

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

340 A



FROM: TLMA - Transportation Dept.

SUBMITTAL DATE:
March 1, 2005

SUBJECT: Bautista Canyon Road Improvement Project

RECOMMENDED MOTION: Stop work on preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) for the Bautista Canyon Road Project.

BACKGROUND: Bautista Canyon Road traverses the San Bernardino National Forest between Fairview Avenue in Valle Vista and State Highway 371 in Anza. The Transportation Department maintains the road via an easement from the Forest Service. The middle 8.2 mile segment of the route is in the mountainous portion of the canyon and is a dirt road with many design and operational deficiencies.

In 1993, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Forest Service and Caltrans (which together form the Program Agencies for road projects on Public Lands, including National Forests) recommended the project be scoped as a guide for future programming decisions. The County committed to funding the environmental documentation for the project in 2000. As a result, the project was included in the Federal Lands Highway Program with a cap of \$ 10,000,000 in construction funding in fiscal year 2005. The total project cost was estimated to

Departmental Concurrence

George A. Johnson

George A. Johnson
Director of Transportation

GAJ:mz

FINANCIAL DATA	Current F.Y. Total Cost:	\$ NA	In Current Year Budget:	NA
	Current F.Y. Net County Cost:	\$ NA	Budget Adjustment:	NA
	Annual Net County Cost:	\$ NA	For Fiscal Year:	NA
SOURCE OF FUNDS:				Positions To Be Deleted Per A-30 <input type="checkbox"/>
				Requires 4/5 Vote <input type="checkbox"/>

C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION: **APPROVE**

County Executive Office Signature *Bronda King*

Policy
 Policy
 Consent
 Consent
 Dep't Recomm.:
 Per Exec. Ofc.:

Prev. Agn. Ref. | **District: 3** | **Agenda Number:**

**ATTACHMENTS FILED
WITH THE CLERK OF THE BOARD**

3.38

be \$12,000,000 and the County was expected to fund the additional \$ 2,000,000 to complete the project.

Preparation of the EIS/EIR and preliminary design began in 2000, with the FHWA, the Forest Service and Transportation as team members. Public scoping meetings were held in January of 2001 in Anza and Valle Vista.

The Draft EIS/EIR was circulated for public comment from August 20 – November 1, 2004. Letters were received from 2 area residents in support. Letters in opposition were received from 16 area residents and organizations. Over 300 fax and email letters in opposition were received. Some of these letters came from people in the Hemet/Anza/Idyllwild area; many came from other locations in California and beyond. Letters requesting significant additional revisions to the DEIS/DEIR came from agencies such as the Forest Service, the National Park Service, the Fish & Wildlife Service and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Public meetings were on September 14 and 15, 2004 in Anza and Valle Vista, with comments received from 11 individuals in support, 21 in opposition and 9 neutral.

CURRENT STATUS:

The support of the Forest Service for the project is crucial. The Forest Service was a member of the project team and attended all meetings and reviewed all documentation. However, the Forest Service submitted 299 comments on the DEIS/DEIR and requested significant revisions to the analysis in the DEIS/DEIR. To address the Forest Service comments would require preparation of a new DEIS/DEIR and detailed study of areas outside of the project limits, at an estimated cost of \$1,000,000. This is in addition to the \$800,000 costs to prepare the DEIS/DEIR that have been funded by Third District Developer Mitigation Funds.

The Transportation Department has now been advised by the FHWA (see attached letter from FHWA dated 2/14/05) that the cost of constructing the project would rise from the \$12,000,000 estimated by FHWA in 2001 to \$21,700,000. Since the Program Agencies have capped the funding at the \$10,000,000 previously committed, FHWA will not consider recommending an increase in funding to the Program Agencies due to the low traffic volumes that exist now and that are projected to occur in the future. This would leave the County to fund a total of \$12,700,000 (\$11,700,000 plus \$1,000,000 for environmental costs).

SUMMARY:

This project began as a 3 way effort between the Forest Service, FHWA and the County. However, the Forest Service no longer has the same level of support for the project. The FHWA also does not support increasing the funding levels for the project. In order for the project to proceed to complete the environmental process, the Forest Service would have to take the lead on the project.

Public comments on the project are overall unfavorable.

The Transportation Department sees no way to fund the \$12,700,000 shortfall. General road funds are not appropriate for use on this road due to low traffic volumes. With the stoppage of work recommended herein, the \$10,000,000 previously committed for construction of the project will be allocated to another Public Lands project by the FHWA, Forest Service and Caltrans.