

From: [Rick Longinotti](#)
To: [Regional Transportation Commission](#); thekristenbrown@gmail.com; Felipe.hernandez@santacruzcountyca.gov; Vanessa.quiroz@watsonville.gov; Apedersen@ci.capitola.ca.us; Eduardo.montesino@watsonville.gov; Manu.koenig@santacruzcountyca.gov; Justin.cummings@santacruzcountyca.gov; Andy.Schiffirin@openup@ucsc.edu; Bruce.mcpherson@santacruzcountyca.gov; zach.friend@santacruzcounty.us; rj12@comcast.net; Mitch.Weiss@openup@ucsc.edu
Cc: [REDACTED] [PK Hattis](#); [Kara Meyberg Guzman](#); [REDACTED] [Stephen Baxter](#); [REDACTED] [Max Chun](#)
Subject: Auxiliary lanes are a mistake
Date: Monday, January 29, 2024 10:20:05 AM



Regional Transportation Commission

Re: Item 29, Additional \$1.4 million for design of the State Park Dr. to Freedom Blvd.
Auxiliary Lanes & Rail Trail Project.

Dear Commissioners,

We request that you defer any decision on spending more money on this project until the RTC considers on its agenda the Final Environmental Impact Report, which was published last week. Environmental impact reports are meant to inform decision makers of the alternatives to a project that would accomplish the project's goals at a lower cost to the environment. The RTC never placed the Draft EIR for this project on its agenda. Nor is there any indication at the present time that the RTC intends to consider the Final EIR for this project. We think elected officials should get all the information you need to make good choices.

An important choice for the RTC is whether to spend the estimated \$180 million on a project that the EIR estimates will not improve congestion in the morning northbound commute. Nor will the estimated slight congestion relief in the southbound evening commute last for long before becoming just as congested as current conditions. It is highly likely that even these dismal Caltrans estimates for congestion relief are inflated since Caltrans did not conduct a complete analysis of induced travel (Expanded highways rapidly become congested again due to pent-up demand for travel, shift in travel timing, etc.) In her comments on the Draft EIR, former RTC Executive Director Linda Wilshusen wrote, "Although the EIR/EA states that "The project would improve travel times and reduce traffic delay on State Route 1 [and] the Bus-on-Shoulder feature would increase the use of public transit...", the data in the DEIR/EA itself demonstrates no sustained traffic-relief benefit from this Project. The Project does not accomplish the stated Purpose and Need." If the RTC decides to continue to fund the project without discussing the EIR, it will create the appearance that it doesn't matter to decision makers how poorly the project performs.

The staff report on this item raises another question of whether the Commission is making the important decisions. “Staff is preparing to submit competitive grant applications for the next cycle of SB1 funds”. The grant application will seek funds for the Highway 1 expansion project, as well as valuable bike, pedestrian and transit improvements on Soquel Dr. As you may recall, the last grant application for the auxiliary lanes included these Soquel Dr. and rail corridor improvements and was unsuccessful in the competition for state funding. Apparently RTC staff have decided to repeat the failed strategy of combining the auxiliary lanes with the Soquel Dr. improvements in one grant application. There is no indication that staff plans to allow this consequential decision to be made by the Commission.

The California Transportation Commission does not publish the reasons why its staff recommend against funding certain applications. It seems plausible that the CTC did not consider the auxiliary lanes to score well on its criteria which include reducing vehicle miles traveled. It seems plausible that the CTC staff agreed with CFST that this project is not a “bus-on-shoulder” project such as exists in Minneapolis, Cleveland, etc, since the only portions of the project where buses have a dedicated bus-only lane are at interchanges. The plan calls for buses to travel in the auxiliary lanes with the other traffic for most of the distance. The existing Morrissey to Soquel Dr auxiliary lane is highly congested during the afternoon commute. The proposed project would be more aptly named, “bus-in-traffic.”

We encourage you to agendize the contents of this grant application. Give the Commissioners a chance to suggest alternatives to repeating the failed strategy from the last funding cycle.. We believe that putting the Soquel Dr. bike, pedestrian, rail trail, and transit improvements in a separate grant application will ensure that this worthwhile project does not once again become a casualty of the ill-conceived auxiliary lane project.

In summary, we request:

1.
Vote to defer any additional spending on the project until the Commission and the public has a chance to discuss the EIR.

2.
Insist that the Commission make the decision on the contents of the grant application for state funding.

For more information on why CFST opposes highway expansion, see [Understanding Induced Travel](#) and [How We Got Here](#).

Thank you,

Rick Longinotti, Chair

From: [Pamela Stearns Stearns](#)
To: [Regional Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: Message for RTC re Aptos Aux. lanes
Date: Wednesday, January 31, 2024 8:22:22 AM

Dear RTC,

Because Aptos Auxiliary Lanes will not meet goals of easing Hwy 1 congestion sustainably please do NOT allocate funds for them.

Sincerely,
Stearns Family



Santa Cruz

From: [Judi Grunstra](#)
To: [Regional Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: No money for futile aux lanes
Date: Tuesday, January 30, 2024 4:08:00 PM

Dear Commissioners,

It seems that an important part of your task is to thoroughly evaluate the EIR and have this discussion at your upcoming meeting. Please do not spend taxpayer money without getting important information on highway widening projects that will likely not even improve Highway 1 commuting by very much, such as the latest Aptos-Freedom portion.

Many studies have shown that adding lanes to highways is not a longterm solution. The existing auxiliary lanes (Morrissey, Soquel) have not relieved traffic in times, or even "pre-peak" times. I even resigned from my job in Watsonville because of the amount of time spent in gridlock.

The large scale tree removal is another painful aspect of this project, and detrimental to the liveability of our county.

Please do more than "rubber stamp" this project.

Thank you.

Judi Grunstra, 31-year resident

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Regional Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: No money for futile aux lanes
Date: Tuesday, January 30, 2024 4:59:51 PM

Dear Commissioners,

The EIR for the auxiliary lanes in Aptos predicts that the morning commute will actually be worse. This and other results of the EIR have never been discussed at the RTC. Please do not spend taxpayer money without getting such important information.

Thank you,

Nicolette Czarrunchick
Santa Cruz resident since 1972

From: [joanne katzen](#)
To: [Regional Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: No money for futile aux lanes
Date: Tuesday, January 30, 2024 8:30:22 PM

Dear Commissioners,

The EIR for the auxiliary lanes in Aptos predicts that the morning commute will actually be worse. This and other results of the EIR have never been discussed at the RTC. Please do not spend taxpayer money without getting such important information. As a resident of Aptos, I find it unacceptable that those in charge of these projects have not done the research necessary to determine whether auxiliary lanes will be useful. For years, I witnessed the impact of Freeway widening projects in Los Angeles. (Severely impacted highways continue to plague that region.) Only by making public transportation widely available and inexpensive (or free) will we begin to address the issue of traffic congestion.

Thank you,

Joanne Katzen

From: [Andy Carman](#)
To: [Regional Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: No money for futile aux lanes
Date: Tuesday, January 30, 2024 7:29:54 PM

Dear Commissioners,

The EIR for the auxiliary lanes in Aptos predicts that the morning commute will actually be worse. This and other results of the EIR have never been discussed at the RTC. Please do not spend taxpayer money without getting such important information.

Thank you,

Andy Carman
Santa Cruz, CA

From: [Jack Bowers](#)
To: [Regional Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: No money for futile aux lanes
Date: Tuesday, January 30, 2024 7:19:44 PM

Dear Commissioners, The EIR for the auxiliary lanes in Aptos predicts that the morning commute will actually be worse. This and other results of the EIR have never been discussed at the RTC. Please do not spend taxpayer money without getting such important information.

Thank you,

Jack Bowers

[REDACTED]
Santa Cruz

From: [Erica Stanojevic](#)
To: [Regional Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: No money for futile aux lanes
Date: Wednesday, January 31, 2024 8:51:23 AM

Dear Commissioners,
The EIR for the auxiliary lanes in Aptos predicts that the morning commute will actually be worse. This and other results of the EIR have never been discussed at the RTC. Please do not spend taxpayer money without getting such important information.
Thank you,
Erica Stanojevic

From: [Shalom Dreampeace Compost](#)
To: [Regional Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: No money for futile aux lanes
Date: Tuesday, January 30, 2024 11:29:56 AM

Dear Commissioners,
PLEASE. We know that Highway widening is always a temporary solution. More lanes will result in more cars. More cars will lead to more congestion no matter how many lanes we add to the freeway

The EIR for the auxiliary lanes in Aptos predicts that the morning commute will actually be worse. This and other results of the EIR have never been discussed at the RTC. Please do not spend taxpayer money without getting such important information.
Thank you,

From: [ROBERT STEPHENS](#)
To: [Regional Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: Please finish the highway one auxiliary lanes
Date: Wednesday, January 31, 2024 7:15:38 AM

Dear Commissioners,

Please finish the job and complete the auxiliary lanes in Aptos. This will help people with their daily commute and make public transit better.

Thank you,

Robert Stephens
Aptos