



Staff Report

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**File #:** 24-0088

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**REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION**

**DATE:** 02/07/2024

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

**FROM:** Public Works Department

**SUBJECT:**  
PROPOSED RIVERSIDE COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION TRAFFIC RELIEF PLAN

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

This staff report provides information on the proposed Riverside County Transportation Commission 2024 Traffic Relief Plan.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

**That the City Council** receives and files a presentation on the proposed Riverside County Transportation Commission Traffic Relief Plan.

**BACKGROUND & HISTORY:**

In May 2020, the Riverside County Transportation Commission ("RCTC") adopted the Traffic Relief Plan ("Plan"), a transportation infrastructure planning and funding strategy for Riverside County residents. The Plan was developed over a years-long public and community engagement effort amongst Riverside County residents, its leaders, and local stakeholder groups to identify solutions to fund a backlog of transportation improvements and to conceptualize the future transportation and mobility needs to support the County's growing population and economy. As RCTC finalized its evaluation on how to fund the Plan, including a potential ballot measure before Riverside County voters in the 2020 general election, the COVID-19 public health challenged public outreach and education activities and created economic uncertainty. As a result, RCTC decided not to move forward with a funding strategy in 2020, but did approve the Plan.

In February 2023, RCTC reengaged the discussion on an updated Traffic Relief Plan ("TRP") and how to fund the updated TRP. Discussions included the need for transportation funding to keep up with population growth, adjustment to new State transportation policies, and the ease of traffic and congestion burden felt by many Riverside County Residents. As a result, RCTC directed its staff to

review and update the TRP with new projects and to reflect any cost, funding, and policy changes since its original adoption.

A Draft Update to the Traffic Relief Plan was approved during the RCTC Meeting of October 11, 2023. The draft updates maintain the Commission's vision, values, and long-term transportation priorities adopted in 2020 while maintaining Riverside County residents' requirements for accountability, transparency, equity, and balance.

The TRP maintains the three geographic subregions identified in 1989 and 2002 Measure A expenditure plans. Additionally, the TRP ensures that revenues raised for the Plan in each subregion remain there and cannot be moved to other parts of the county. These include:

- Western Riverside County (Riverside and Corona areas, Moreno Valley and Perris areas, Hemet-San Jacinto Valley, San Gorgonio Pass, and Temecula-Murrieta-Lake Elsinore areas)
- Coachella Valley
- Palo Verde Valley (Blythe area)

The draft updates to the TRP are intended to reflect new information related to project costs, policy changes, and funding availability. The TRP represents billions of dollars in investment in transportation infrastructure for all transportation modes and services. To help deliver these projects, the TRP funding plan proposes a new 1 percent sales tax. For Corona, this would increase the local sales tax to 9.75%. The proposed 1 percent sales tax is estimated to generate \$25 billion over a 30-year funding period. The approximate distribution of these funds among the geographic subregions includes:

- \$20 billion in Western Riverside County
- \$5 billion in Coachella Valley
- \$100 million in Palo Verde Valley

The TRP includes eight investment types. In Western Riverside County, a specific percentage of funding is reserved for each investment type, with several sub-types, and the Commission as the decision-making authority for most funds. For Western Riverside County, only seven of the eight categories apply to the region, and the percentages allocated in the proposed Traffic Relief Plan are as follows:

- Safe Streets and Roads (8%)
- Highways (25%)
- Public Transportation (25%)
- Regional Connections (12%)
- Commuter Assistance (2%)
- Active Transportation (3%)
- Environmental Mitigation (25%)
- Flood and Blowsand (not applicable)

The Safe Streets and Roads investment category is where the City of Corona will receive a share of

funds for safety improvements to local streets and roads and pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Through RCTC's current Measure A half-cent regional sales tax, all 29% is allocated for Local Streets & Roads distributed by formula based upon population and taxable sales, which equates to approximately \$6 million received annually.

Regional Arterials projects receive a 9% allocation to be distributed per RCTC's discretion. Through RCTC's latest competitive Regional Arterial Call for Projects bi-annual grant program, the City was selected to receive almost \$8 million toward the City's Ontario Avenue Widening at I-15 project.

As currently proposed by RCTC's RTP funding plan, the City of Corona would receive direct funding of 4% (estimated at \$1.7 million) toward its local streets and roads. The remaining half would be for major regional or arterial projects allocated by RCTC.

The City of Riverside sent a letter to RCTC last month and proposed the following allocations for its funding plan:

- Safe Streets and Roads - Increase to 20% (with full 20% direct allocation)
- Highway - 25% (no change)
- Public Transportation - Reduce to 20%
- Regional Connections -12% (no change)
- Commuter Assistance - Reduce to 0% and include in Highway allocation
- Active Transportation - 3% (propose as a direct allocation for agencies)
- Environmental Mitigation - Reduce to 20%

City staff has no objection to the proposal provided by the City of Riverside. The total direct allocation to the City would increase from 4% to 23%, 20% from the Safe Streets and Roads, and 3% from the Active Transportation investment category. Providing full allocation to the City allows for complete discretion over the funds used for the local streets and roads and the regional arterial projects within the City. Some regional projects that funding could be applied towards include the I-15/Ontario Interchange, Magnolia Street Widening at Temescal Creek Channel, Railroad Grade Separation at Railroad Street, and widening remaining portions of Railroad Street from 2-4 lanes.

The City would have more opportunities to invest in safety projects in both local and regional arterials, such as installing raised median on Hidden Valley Parkway, Lincoln, and 6<sup>th</sup> Street, installing traffic signals where needed, and providing facilities for alternative transportation with more bike lanes, trail access, and provide accessibility through the Americans with Disability Act. Currently, the City must compete for not only federal and state funding but also RCTC's regional programs through SB-1 Article 3, Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Program, or its call for projects through its Regional Arterials program that is competitive and offered every other year.

**ANALYSIS:**

Tonight's presentation provides the opportunity for the City Council to get more familiar with RCTC's proposed TRP and associated funding plan. This is in preparation for RCTC staff's presentation to the City Council at its March 6, 2024, meeting. After having the opportunity to hear from RCTC and ask questions, the City Council will have the opportunity to discuss its position at a future City

Council Meeting. RCTC is scheduled to vote on the proposed TRP at its meeting in April and the proposed tax increase at its meeting in June.

Staff proposes that the City Council think about the following four options when hearing the presentation tonight by City staff and March 6, 2024, by RCTC staff.

1. Support the TRP and its funding plan
2. Support the TRP and funding plan with Amendments
3. Oppose the TRP and its funding plan
4. Take no position/stay neutral

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

There is no financial impact associated with the recommended action.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Action (CEQA), as the action is not a "project" as defined by CEQA (PRC Section 21065 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15378), guidelines which define a "project" as the whole of an action, which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or reasonable foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, and that is an activity directly undertaken by any public agency including public works construction and related activities. This action involves a presentation of a Draft Traffic Relief Plan by the Riverside County Transportation Commission. Therefore, no environmental analysis is required.

**PREPARED BY:** SAVAT KHAMPHOU, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

**Attachments:**

1. Exhibit 1 - Presentation
2. Exhibit 2 - City of Riverside letter to RCTC