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## Caltrans recommends \$2.2 billion in bond money for Southern California freeways

L.A. County tops the list, with \$1.5 billion recommended. Orange County is recommended for \$405 million in funds

By David Reyes and Jean Guccione

Times Staff Writers

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Caltrans on Monday recommended that several Southern California counties receive more than \$2.2 billion from part of the governor's infrastructure bond to widen freeways and ease congestion.

Orange County had sought \$618 million from the state to help pay for projects on the 405, 22 and 91 freeways. The California Department of Transportation recommended \$405 million in state funds.

As expected, Los Angeles County headed the list of Caltrans recommendations, with \$1.5 billion in requests, down from 1.7 billion sought by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority for various projects.

The endorsements add weight to county requests for bond money, though the final decision rests with the California Transportation Commission when it meets in February.

"Southern California has fared very well in this draft list," said Rose Melgosa, a spokeswoman for the Caltrans district serving Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

In addition to seeking bond money to eliminate the bottleneck on the Santa Ana Freeway at the Los Angeles-Orange County line, Caltrans also endorsed \$730 million to build a northbound carpool lane on the 405 Freeway between the Ventura and Santa Monica freeways.

Adding a carpool lane on the Ventura Freeway was not recommended for funding, an MTA spokesman said.

Caltrans also recommends construction of a southbound carpool lane on the 101 Freeway for nearly 40 miles in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties.

The Caltrans decisions affect more than \$19 billion in requests for bond money made by counties statewide. Under the bond's provisions, a pool of \$6.1 billion statewide was made available on a competitive basis.

Art Leahy, Orange County Transportation Authority chief executive, announced the recommended allocation for Orange County at an OCTA board meeting Monday.

Widening the 91 Freeway and constructing carpool connectors for the 405 Freeway top Orange County's project list.

To qualify for state funds, OCTA had to rank its projects, favoring those far along in the environmental phase so

they could be done by 2012 under terms of the bond, meaning that some projects could not be considered, said Kia Mortazavi, OCTA's director of strategic planning.

Although Caltrans pared what Orange County transportation officials had submitted, OCTA and other transportation agencies will attend the Feb. 28 commission meeting to argue for more funding.

In Riverside County, top projects — including a carpool lane on the 91 Freeway from Adams Street to the interchange of the 215, 60 and 91 freeways, and widening the 215 from Interstate 15 to Scott Road — were recommended for funding.

"We're pleased with the initial assessment made by Caltrans staff," said Anne Mayer, Riverside County Transportation Commission deputy executive director. "Of course, we would like to see more money, but this is a finite program."

Caltrans also recommended funding the interchange at the 71 and 91 freeways, Mayer said, adding that Riverside County commissioners are expected to vote on the final projects Wednesday.

In addition to the widening of the Santa Ana Freeway between Interstate 605 and the Orange County line, Caltrans recommended funding the addition of a northbound carpool lane on the San Diego Freeway, construction of carpool lanes on the San Bernardino Freeway, and the expansion of California 138 in the Palmdale-Lancaster area.

"Los Angeles County did very well," said David Yale, director of regional planning for the MTA. "We knew that proposing a larger list was not productive."

Indeed, the state agency did not endorse one of the MTA's smaller requests: \$73 million to build carpool lanes on the Golden State Freeway between the Hollywood Freeway and the 134 Freeway in the San Fernando Valley.

MTA could petition the transportation commission directly to finance that project or seek other funding, Yale said.

Caltrans also declined to make a separate bid at Los Angeles County's request for a transportation system to control the flow of traffic onto the freeways, Yale said. Instead, the state agency is asking the commission for a pot of \$150 million for such projects that Caltrans would distribute statewide.

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Transportation requests

Caltrans drafted a list Monday earmarking \$636.6 million from funds to be collected from Proposition 1B for road projects in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. The list will be submitted to the California Transportation Commission, which will approve a final statewide list Feb. 28.

Projects

215 Freeway: Widening from Interstate 15 to Scott Road - \$56.0 Proposed funding (in millions of dollars)

91 Freeway: 71/91 interchange and connector - 99.0

Create carpool lanes from Adams Street to 60/91/215 - 161.5

Interstate 15: Phase 2 to complete widening from Victorville to Barstow - 46.4

Interstate 10: Widen exit ramps, add auxiliary lane in Fontana - 30.3

Build westbound mixed-flow lanes in Redlands and Yucaipa - 38.2

Interstate 215: Build carpool lanes, mixed-flow lanes, other improvements from Interstate 10 to Interstate 210 in San Bernardino - 111.7

State Route 58: Redesign and widen to four-lane expressway from Valley View Drive to Agate Road near Hinkley - 93.6

Total - \$636.7

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Source: Caltrans

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