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Dec. 7, 2006- Bass Lake carpool lane on fast track

By Roger Phelps, Democrat staff writer

Landing \$20 million to help install carpool lanes on U.S. Highway 50 in El Dorado County is the aim of county transportation planners and state Department of Transportation officials.

To get in line for monetary assistance from California's special anti-gridlock fund - called the Corridor Mobility Improvement Account - officials will need to make formal recommendation to state transportation commissioners by the middle of next month that widening a stretch of Highway 50 from El Dorado Hills Boulevard to the vicinity of Bass Lake Road become a priority project for state carpool-lane spending. El Dorado County Transportation Commission members today are expected to make such a recommendation. The gridlock fund was approved by voters in November as part of Proposition 1B

"EDCTC has successfully garnered support from Caltrans, District 3, to jointly nominate the Phase 1 U.S. 50 HOV Lane Project for \$20 million in Corridor Mobility Improvement Account funding," agency Executive Director Kathryn Mathews wrote in a report to commissioners.

The project meets guidelines set by the California Transportation Commission, Mathews wrote.

According to a state report, to include a project in the CMIA program, the state commission must find that it "improves mobility in a high-congestion corridor by improving travel times or reducing the number of daily vehicle hours of delay, improves the connectivity of the state highway system between rural, suburban, and urban areas, or improves the operation or safety of a highway or road segment."

The state Transportation Commission will adopt the CMIA program of projects at its February 2007 meeting. In addition to the hoped-for \$20 million from the state anti-gridlock fund, building El Dorado Hills-Bass Lake Grade carpool lanes in each direction on Highway 50 will also require \$19.5 million in locally controlled transportation funding, Mathews reported.

For the county, the El Dorado Hills-Bass Lake Road high-occupancy vehicle lane project is one of three pieces in plans to get an extra lane on U.S. 50 from the Sacramento County line to beyond Shingle Springs, near a planned freeway interchange to serve a tribal casino in the area, said Director Richard Shepard of the county Department of Transportation.

For the El Dorado Hills-Bass Lake Road stretch, if the money lines up, the earliest a construction contract could be let is around the end of summer 2007, Shepard said.

"We're actively engaged in designing the project, and we're about 60 percent done," he said.

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