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# California State Senate

SENATOR  
**TOM TORLAKSON**  
SEVENTH SENATE DISTRICT



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STANDING COMMITTEE  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
CHAIR

SELECT COMMITTEE  
BAY AREA INFRASTRUCTURE  
CHAIR

March 2, 2005

Ms. Linda Wilshusen  
Executive Director  
Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Comm.  
1523 Pacific Ave  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060-3911

Dear Ms. Wilshusen:

I am writing to request information about transportation infrastructure needs in your jurisdiction.

I recently introduced SB 275, which requires the California Transportation Commission and California Department of Transportation, in cooperation with regional transportation planning agencies, to develop a 10-year needs assessment of the state's transportation system.

Senate Resolution 8 (Burton, 1999) directed the CTC, Caltrans, and regional transportation planning agencies to produce a similar 10-year assessment. The resulting report estimated that California needed at least \$110 billion to meet transportation infrastructure demands. An updated assessment will help the Legislature evaluate transportation programs, policies, and revenue options.

In December 2004, the CTC's Annual Report to the Legislature stated that "California's transportation program is in crisis and on the verge of collapse." A 10-year needs assessment will help the Legislature evaluate the depth of this crisis and plan ways to restore stability to the transportation system.

As this proposal moves through the legislative process, I am requesting any existing inventories of transportation needs for regions throughout California. In most cases, this simply means a recent copy of a Regional Transportation Plan. I would appreciate any such documents or relevant information.

I look forward to your timely reply. Thank you again for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Torlakson".

Tom Torlakson

29-1

April 5, 2005

Senator Tom Torlakson  
State Capitol, Room 5061  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Infrastructure Needs in Santa Cruz County

Dear Senator Torlakson:

I am writing in response to your March 2, 2005 request for information about transportation infrastructure needs in Santa Cruz County. The Regional Transportation Commission has worked with Caltrans to develop a needs assessment for Santa Cruz County in the form of the *Draft 2005 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)*. Appendices C and D of the document (enclosed) identify nearly \$4 billion worth of transportation needs for the region over the next 25 years.

One of the greatest challenges facing our region is maintaining our existing transportation infrastructure. As Page 39 of our RTP explains, there is an approximately \$150 million backlog of road maintenance needs on local streets and roads in Santa Cruz County. Most of our local jurisdictions are only able to fund half of their annual operating and maintenance needs. It is my understanding that Caltrans suffers similar shortfalls for the SHOPP, though local streets and roads are undoubtedly in much worse shape than the state highway system in our region.

Our bus transit system is also suffering funding shortfalls and has had to cut several routes in the past few years, resulting in a 28 percent decline in ridership since 2000.

Given the challenges we face just to fund maintenance of our existing transportation system, it is predictable that expanding our system to meet increased demands is an even greater challenge. The following is a short list of some of the major projects and programs that are at risk given the ongoing transportation funding crisis:

- Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes (has been programmed in the STIP since 1990)
- The MetroBase Consolidated Bus Operations Facility
- Highway 1 Widening with Carpool Lanes from Santa Cruz to Aptos
- Highway 17 Safety Improvements
- Paratransit service for seniors and disabled persons
- Coastal Bike/Pedestrian Trail, next to the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line
- Operational and safety improvements to state routes and arterials

The SCCRTC is increasingly concerned with the continued effects of the state budget crisis on transportation funding. As these high priority improvement projects and vital maintenance of existing infrastructure are subject to continued delay, project cost increase.

We remain flexible in how the funding shortfall could be resolved, but see the continued redirection of publicly supported transportation revenues to address general fund deficits to be of grave concern. A commitment to the reestablishment of transportation revenues for transportation purposes, with predictable funding levels, should be a significant part of the state budget resolution this legislative session.

The maintenance, improvement and expansion of alternative transportation options are not only critical to the mobility and well being of our community, but important for the economic development of our region and the entire state.

The SCCRTC supports legislative efforts to increase the gas tax or develop other revenue generating mechanisms to fund transportation projects and to dedicate and firewall those funds for transportation. In addition, the SCCRTC supports reducing the voter threshold for approval of local transportation sales taxes to 55%.

Thank you for your ongoing support of transportation funding and improvements statewide. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 460-3200 or Rachel Moriconi of my staff at 460-3203.

Sincerely,

Pat Dellin  
Acting Executive Director

Enclosure

Cc: Senator Maldonado  
Senator Simitian  
Assemblymember Laird  
Assemblymember Salinas  
SCCRTC  
Interagency Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC)