

October 19, 2011

To: Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission

1523 Pacific Avenue

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Re: Prioritization of Transportation Projects in Santa Cruz County

Dear Commissioners:

I reside in Aptos, California with my family. Our sons are 6th generation County residents. We travel via automobile, bike and pedestrian modes. Over the years, I have watched transportation in the County become more and more impacted as the economy and populace grew. The consequence of more people on the roads is of course less efficiency. Our family has stopped all commute activity basically past 41st Avenue unless it is done between the hours of say 10 and 1. We do not shop in Santa Cruz. We have our car serviced at Soquel Drive near Dominican, but only because it is right off the freeway. The only shopping we do in Santa Cruz is at Costco and then only at 10 AM. We spend our money shopping in Capitola, Aptos and Watsonville. Even Sand City and Monterey offer an easy commute (not to mention major retailers) for items we may need. My wife and I are registered voters. We both work in the County and drive as part of our jobs. My wife works in Scotts Valley and schedules her work appointments so that she is south of Soquel Drive no later than 3 PM. I fortunately work in Watsonville and enjoy a commute of 7 minutes at 65 mph.

It has been decades since any substantive improvements have been made to Highway One. The most recent project at the Fishhook provides evidence to any lay person that if one provides greater capacity, higher throughput at reasonable speeds is the result. It is evident to most persons that when the choke point is encountered (now just past Morrissey), vehicles slow and travel becomes inefficient.

I have no expectations of any further improvements to Highway One. If they come to fruition, I will be pleasantly surprised. I may even change my commute patterns and shop in Santa Cruz. I know that it has a lot to offer. I just don't have the time to waste to get there.

As the Commission considers yet again the priority of transportation projects, it might ask itself the following questions.

1. Should a major thoroughfare through the County provide for safe and expedient travel for life safety vehicles?
2. Do automobiles run more efficiently and produce less pollution when idling or when moving at reasonable speed?

3. If the major thoroughfare through the County is inefficient, do people just stop driving or do they find an alternative route on surface streets?
4. If they do take surface streets, does that make neighborhoods more or less safe for bicyclists and pedestrians?
5. If there are more cars on surface streets, does that result in more or less degradation of those roads?
6. Is it important that people not be limited in their economic or other commute choices because a thoroughfare is inefficient?
7. Should a thoroughfare provide lanes dedicated to high occupancy vehicles and mass transit to further increase throughput?
8. Can you name another County that has not improved a major thoroughfare in the last 20 years?
9. What was the effect of that inaction?
10. If the main thoroughfare were improved, would that provide more or less jobs?
11. If the main thoroughfare were efficient, would people spend more or less money in the County, or better yet, in different parts of the County?

I am under no illusions that the prioritization of projects is a daunting exercise. Does one spend limited funds on existing infrastructure or plan for the future? I would suggest that doing nothing or maintaining antiquated infrastructure is akin to repairing an original Macintosh computer when investing in an i-Pad makes so much more sense. Structural improvement breeds efficiency and economic success.

As I said, my sons are 6th generation residents of the County. In the 1930's my grandfather, who was an apple farmer in Watsonville, hauled sand and gravel from the Corralitos Creek up on to what was then the Santa Cruz Highway (now Freedom Blvd, perhaps named because it allowed for free travel), to provide an improved thoroughfare for the movement of people and products. Imagine the improvement in getting apples to market on a smooth road as opposed to dragging a loaded wagon through the mud.

I would posit that the same magnitude of improvements my grandfather helped initiate on the Santa Cruz Highway faces the Commission at this time. It is approaching a generation in duration that our main thoroughfare has not been improved. It is beyond me (and many I speak with) as to why this has been allowed to occur. I sincerely hope that I will not have to wait for the 7th generation of my family to enjoy an improved transportation thoroughfare through the County and that the Commission will prioritize its efforts to make that happen.

Sincerely,

Christopher S. Mann



October 19, 2011

Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission
1523 Pacific Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95060



Reference: Prioritization of Transportation Projects for Santa Cruz County

Dear Commissioners:

Graniterock is a 111 year-old provider of high-quality construction materials and services headquartered in Watsonville. Our customer base stretches from Monterey to San Francisco and beyond. About 125 of our Team Members live in Santa Cruz County and commute to work at our Corporate Offices or our other twenty-six Branch operation locations.

Our industry is inextricably linked to the provision of safe and efficient infrastructure systems for the movement of goods and people. As the Commission considers such projects, Graniterock would encourage the Commission to continue to give priority to the improvement of Highway 1. As you know, Highway 1 is the main (really the only) artery allowing for the transportation of both goods and people through the County. Roadway capacity has not been increased for decades and today's traffic conditions have made the road nearly impassable during extended periods of time each day.

Roadway planning that the community needs is of maximum import for safety, economic efficiency, and energy efficiency factors. We further understand that not all projects in this day and age, while worthy of funding, can generate or ultimately procure the funds necessary for their implementation. We believe that all modes of transportation are important and that when each is properly prioritized, transportation on all types (highway, local roads, mass transit, alternative transit, bicycle, pedestrian and others) make for an efficient, sustainable and fully-integrated transportation system. However, we believe that Highway 1 improvement should continue to receive the Commission's highest level of support and effort in order to address the single most important, highly used component of our County's transportation system – Highway 1.

I believe the vast majority of Santa Cruz County residents support your efforts to expand the capacity of Highway 1. Highway 1 conditions, as they have been allowed to exist today, do not support job creation and economic opportunity for Santa Cruz County residents who have suffered from high unemployment rates prior to the current recession.

- Monterey County
- San Benito County
- San Mateo County
- Santa Clara County
- Santa Cruz County
- Alameda County
- City and County of San Francisco

Sincerely,
Graniterock

Bruce W. Woolpert
President & CEO

**Material Supplier/ Engineering Contractor
License #22**



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Harvey Nickelson
Dave Regan

October 18, 2011

Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission
1523 Pacific Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Re: Prioritization of Transportation Projects for Santa Cruz County – Regular Agenda Item 5

Dear Commissioners:

The Santa Cruz County Business Council is a non-profit organization dedicated to the enhancement of public – private partnerships. Our member companies employ nearly 20,000 individuals and rely on the efficient movement of products, services and people across our County and beyond.

As the Commission considers the prioritization of upcoming projects, the SCCBC would encourage it to continue to prioritize the improvement of Highway One.

Highway One is the main artery allowing for transportation of goods and people through the county. Its efficiency is of maximum import for safety, economic efficiency, energy efficiency and maximum use of commute time.

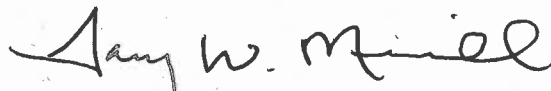
We are well aware of the overall economic situation our area faces and are not immune to its challenges. We further understand that not all projects in this day and age, while worthy of funding, can generate or ultimately procure the funds necessary for their implementation. We believe that all modes of transportation are important and that properly assembled, transportation on all types of thoroughways (highway, local roads, mass transit, alternative transit, bicycle, pedestrian and others) makes for an efficient, sustainable and fully integrated transportation model. We believe that Highway One improvement, however, should continue to receive the Commissions highest level of support and effort in order to provide the highest quality, most efficient and safest major arterial to the residents and visitors and commuters within and through our County that can be achieved.

The business community relies on the safe, efficient and timely flow of its products and people. We look forward to supporting your efforts to achieve those goals.

Sincerely,


Ted Burke
Co-Chair


Chris Mann
Co-Chair


Gary Merrill
Executive Director

From: Stacey Falls [<mailto:staceyffalls@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, August 23, 2011 9:27 AM
To: rlj12@comcast.net
Cc: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Thursday's meeting on highway widening

Dear Commissioner Johnson,

Nowadays, it is easy to feel disenchanted with governmental bureaucracies and politics in general. Sometimes it feels like the electoral process simply boils down to mudslinging between candidates, and important decision making descends into partisan bickering. However, when an elected official starts denigrating the character of constituents, members of the general public with whom they disagree, well, that is really disillusioning.

I spoke at Thursday's meeting of the SCCRTC about why I don't support highway widening. I didn't attack any members of the commission or turn my beliefs into a personal attack, but your rebuttal was to accuse me of lacking empathy. You don't know me. You don't know anything about my personality, and so to question my character is quite offensive. In fact, I am quite compassionate; I feel, deeply, the pain of others, and much of my life is devoted to making the world a better place for everyone who lives here. I believe that you, too, want what is best for your community. We just disagree on what that looks like.

I have countless friends and loved ones who commute long distances every day. I have loved ones and family members who are quite aged, and I certainly don't believe that the solution is for everyone to stop driving and ride their bike. I understand that people hate traffic, and that regularly being stuck in traffic jams diminishes quality of life. I feel immensely for people who have long commutes that keep them from their families or hobbies. I care about them so much that I want REAL solutions, and not a costly, time-consuming, boondoggle with dubious efficacy.

I seriously believe that highway widening is not the solution. Besides costing millions (billions?), the project will take years to complete. In the meantime, Highway 1 will be gridlocked with construction traffic, and when it is finally done, our county will have grown so much that we will still face the same traffic congestion that we do today.

Most people want real, long-term, sustainable, environmentally-sound alternatives. In your comments, you pointed to Eduardo as someone who would suffer if I had my way, but when I talked to Eduardo after the meeting I said, "If you could take a train, if there was one that was reliable and cheap, wouldn't you prefer it?" and he said, "Of course!" He went on to express concerns about the viability of a train, and I agree, a train is a big dream, but, let's be honest, so is this huge highway widening project. (Again, billions of dollars and a decade are needed.) If we are going to dream big, let's dream sustainably.

In the meantime, there are easy and inexpensive things we can do to decrease congestion on Highway 1. For a fraction of the cost of widening the highway, the RTC could work with local businesses to incentivize the staggering of work hours. Commuters with young kids might even appreciate having options to go to work at 7 am, 8am, 9 am or 10 am. It would reduce the burden of child-care costs on working families and would put less traffic on Highway 1 at key commute hours. The RTC could work with the Santa Cruz Metro to install Wi-Fi on all buses, not just the Highway 17 bus, and local business could encourage workers to take the bus or telecommute.

A solution that would benefit the entire county would be to put funds into economic development of South County. Eduardo expressed concern that Watsonville lacks jobs, forcing people to commute north on Highway 1. This is sad for a few reasons, and to diminish the need for commuters and improve the economy of Watsonville, it seems that our local officials should be working on job creation in South County.

We all have to live in this county together. It would obviously be ideal if we could all agree on a positive and productive course of action for transportation policy in the county, but even if we can't it would be great if we could all be civil and polite. Even if we disagree, we have the same aspirations: to make our county the best it can be.

Sincerely
Stacey Falls
120 Walk Circle
Santa Cruz, CA
95060
831-421-9367

From: Reed Welch [<mailto:reedwelch@gmail.com>]

Sent: Thursday, September 22, 2011 5:10 AM

To: info@sccrtc.org

Cc: John Leopold; Ellen Pirie; John J. Presleigh; mark.stone@co.santa-cruz.ca.us; greg.caput@co.santa-cruz.ca.us; bds031@co.santa-cruz.ca.us

Subject: RTC Highway 1 expansion funding - NO!

RTC members,

I am opposed to continued use of funds to widen Hwy 1, since it is fiscally irresponsible, and the first priority for these funds should be to maintain existing local roads and alternate/public transportation. Widening Hwy 1 does none of this!

On another note, why is this not a CA state or Fed project? Isn't that where it belongs? And not sucking funds from local needs?

I recommend that the regional RTC office be dismissed (or reduced in authority) and replaced by the County DPW for road funding, and that locals address state highway needs with state elected officials, so that State highways are maintained by the State!

Maybe I am old school, but believe that existing travel infrastructure must be kept up before spending money on expansions, otherwise how can anything be maintained, since funding is finite. If you want to abandon something, say so....., but do not let others swing in agony....

Maintaining the current road infrastructure will benefit the county by maintaining/improving property values and local businesses. Note that local county roads such as Soquel-San Jose Road, Bear Creek, among others, are everyday commute corridors that are in need of repairs and must be addressed to avoid neglect and possible liability.

Fiscal highlights - it is my understanding that close to \$12M has been spent for the EIR for 1 mile of extension or 10% of the overall project, to extend this to San Andreas Road, with little or no assurance that this will allow construction at projected costs. Spending this much for "paper generation" and not real construction is way out of line. Although not your problem, will ask my elected officials to correct situations like this.

Understand that I am environmentally concerned, but am skeptical of ludicrous amounts spent on generating "paper" as opposed to results.

If I do a back of the envelope calculation to extend Hwy 1 expansion to San Andreas Road (overall project goal), EIR cost will be about \$144M, construction cost another \$600M, cost of disruption might be about \$300M for biz/working people - this is approaching \$1 billion dollars, how do you justify this, and why focused on this versus other alternatives.

What are the alternatives for spending \$1B??

- Alternate traffic access to the Central Coast
- Widening of Hwy 17 to 3 lanes in each direction (doesn't seem practical), what do experts say?

From: John Mertz [<mailto:jmertz@4rbs.com>]

Sent: Monday, September 12, 2011 7:21 AM

To: info@sccrtc.org

Cc: 'John Leopold'; ellen.pirie@co.santa-cruz.ca.us; dpwwweb@co.santa-cruz.ca.us; mark.stone@co.santa-cruz.ca.us; greg.caput@co.santa-cruz.ca.us; bds031@co.santa-cruz.ca.us

Subject: 10 Years of County Road Maintenance for 1 Mile of Expanded Lanes on Highway 1 is NOT a Reasonable Proposal

Sirs,

We must STRONGLY object to your proposal to 'steal' money that has historically been used for local road repair to fund yet another Environmental Impact Review of a project that will be of little or no benefit to the citizens of Santa Cruz County – specifically the Highway 1 Widening Project. According to our county supervisor, John Leopold, "In order to complete the EIR and avoid paying back \$5.5 million to the federal government, the RTC is proposing to use virtually all of the state and federal road dollars over the next ten years to construct one mile of auxiliary lanes between the Soquel Avenue and 41st Avenue exits"

In summary, we object for the following reasons:

- . This project is simply not economically viable and continuing it is fiscally irresponsible. The EIR for this project is so far over budget, and still not finished, that it cannot be saved. And then to spend another \$30 million for yet more paperwork and to add additional lanes to a 1 mile stretch of road that will have little or no positive impact on traffic is an irresponsible waste of our limited resources.
- . This project will probably cause more traffic congestion than it solves.
- . Abandoning maintenance on the county roads will probably open the RTC and the County to charges of negligence and other court actions. Loosing in court would cost much more than what you owe the federal government.
- . The roads in Santa Cruz County are in the worst condition they have ever been in for over 40 years.
- . The roads are beginning to cause serious damage to our cars' suspensions and tires.
- . Some roads are so bad that emergency vehicles may not be able to use them creating the probability that someone will loose their life because of your actions.
- . Should serious injury or loss of life occur because of the lack of road maintenance, the courts would probably hold you at least partially financially responsible.
- . Trading 10 years of road maintenance for 1 mile of expanded lanes is fiscally irresponsible.
- . Growth of viable businesses, adding significantly to the county's tax revenue, in the mountain areas (e.g. wineries) demand better roads to support the influx of tourists.

In 2003 the Highway EIR was originally budgeted at \$6.5 million, but it is still not finished and costs are now closer to \$12 million. Spending more money on this project will simply be throwing good money after bad. And the idea of spending \$30,000,000 to widen Highway 1 for 1 mile is, quite frankly, obscene. It would have almost no impact on congestion, traffic is backed up well past 41st street headed south and the 'fish hook' – well is there anything good anyone can say about the 'fish hook'.

The problem is that the proposed widening will probably make matters worse. If you have ever commuted through Los Gatos on Highway 17, you are familiar with the massive congestion Cal Trans

-----Original Message-----

From: Kathy Handforth [<mailto:kahandforth@cruzio.com>]
Sent: Sunday, September 11, 2011 1:59 PM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Santa Cruz bus

I am wondering if you can help us figure out who to contact regarding the upcoming 9/15/11 bus service changes that deal a 3 strike blow to local working people trying to get home from work. We have tried the metro itself and the board - unresponsive and uninterested.

The route 71 to Santa Cruz is a major use route for working people - there are more jobs in Watsonville and Aptos/Soquel than in Santa Cruz. The metro has removed 2 key return routes IN A ROW between 4 and 5:00 pm. So, an hour is added. Then, the route 35, the 6:30 pm, that connects to the route 71 after the 2 removed routes, is GONE as well. People trying to get home to Scotts Valley and San Lorenzo Valley are supposed to wait the the 7:00 PM bus !!! A three hour commute that will destroy family life, after school events and jobs. NOTE: that route 35 has NOT been removed for the weekend - these changes are only directed at working people. We cannot get anyone to listen and are hoping you can get the word out and suggest others to talk to about this issue.

Thank you

-----Original Message-----

From: Karena Pushnik [<mailto:kpushnik@sccrtc.org>]
Sent: Tuesday, September 13, 2011 11:23 PM
To: kahandforth@cruzio.com
Cc: Erich Friedrich; Angela Aitken; ellen.pirie@co.santa-cruz.ca.us
Subject: FW: Santa Cruz bus

Dear Kathy -

Your email regarding bus service changes was received.

As you noted, the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (Metro) is the entity responsible for overseeing and providing the local bus service. Your comments to the Transit District staff and board are the primary way to request service changes. Your email will be forwarded to Metro staff and the board chair for their consideration.

Unfortunately, funding for Metro's ongoing operations are based on sales tax revenues which have decreased dramatically in the last year. As such, Metro has had to make some tough decisions about how to address this huge hit to their budget. They have had over a dozen public hearings about proposed changes to their bus service and fare structure. Changes to be implemented on 9/15/11 reflect their best effort to minimize the effect of these difficult decisions.

- Karena Pushnik
Senior Transportation Planner/Public Information Coordinator
Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission
1523 Pacific Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Ph: 831.460-3210, f: 831.460-3215, www.sccrtc.org

From: Eric Smith [<mailto:Eric.Smith@elekta.com>]
Sent: Thursday, August 25, 2011 8:18 AM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: Highway 1

I don't know if you've noticed, but highway 1 needs widening. The train tracks are a waste of money.

Thanks,

Eric Smith
Soquel, CA

Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail.

The contents of this e-mail message (including any attachments) are confidential to and are intended to be conveyed for the use of the recipient to whom it is addressed only. If you receive this transmission in error, please notify the sender of this immediately and delete the message from your system. Any distribution, reproduction or use of this message by someone other than recipient is not authorized and may be unlawful.

08/25/11

Dear Eric,

The RTC has secured funding for three projects: Mission Street, Highway 1/17 Interchange and the Morrissey/Soquel Auxiliary Lanes project, the latter of which is scheduled to begin construction as early as February 2012. For more information on the RTC's work to improve Highway 1 please see the newly updated website: <http://sccrtc.org/projects/streets-highways/highway-1-aux-lanes/> .

Thank you for your comments. They will be made available to the Commission for their review.

Please visit the SCCRTC website at www.sccrtc.org for information on the Commission and its activities.

Karena Pushnik
Senior Transportation Planner/Public Information Coordinator

Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission
1523 Pacific Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Ph: 831.460-3210, f: 831.460-3215, www.sccrtc.org