

----- Forwarded by John Whitehouse/D06/Caltrans/CAGov on 12/22/05 03:31 PM

John Whitehouse

To: "Karena Pushnik" <kpushnik@scrtc.org>,
12/22/05 02:40 PM

cc: KenSlos@aol.com

Subject: Proposed Tree Removal along Route 1 at Branciforte and
Carbonera Creeks (Document link: John Whitehouse)

Dear Ms. Slosberg,

Thank you for your interest in the trees along Route 1 in Santa Cruz. The 168 trees planned for removal this winter are to be cut as part of a larger construction activity, the Route 1/17 Widening for Merge Lanes project. As part of the environmental assessment process that was conducted for this larger project, we looked into the items brought up in your letter.

Construction of the Route 1/17 Widening for Merge Lanes project will add about six acres impermeable surface to the drainage basin of the Branciforte and Carbonera Creeks. Permits from the Regional Water Quality Control Board, the Army Corps of Engineers and the State Department of Fish and Game regulate work in and near the creeks.

The proposed project will have both temporary and permanent impacts to waters under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Construction work at Branciforte Creek will result in a temporary disturbance of 0.468 acres. Permanent disturbance for Branciforte Creek would measure 0.080 acres. Construction work at Carbonera Creek will temporarily disturb 0.243 acres. Permanent disturbance for Carbonera Creek will measure 0.055 acres.

Riparian areas outside the project footprint will be protected by the use of Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing. Loss of riparian vegetation will be offset by using plants to protect slopes and bridge embankments and by planting riparian species at a ratio of 3:1. A mitigation parcel has been obtained for riparian mitigation planting. This parcel, measuring 0.672 acres is located on Branciforte Creek immediately north of the Route 1 Caltrans right-of-way. The currently undeveloped parcel will be maintained as a vegetated open space.

The National Marine Fisheries Service has concluded that the project is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of Central California Coast Evolutionarily Significant Unit steelhead trout or Central California Coast Evolutionarily Significant Unit coho salmon, and is not likely to destroy or adversely modify critical habitat or Essential Fish Habitat. The project may result in the incidental take of steelhead trout and coho salmon. We will avoid the migration period for steelhead trout and coho salmon by establishing a June 15 - October 31 construction window for work within the creeks. Fish passage will be maintained during and after construction.

Noise levels near the highway currently exceed the established threshold for residential land use. Construction of the proposed highway project would lead to temporary and permanent increases in noise levels. The permanent noise impacts are to be mitigated by the installation of soundwalls. Temporary construction noise is to be reduced through construction scheduling and early construction of soundwalls.

After conducting an Initial Study, the California Department of Transportation has determined that the proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment. As a result of their Environmental Assessment, the Federal Highway Administration has determined that this project will not have any significant impact on the human environment. The State of California Department of Transportation and the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration jointly issued their Negative Declaration and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Route 1/17 Widening for Merge Lanes project in September 2002.

I hope that this answers your questions regarding the tree removal scheduled within the Route 1 right-of-way. Numerous environmental professionals have spent thousands of hours analyzing the environmental impacts of the proposed project and working with design engineers to minimize those impacts. Our goal has been to improve the safety and operation of this stretch of highway in a way that meets the concerns of all parties involved.

- John Whitehouse
Associate Environmental Planner
California Department of Transportation

From: KenSlos@aol.com [<mailto:KenSlos@aol.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, December 06, 2005 4:14 PM
To: info@sccrtc.org
Subject: about the trees

Hello Commissioners,

As perhaps you are aware from others too, after reading the article about the possible cutting of 168 trees near B-40 and Carbonera creeks, I was upset and shocked. I was glad to hear the remarks from Commissioner Mardi Wormhoudt that indeed 168 is a lot of trees and "it's going to be very noticeable". I hope that you will make the decision to not cut the trees until it is definite that the bids are coming in.

The article raised several questions for me that I would be very appreciative of answers. I understand that you have to take the trees out before March because of nesting birds. However, isn't that the worse time for work near the creek for the spawning migration of the steelhead (B-40 creek is listed as an endangered creek for steelhead)? Wouldn't cutting trees both eliminate shade for the fish as well as add sediment to the creeks (another impediment to the steelhead)? And is it necessary to cut so many trees?

I have lived on B-40 Creek (the natural part in city limits) for 25 years and have seen several changes to the creek because of "projects" upstream. Because we are losing more and more of our impervious surfaces near the creek channel, the flooding potential has become greater. Water flows much faster and rises more quickly. Again, I am afraid that by cutting 168 trees near two creeks that happen to converge downstream from the cutting sites, the flooding potential will be increased downstream. Branciforte

Creek is the largest tributary to the San Lorenzo River and has a large impact on that system.

And of course, last but not least, cutting 168 trees is going to have an enormous impact on the noise level in the surrounding neighborhoods. Highway 1 is already loud and this work will only increase that situation. Will there be any mitigation for the noise increase?

Thank you for reading my comments and I would be delighted to receive any answers to my questions. I would also like to be put on a mailing list for future meetings.

Tina Slosberg
434 market St. 426-1967

Tina Slosberg -

Your message regarding trees in the vicinity of the Highway 1/17 Interchange Merge Lanes project was forwarded to the Regional Transportation Commission for their consideration and to Caltrans Environmental Branch with a request for answers to your questions about the impact of the creek work on steelhead.

I apologize for the delay in our response. Unfortunately, many people are out for the holidays. I have asked them to respond directly to you, with a copy to me so I can track their response.

Regarding the noise impacts, soundwalls are included in the project based on the strong support of the adjacent neighbors. For a map of the soundwall locations, please visit the Caltrans project website:
http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist05/projects/scr_1_17/
Where possible, trees and vegetation will be replaced at a 3 to 1 ratio.

- Karena Pushnik
Senior Transportation Planner
Santa Cruz Co. Regional Transportation Commission
831/460-3210 (fax 460-3215)

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

From: KenSlos@aol.com [mailto:KenSlos@aol.com]

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*- Karena Pushnik
Senior Transportation Planner
Santa Cruz Co. Regional Transportation Commission
831/460-3210 (fax 460-3215)*

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

From: Dennis Norton [mailto:dnortondesigns@msn.com]
Sent: Monday, December 05, 2005 9:12 AM
To: trc005@co.santa-cruz.ca.us; Pat Dellin
Subject: FW: rail/trail

*From: Dfsummersurfer@aol.com
To: dnortondesigns@msn.com
Subject: rail/trail
Date: Sun, 4 Dec 2005 13:38:10 EST*

Dear Mr. Norton:

I would like to express my endorsement of the Transportation Commission's buying of the Union Pacific rail line. I wholly support the rehabilitation of the tracks, using the tracks for public transportation as well as freight, and having a trail running along the tracks where possible for use of walkers, runners, and bicyclists. I live in Seacliff, only about fifty yards away from the tracks myself, and look forward to using the rail/trail.

L.D. Freitas
522 Harriet Ave.
(831)688-9206
Aptos, Seacliff, California

L.D. Freitas –

Your email regarding the rail/trail was received and will be forwarded to the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) for their consideration.

For more information about this and other transportation projects/programs, please refer to the RTC's website at: www.sccrtc.org

Thank you for taking the time to write.

- Karena Pushnik
Senior Transportation Planner
Santa Cruz Co. Regional Transportation Commission
831/460-3210 (fax 460-3215)

November 21, 2005

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

Re. Transportation Planning

Dear Commissioners:

As I am sure you will agree that Santa Cruz County is a wonderful place to live, aside from commute-period congestion and very expensive housing. I call upon you to do your best to maintain our county's high quality of living while devising plans to improve people's ability to get around.

In my opinion, several things are essential to the complex task of developing an integrated transportation plan that will meet the needs of the community for the next several decades. I ask you to consider them.

- Plans are based upon facts and analysis, not opinion:
 - Traffic flow data, especially during peak hours,
 - Effect of traffic flow and speed upon air pollution,
 - "If-then" analysis using best traffic models, e.g., if school kids were bused to school, instead of driven by parents, what effect on commute traffic?
 - What "solutions" have worked, and not worked, in other communities.
- All options that may reduce commute congestion are considered.
- The participation of major employers here and over the hill is solicited.

I hope that you will move speedily to get the Comprehensive Transportation Program Task Force up and running and that you insist upon real dialogue, rather than arguments.

Sincerely,



Don Hoernschemeyer
6107 Sheraton Pl.
Aptos, CA 95003

cc. Pat Dellin