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# ENVIRONMENTAL



# NEWSLETTER

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Environmental Division, California Department of Transportation

## PLANNING IN CALTRANS!

### VIEW FROM THE TOP

*At the Senior Forum Director James van Loben Sels outlined his vision of the role of planning in Caltrans. The following is a quick glimpse of that vision.*

The passage of ISTEA required states to develop a statewide transportation plan. One of the Director's first tasks was to develop and nurture implementation of the legislation. The plan is important to ensure proposed projects meet long-term infrastructure and operational needs. The Blueprint Legislation already provided a step towards building a comprehensive system plan. The first California Transportation Plan (CTP) will be broad brush and built upon the more detailed local and regional plans. The CTP is intended to be a "living document" which is periodically reviewed and updated. It sets the course for creating the program, and the program drives the projects. The CTP may help us define concepts we are not considering today, but perhaps should be considering.

We are entering a new era that challenges the State to expand and enhance the movement of people, goods, services and information using a variety of modes. Historically, Caltrans built and operated highways in terms of capacity for moving cars and trucks. The focus has been broadened as we look at changes in California's economy and businesses. There will be a major thrust in goods movement. We are in competition for trade and require good planning of infrastructure to enhance the movement of goods around the state, and in and out of the state by trucks, trains, ships and airplanes. We need to understand these modes and facilitate them.

We have new planning roles to determine the best ways we can work with others in improving the movement of people, goods, services and information. We are creating a new role in transit by expanding and enhancing the intercity rail system, and will be instrumental in providing high speed ground transportation.

Caltrans must assume leadership in developing an integrated transportation system. To facilitate our role in other areas of transportation beyond the traditional highway development work, planners are learning how to establish partnerships with regional and local governments. Nothing gets built or decided upon without partnerships. Planners need to work together with other districts, regional and local governments and all the other players.

Our agency has a tendency to move forward on project implementation differently than the way the laws dictate. We tend to begin the environmental process after we have decided on the solution. Instead we should start with the problem. Look at alternatives and their environmental consequences. Weigh the pluses and minuses and then decide on a solution. It is important to perform a true alternatives analysis at the front end of project development. This involves preparing, and obtaining agreement upon, a tier I environmental document. At the next level, a more detailed environmental study could be performed to assess the project for programming purposes, and finally, a project level of detail could be performed. This way we may be able to avoid having to "re-visit" issues as projects develop. For this process to work we will probably need legislation since it is difficult to have the various factions involved with the project hold to their agreements as the players change.

The key to successful project implementation is to make sure that the environmental analysis and decisionmaking for the alternative analysis is done in front of the process. We need to do planning with an **Planning**, *continued on back page.*

## SPECIAL CASE STRATEGY FOR SECTION 106 COMPLIANCE

*Excerpted, with the author's permission, from "New Strategy for Section 106 Clearance" by Janet Pape, District 4, in the Society for California Archaeology Newsletter, July 1993.*

The Loma Prieta earthquake inspired the development of an alternative method for Section 106 considerations for replacement of Route 480 in San Francisco. The roadway connects downtown San Francisco to I-80 south and west and east to the Bay Bridge between San Francisco and Oakland. It covers an area seven-tenths of a mile long through one of the oldest inhabited sections of San Francisco. Initial studies revealed prehistoric and historic archaeological resources, including the remains of gold rush period buildings, camps, sunken ships, industries dating to the 1860s, boarding houses, and various domestic sites.

Demolition and rebuilding of the structure was scheduled to begin in the fall of 1992. Use of federal emergency relief funds required compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The compressed project schedule, however, posed a problem in meeting all the Section 106 requirements. In addition, many of the sites were located under twenty feet of fill or underneath a layer of concrete and the collapsed remains of the freeway. District 4 developed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that was able to eliminate the lengthy step-by-step consultation process between FHWA, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP). The primary stipulations in the MOA covered establishing a historical context, developing a treatment plan for historic properties, compressing the identification, evaluation and data recovery stages of the process into a single operation, and providing for unanticipated discoveries.

The Treatment Plan required extensive background research and the development of a top quality research design. Archaeological studies were contracted to Sonoma State University. With this approach, Section 106 compliance was achieved in a total of three months--a record for District 4. The time and cost efficiency achieved in merging archaeological testing and data recovery may be of interest to those involved in projects with similar construction constraints, and is worth examining.

For more information and details of the MOA or Treatment Plan, call Janet Pape, District 4, at (510) 286-9697.

## COOPERATIVE TREE-LOSS MITIGATION

*Material for this article was supplied by Larry Fagot, District 11 Landscape Architect, who donated 200 hours of his own time to set up the program.*

The Landscape Architecture Branch in District 11 established an innovative mitigation partnership, when Albertson's built a store in Ramona that caused the loss of 18 eucalyptus trees from a scenic resource--a colonnade lining the street. Now, 72 trees will be planted and maintained in perpetuity in the community.

San Diego County was the lead agency; Caltrans got involved through the issuance of an encroachment permit. Replacement for the loss was to be at a ratio of four to one. At a value of \$500 per tree, the mitigation cost for each was \$2000. To assure that the trees got perpetual care and maintenance, Caltrans aided in the establishment of a non-profit corporation, the Tree Conservancy. Its purpose is to administer an endowment to fund the preservation, stewardship, replacement and new planting of trees and native vegetation in the San Diego County area. The Tree Conservancy holds deposited funds and gives grants to foster partnerships with government, business, professional organizations, civic groups, and individuals to develop tree establishment projects to promote sustainable urban and rural forests. Prospective grantees must agree to plant, and care for the trees.

The Ramona Tree Trust is the first account to be established in the Tree Conservancy. The account contains the money deposited by Albertson's and other donors. The objective is to use this mechanism for tree trust accounts for other projects in other communities as well. Future development proposals could be required to use it to reduce project impacts.

This mechanism allows the new trees to be planted off of the project site while assuring that they are always maintained. The community does not have to tax itself for long-term tree maintenance. The funds stay in the community. The program allows groups to get involved in enhancing their community and participation builds a sense of community pride.

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The establishment of a committee to help enhance a project after the release of the final environmental document is an unprecedented step. The committee's work resulted in a greater commitment to mitigating impacts and minimizing harm to historic resources.