5 and CHP Coastal Division do not get notified in a timely manner of the impending closure of I-5. Vehicles travel over SR-33 (which has a higher elevation than the Tejon summit on I-5). Truck traffic in particular greatly increases on SR-166 and

US 101. Lt Olson has contacted CHP Areas involved in the closures and is working to be added to their I-5 closure notification list ASAP. Upon learning of a closure, we are also closing SR-33 due to the expectation of even more dangerous conditions on SR-33. So far, when learning of I-5's closure, Caltrans supervisor Frank Sullano uses the Task Force CMS board to inform motorists in the Cuyama area of the road closure and alternate routes. Supervisor Frank Flores places CMS boards on US 101 at SR-166 to notify travelers of the closure.

7. Roundtable

- Caltrans is working with CHP establishing current projects.
- Chief Owen thanked Caltrans for their hard work making recent storm-related road repairs on SR-166 West.
- Councilman Cordero expressed his happiness that the Russell Avenue traffic light will soon be installed.
- Courtney Kienow thanked Lt. Olson for the meeting and his continuing support of the SR-166 Safety Task Force.
- Bob Snoddy informed the group that Kern County is one of only four counties without measure funds to use for roadway safety improvements. It does not appear this will change.
- Lt. Olson advised there has been no new information on plans for a possible large multi-day music festival near Cuyama. The group put planning on hold late in 2009.

8. Next Meeting

- **The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 9, 2010, at 1330 hours.** Final confirmation of the next meeting's date and location will be forthcoming.

(If any corrections need to be made to these minutes, please contact Lieutenant Matt Olson at the CHP – Santa Maria Area office at (805) 349-8728.)