

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
AND
SERVICE AUTHORITY FOR FREEWAY EMERGENCIES

Minutes

Thursday,
November 17, 2005
7:15 p.m.

Board of Supervisors Chambers
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA

1. Roll Call

Members Present: Jan Beautz Ellen Pirie
 Dene Bustichi (Alt.) Emily Reilly
 Tony Campos Pat Spence
 Randy Johnson Mark Stone
 David Koch (Alt.) Marcela Tavantzis
 Dennis Norton
 Tim Gubbins (ex-officio)

Member Absent: Mardi Wormhoudt

Staff Present: Pat Dellin Luis Mendez
 Karena Pushnik Gini Pineda
 Kim Shultz Cory Caletti

2. Oral Communications - None

3. 7:15 PM Public Hearing on the Highway 1 Soquel Avenue to
Morrissey Boulevard Auxiliary Lane Project - Oral Report by
Chris Metzger, Nolte & Associates

Acting Executive Director Pat Dellin gave a brief description
of the history of the proposed auxiliary lanes and introduced
Chris Metzger, Nolte Associates.

Mr. Metzger gave a PowerPoint presentation that defined the
goal of the project as improving traffic conditions for merging
and weaving movements between Soquel Avenue and Morrissey
Boulevard. Mr. Metzger stressed the increased safety that the
auxiliary lanes would provide. He emphasized that the project
has been under consideration since 1988 and had been included
in the 2002 Caltrans Project Study Report as one of four areas
where auxiliary lanes were recommended.

Mr. Metzger described project benefits and illustrated the project alternatives, including the "no build" alternative, building separate auxiliary lanes between Soquel Avenue and Morrissey Boulevard, and building an extension of the Ocean Street auxiliary lane from where the Highway 1/17 Merge Lanes project ends to Soquel Avenue. Both of the build scenarios would include extensive improvements for bike and pedestrian traffic at the La Fonda overcrossing.

He said that the project would be subject to environmental review and would have to comply with both California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements. He projected the estimated cost to be \$11.3 million and provided a tentative timeline.

In reply to a question from Commissioner Reilly, Mr. Metzger said the distance of the project was less than a mile.

Commissioner Stone asked for counts regarding how much traffic exits at Morrissey Boulevard. Acting Executive Director Pat Dellin said that traffic operations analysis will be performed as part of the environmental review.

Ms. Dellin added that staff recommended that the Commission direct staff to prepare a cost and funding proposal for completing the Project Approval/Environmental Documentation (PA/ED) phase of the Highway 1 Soquel Avenue to Morrissey Boulevard Auxiliary Lanes Project.

Chair Pirie opened the floor for the Public Hearing.

Al Hoga said that he lives near the freeway and that pollution blows towards the De Laveaga Park side of the freeway. He said this should have been considered when the freeway was built.

Jean Brocklebank said she does not have a problem weaving and merging between lanes and proposed lowering the speed limit to 55 mph and widening the shoulders for use by emergency vehicles. She asked that this be included as an alternative.

Peter Scott, Campaign for Sensible Transportation, said that the era of oil dependence is ending and that there will likely be fewer cars on the roads. He said this should be factored in when thinking of adding lanes to the highway.

Chris McConn said he supports the auxiliary lanes and that he voted against Measure J because the measure included too many projects.

Don Hoernschemeyer, Campaign for Sensible Transportation, said he likes the idea of a citizens' task force so that projects can be recommended to the Commission and that the Commission should wait until after the Transportation Funding Task Force (TFTF) has made its suggestions.

Mark Vanderwoud said the merge lanes project was well thought out and supports moving forward.

Austin Harless said that when expansion comes, people fill the space and recommended improving public transportation instead.

Miles Payton said that huge freeways will make Santa Cruz more like Los Angeles and that widening highways doesn't work. He said the solution is to get more cars off the road and to spend the \$11 million on bike lanes, trails and buses.

Tim Wesdowski, People Power, said he had 1300 signatures against widening the highway and that he went to South County to get South County residents' opinions. He felt that there was a strong response in Watsonville to use the money to strengthen the bus system or to pursue new ideas.

Jesse Frey said he lives in an area where the wind blows in his direction and that putting more cars near his house will add to the pollution.

Bryan Smith, Aptos, said he opposed Measure J and that the auxiliary lane is a piecemeal part of the Highway 1 HOV Lane Widening Project. He said he supports the Transportation Funding Task Force and supports it doing its work before proceeding with auxiliary lanes.

Micah Posner, People Power, said the project is an affront to common sense and that the Commission is stuck in a 1950's paradigm. He said that consensus building means clearing the field and letting people think about what they want before proceeding with this project.

Robert Vallerga, Senior Coalition, said he supports a "build" alternative and that he voted no on Measure J because of all the other "garbage" on the ballot.

Tom Pistone said he supports the plan as presented and that it takes longer to get home from the fishhook than it does to commute from Silicon Valley. He noted that the Home Depot and other commercial projects at 41st Avenue will increase congestion on the freeway.

Ed Oberweiser said the proposal is flying in the face of reality because there will not be enough oil to continue dependence on cars and that China will be getting all the oil because of our trade deficit.

Jim Kinney, Aptos, said that freeways are not going away and that this project is a start that will help all drivers even if cars will be electric in 10 years.

David Pirkle, Soquel, commutes over the hill and sees both Santa Clara and Santa Cruz traffic. He concluded that widening does not improve traffic flow. He said that if the goal of the project is to improve traffic flow, closing the entrance ramp at Fairmount in the southerly direction and allowing big rigs to use the left lane during rush hours would help.

Lois Robin said that the highway divided the community and widening will continue to degrade the community. She suggested sending a crew to Brazil to study the best bus system in the world.

Bill Comfort pointed out that in 1997 Rich Krumholz (Caltrans, District 5) presented this auxiliary lane project and that it has nothing to do with Measure J. He added his support for the project.

Tom Barber, Rio del Mar, said the earth is running out of fuel and that the transportation system cannot stay as it is. He said there needs to be a plan for mass transit.

Sam Moore, Rodeo Glen Homeowners Association, said there is a lot of widening already approved and the impacts to communities beyond this section need to be taken into consideration. He recommended soundwalls if this project goes forward.

Lisa Hochstein, Santa Cruz, voted no on Measure J because she cares about congestion and suggested that rather than spending money on widening the highway, to spend it on studying public transportation. She said it would undermine the Transportation Funding Task Force (TFTF) by going ahead at this time. She added that it is arrogant to hire consultants who are biased towards building and that "no build does not mean no change".

Lynn Robinson said she thinks as a safety issue it is important to extend the auxiliary lanes past La Fonda and asked the Commission to look at transportation as a whole, noting that the auxiliary lanes will help take traffic off the streets and make them safer.

Tom Crosson said that he supported the auxiliary lanes as a safety measure for the freeway traffic.

Elaina Ramer said other parts of the world have better public transportation and that as a cyclist she does not feel safe in many parts of Santa Cruz. She would rather have train service and does not support the auxiliary lanes project.

Steve Schnaar, Bike Church, said many people would rather have a better public transportation system and that several studies show that widening highways only helps for a short while and usually the highways fill up in a few years.

Debbie Bulger, Santa Cruz, said she would re-do the wacky ramps at Morrissey Boulevard which are dangerous for bikes and pedestrians. She said it is necessary for people to adapt and that the future is in mass transit.

Aldo Giacchino, Sierra Club, said to look at ways to improve the circulation of traffic without widening and that the lack of circulation of traffic after cars get off the freeway is a problem.

Bill Le Bon said the real safety issue is our need for oil, that we are in Iraq over oil and that the main source of terrorism is our need for oil.

Barbara Lawrence said she lives near the freeway and that the Commission should work towards creating livable cities like Paris and San Francisco, concentrating on mass transit, bike lanes and safe pedestrian access.

Mark Forrester, Soquel, said that wider roads bring more people and that he supports public transportation. He suggested that employers in Silicon Valley could use a company van for commuting and that private enterprise should solve the problems it is creating.

Jim Danaher, Sierra Club, said he was excited about the Transportation Funding Task Force (TFTF) and would not advocate for a wider freeway, but for the Commission to wait for a decision until the TFTF has had a chance to meet.

Jim Conklin, Santa Cruz Business Council, said that Highway 1 desperately needs to be fixed and that businesses support widening as the highway is the lifeblood of the community.

Ed Davidson said that the options in the master plan for the City of Santa Cruz do not show road improvements, improvements

to the fishhook or plans for an eastern access to UCSC, but only plans for alternative transportation modes which don't work. He said there are no jobs along the rail line.

Paul Marcelin-Sampson said our buses are affected by the same congestion as car drivers and that the auxiliary lanes will improve conditions for buses.

Commissioner Pirie thanked everyone who participated in the meeting and closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Beautz said the hearing provided the Commission with a wide variety of viewpoints and moved to approve the staff recommendations to:

1. Accept the staff report and presentation by Chris Metzger, Nolte Associates Inc., on the Highway 1 Soquel Avenue to Morrissey Boulevard Auxiliary Lanes Project; and,
2. Conduct a Public Hearing to receive community input on the Highway 1 Soquel Avenue to Morrissey Boulevard Auxiliary Lanes Project; and,
3. Direct staff to prepare a cost and funding proposal for completing the Project Approval/Environmental Documentation (PA/ED) phase of the Highway 1 Soquel Avenue to Morrissey Boulevard Auxiliary Lanes Project.

Commissioner Campos seconded.

Commissioner Stone asked for a legal opinion regarding whether the auxiliary lanes project, as a stand alone project, could be considered segmentation of the proposed Highway 1 HOV Lane Widening Project.

Commissioner Norton asked if a pedestrian study was done in the area and if there were any Park and Ride lots within that section and the broader Highway 1 HOV Widening Lane Project. He also asked for a closer estimate of the costs.

Acting Executive Director Pat Dellin said there was a Park and Ride lot within the project limits of the Auxiliary Lanes Project and that pedestrian improvements, in addition to the improvements at the La Fonda overcrossing, were included in the plans for the Highway 1 HOV Lanes Widening Project. Senior Planner Kim Shultz added that in the Highway 1 HOV Widening Lane Project's current phase, there will be analysis for potential additional Park and Ride lots.

The motion passed unanimously.

4. Next Meetings/Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.

The next regular SCCRTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 1, 2005 at 9:00 a.m. at the Board of Supervisors Chambers, 701 Ocean Street, 5th Floor, Santa Cruz, CA 95060.

The next Transportation Policy Workshop is scheduled for Thursday, December 15, 2005 at 9:00 a.m. at the SCCRTC Offices, 1523 Pacific Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA 95060.

Respectfully submitted,

Gini Pineda, Staff

ATTENDEES

Karen Fry
Robert Vallerga Senior Coalition
Jan Kampa
April Kampa
Mark & Debora Vanderwoud
Leo Moll
Hillary Fusting
Tom Barber
Bill Comfort
Bryan Smith
John Presleigh SC County Department of Public Works
Irene Ritchie
Ed Silveira
Jesse Jacovin
Dan Alexander
Joe Moreno
Austin Harless
Elaina Ramer
Albert Haga
Jean Brocklebank
Peter Scott
Chris McConn
Don Hoernschemeyer
Miles Payton People Power
Tom Wesdowski
Jesse Frey Hub for Sustainable Transportation
Micah Posner People Power
Tom Pistone
Ed Oberweiser
Jim Kinney
David Pirkle
Lois Robin
Sam Moore Rodeo Glen HOA
Lynn Robinson
Tom Crosson
Steve Schnaar Bike Church
Debbie Bulger
Aldo Giacchino Sierra Club
William LeBon
Barbara Lawrence
Marl Forrester
Jim Danaher Sierra Club
Jim Conklin SC Business Council
Ed Davidson
Paul Marcelin-Sampson