



HUMBOLDT COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS

Regional Transportation Planning Agency
Humboldt County Local Transportation Authority
Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies

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AGENDA ITEM 9c
HCAOG Board Meeting
October 21, 2021

DATE: October 13, 2021
TO: HCAOG Policy Advisory Committee (PAC)
FROM: Stevie Luther, Associate Regional Planner
SUBJECT: **Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE) Draft Strategic Plan**

STAFF REPORT

Contents:

- Staff's Recommended Action
- Staff Summary
- Draft SAFE Strategic Plan

Staff's Recommended Action:

1. Introduce the item as an action item;
2. Allow staff to present the item;
3. Receive public comment;
4. Direct staff as necessary or consider making the motion,
"I move that the PAC recommend that the HCAOG Board, acting in its capacity as the Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies, approve the SAFE Strategic Plan."

Staff Summary:

The SAFE Strategic Plan provides a blueprint for the financial and operational management of the highway call box program. The plan lays out near-term goals for SAFE, which include:

1. Establish a threshold to determine which call boxes are underutilized and identify which, if any, are to be removed or relocated.
2. Complete ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) and network upgrade improvements for all call boxes.
3. Evaluate call box requests and determine how many, and what type, of additional call boxes can be sustainably supported based on SAFE financial projections.
4. Install call boxes at new locations.
5. Plan for supplemental patrols.

While even one call can provide vital assistance to motorists, the prevalence of personal cell phones and proximity of call boxes to urban areas with easy access to emergency services means that some call boxes are underutilized. The materials can be repurposed and relocated to a different location on highways with less reliable cell coverage in a more remote area. Staff has identified seven call boxes where zero calls were made in four of the last six years. Staff is recommending these boxes be relocated and upfitted with satellite call box technology.

The call boxes proposed for relocation are:

- NB Alderpoint, MM 12, 101-0120
- SB Alderpoint, MM 12, 101-0121
- SB 101 S of Barkdull Road, MM 42.6, 101-0425
- SB Myers Flat, MM 28, 101-0281
- SB Rio Dell, MM 52.5; 101-0525
- NB Rio Dell, MM 52.5; 101-0526
- NB Chapman's Gem Store, MM 56; 101-0560

The plan identifies a strategy for expanding the call box program, with Highway 36, Highway 96, and Bald Hills Road identified as locations in need of motorist aid services. The financial plan plugs in an estimate of the number of call boxes needed and the cost of materials for new or refurbished materials. The cost of materials for a new satellite call box is \$11,150, while the cost of reutilizing existing call box materials and upgrading them with satellite gear is \$3,725. Each satellite call box also has an annual \$800 satellite phone service cost, plus higher fees per minute of call time. The financial plan budgets for five new satellite callboxes, seven relocated and upfitted satellite call boxes, and up to 13 new cellular call boxes. The plan budgets for up to \$100,000 per year for the CHP contract. After the initial high upfront costs to complete the ADA and 4G upgrades, and implement the call box relocation/expansion, the program's estimated annual cost (including the CHP contract) would be \$189,000 while the annual income is estimated at \$136,000. Given the high starting balance of approximately \$1.5 million, the HCSAFE program is projected to be able to run sustainably for the next twenty years.

This is an action item. The TAC reviewed the SAFE Strategic Plan and recommended approval. Recommendations from the TAC were incorporated into the plan by setting aside funds to use for signage as part of the highway motorist aid program. Staff is asking the PAC to make a motion recommending the HCAOG Board approve the SAFE Strategic Plan with any suggested changes incorporated.