

July 31, 2014

Sent by email to: info@mtc.ca.gov

To: MTC Public Information Office
101 Eighth Street
Oakland, Ca 94607

Subject: Comments on Draft 2015 TIP and Draft Air Quality Conformity Analysis

Dear MTC Public Information Office:

Below are comments I am submitting regarding the Draft 2015 TIP and Draft Air Quality Conformity Analysis.

My chief concern is the proposed Calera Parkway Widening in Pacifica, County of San Mateo. The TIP ID for the Calera Parkway SR1 widening is SM-050001, RTP ID 98204. The Project description listed on the 2015 TIP Projects by County, page 11 of 59, states: "In Pacifica: Route 1 between Fassler and West Port Dr.: **Add an additional lane in each direction.**"

One freeway lane is 12 feet wide. The existing width of SR1 in this part of Pacifica is 64 feet wide (the northbound and the southbound road each have a 5 foot shoulder and two 12 foot lanes, equaling 29 feet in each direction, plus a 6 foot median for a total width of 64 feet). The addition of 2 lanes at 12 feet wide each (one northbound, one southbound, for a total addition of 24 feet) to the existing 64 feet should equal 88 feet in width. But in Caltrans' "Preferred Alternative," the expanded roadway equals 148 feet in width. Why is there a discrepancy, you may ask? A review of the Caltrans proposed Calera Parkway Project (Preferred Alternative) reveals, in addition to the "additional lane in each direction," the addition of a 10 foot inside shoulder, plus a 10 foot outside shoulder, in both the northbound and southbound portions, plus a 16 foot landscape median. Together with the 2 existing lanes in each direction plus the proposed additional lane (12 feet) in each direction, we now can see that the Caltrans proposal actually more than doubles the existing roadway. Describing this as "adding an additional lane in each direction" is untrue and disingenuous.

The project description also obscures the fact that the creation of this greatly enlarged roadway width would be highly detrimental to the City of Pacifica in several ways: (1) It would cut through and therefore destroy existing coastal hills, wetlands and other environmentally sensitive areas; (2) It would forever change the character and beauty of Pacifica's coastal views and environment, which are integral to quality of life for Pacificans and others (residents of San Mateo County, the Bay Area, and tourists who come from the US and other countries) to enjoy the beautiful California coast; (3) It would endanger animals, including protected species, both by the destruction of habitats, and in the creation of a super-wide freeway that would be impossible for wild animals to cross safely, and (4) It would require the use of eminent domain to acquire right of way, resulting in the loss of a number of local businesses. In the current struggling economy, especially in the more rural and isolated areas of San Mateo County such as

Pacifica that were hard hit by the recent recession, this would be a great loss economically to the businesses, and a great loss of services to the residents of Pacifica and the surrounding area.

Caltrans has recently been criticized by the California State Smart Transportation Initiative Review – SSTI, whose assessment of January, 2014 included the findings that Caltrans was out of touch with today's communities in California (“A mission, vision, and goals not well-aligned with current conditions or demands”). The SSTI states, “Caltrans, like other state DOTs, was organized to build a network of trunk highways linking cities. In metro areas, local traffic began to overwhelm these highways, leading to massive construction. Eventually the highway system was largely built-out, and system operation and maintenance became more critical to Caltrans' job. Yet the department continues to be oriented toward projects—both for new capacity and reconstruction of the existing system. As early as 1972, when Caltrans was formed out of the Department of Highways, there were calls for more multimodalism and less reliance on auto-mobility. More recent passage of state planning goals in AB 857 (2002) and transportation greenhouse gas reduction strategies SB 375 (2008) signal a need for Caltrans to support reductions in auto travel via low transportation-iv demand land use patterns. These outcomes are precisely the opposite of what Caltrans was set up to do—foster higher auto-mobility—and the department has not adapted to them.”

The Calera Parkway widening proposal is a perfect example of Caltrans' outmoded way of thinking. Building a bigger roadway as the so-called “solution” to a very minor traffic problem will actually increase traffic congestion because the 2 new lanes in each direction will have to merge back into the roadway in 1.3 miles. Regardless of the fact that widening SR1 will not actually lessen the traffic, it will do permanent damage to the community of Pacifica and the San Mateo County coastal region. The proposed highway widening will not address greenhouse gas reduction (more highway actually will raise, not lower greenhouse gas levels), contribute to better public transit, or enhance access to the San Mateo County coast. On the contrary, the proposed highway widening will negatively impact these critical issues. By selecting a build “solution,” Caltrans rejected the numerous alternatives suggested by community members to reduce traffic congestion on SR1 in Pacifica. These suggestions included dynamic signal timing, adjusted school start times, pedestrian overcrossings, increased public transit service, school bus service, a wildlife undercrossing, bike routes, and many others. In terms of cost, they range from no cost to modest cost compared to the \$55 million cost of the proposed highway widening. A combination of alternatives is likely to be the most effective solution. A reasonable approach would be to investigate the most viable alternatives, and try them out. Tragically for the community and surrounding area that will also be affected, Caltrans is taking the unreasonable approach of a “solution” that is way too big in scale for the problem it purports to address, and does not take into account the damage that it will cause.

The people who live in or visit Pacifica are not stupid. We know that the Caltrans plan to widen SR1 will not help traffic congestion, but will forever change what we love about Pacifica. That is why over 1,200 people signed a petition to the Pacifica City Council that states: “The Caltrans plan to widen Highway 1 is not good for Pacifica. It will cause more problems than it will solve. I support pursuing a combination of alternatives that can improve traffic congestion on Highway 1 and that will be less damaging to Pacifica.”

I had the honor of presenting the petition signatures to the Pacifica City Council on April 28, 2014. The City Council meeting was packed to capacity with more than 80 concerned people, dozens of whom spoke out eloquently against the SR1 widening plan. The City of Pacifica needs to work with Caltrans to explore a combination of alternatives to widening SR1, as I describe above. There is an opportunity here for the City of Pacifica, the County of San Mateo Transit Authority, and Caltrans to step up and work together with the Coastal Commission to develop a viable, innovative, 21st century solution that will minimize impacts and positively, not negatively, affect Pacifica and the coastal region.

Toward that outcome:

- (1) Until the parties (the City of Pacifica, the San Mateo County Transit Authority, and Caltrans) embark on the above-described path and seriously conduct appropriate, comprehensive, peer-reviewed studies of alternatives to the Calera Parkway Widening of SR1, I propose that funding for the Calera Parkway SR1 widening (TIP ID: SM-050001, RTP ID 98204 as listed in The Project Description, 2015 TIP Projects by County, page 11 of 59) be excluded from the 2015 TIP and future TIPS.
- (2) Additionally, I propose that the 2015 TIP and future TIPs not include the Calera Parkway SR1 until it is determined by the permitting agency that the Calera Parkway SR1 widening is consistent with the Pacifica General Plan, Local Coastal Land Use Plan, and the Coastal Act.

Sincerely,

/s/

Chaya Gordon

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Chaya Gordon.