



To: Board of Directors

From: Debra L. Hale, Executive Director

Date: January 27, 2021

Subject: Focus on the Future – 2020 Virtual Conference

The Self- Help Counties Coalition is the organization that represents all of the 25 counties with voter-approved local transportation sales taxes. As noted on their website:

*SHCC member agencies are dedicated to keeping the faith of the voting public who provide the authority and the funding so that we may deliver the priority transportation projects Californians depend upon everyday. SHCC as an organization is dedicated to ensuring sound public policy so that the State of California can meet our transportation infrastructure needs. SHCC works closely with the California Transportation Commission, the California Department of Transportation, elected officials as well as other public and private sector interests.*

Each year, the Coalition holds a *Focus on the Future* conference, which is an opportunity to learn best practices, share information on our projects and programs with state transportation officials, and build relationships with state leaders, other sales tax agencies and members of the consultant community. This year's conference, on November 16 – 17, went virtual and was surprisingly successful.

Monterey County was well-represented in the conference. Executive Director Hale served on the panel of CEOs and was able to share information on our 2020 Measure X-funded projects, including: the King City Operations facility, the SURF! Highway 1 Busway, the Fort Ord Regional Trail and Greenway, the Highway 68 Scenic Corridor. Deputy Executive Director Muck served on the Deputy Director's panel and shared information on the Highway 156/Castroville Boulevard improvements, the challenges with remote Safe Routes to Schools education, and the opportunity provided by increasing popularity of e-bikes. Monterey Traffic Engineer Andrea Renny presented information on the Fremont Avenue Rehabilitation and Median Bike lanes as part of the panel on Innovations in Active Transportation. Principal Planner Mike Zeller also attended the conference.

Some of the key information and ideas from the conference are:

- State revenues for 2020/21 are forecast to be \$1.9 billion (+20%) less than the prior year.
- Maintenance of Effort requirements for cities and counties (which all sales tax measure have) will be challenging next year, and most agencies will take the lead from the state and its SB 1 maintenance of effort requirements.
- Federal infrastructure legislation is viewed as a likelihood in 2021; transportation agencies should be prepared to make specific “asks” for that legislation. The Biden transportation plan at present emphasizes rail service and zero emission vehicles.
- The California Transportation Commission is asking the Legislature to increase the Active Transportation Program funding given the high demand (almost 6 times as many applications as funding).
- Contra Costa Transportation Agency has implemented a paperless policy for project delivery that extends from requests for bids through the construction process. These paperless procedures have provided efficiencies that have been particularly beneficial during the telework environment.
- Zero Emission rail cars (so called “multiple units”) are currently in design for San Bernardino County and will provide a new, flexible way to meet the state’s requirements for lower passenger volume corridors.
- Agencies have successfully pivoted their outreach away from in-person meetings and in some cases have in fact expanded public involvement with: short Facebook or Instagram videos, virtual public meetings, targeted virtual Spanish-language presentations, email newsletters, postcards or door hangers, and mobile-device friendly webpages.
- The Federal Highway Administration has issued a “Notice of Enforcement Discretion” under the COVID-19 emergency order which relaxes the federal restriction on vending and food sales at highway rest stops. California has issued an executive order allowing food trucks to operate at rest stops.
- Monterey-Salinas Transits contactless fare demonstration program was featured in Caltrans Director Toks Omishakin’s presentation as an innovative way to simplify transit by removing the need for separate passes or tickets.