

From: [Cindy Winter](#)
To: info@planbayarea.org
Subject: The new Larkspur Landing parking garage: a cautionary dissent
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Attachments: [MTC Plan Bay Area 2050 parking.docx August 7.docx](#)

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Cindy Winter, 

The Proposed new parking garage for Larkspur Landing: A Cautionary Dissent

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Given that MTC's total planned GHG reductions are falling well short of the CARB goal, I don't understand why a new Larkspur parking garage was tentatively approved. It will only increase congestion and GHG emissions.

Such a garage would attract even more SOV's into the narrow corridor between the west portion of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard and the east side of it. VMT's will increase, LOS will worsen. As a result, GHG emissions would be expected to grow.

Although our vehicles will gradually become electrified and our air will grow cleaner, to what extent will these improvements meet the CARB requirements?

In addition, though we all love our ferries, they have been a significant source of GHG's. It takes a lot of diesel fuel to power those large boats through the heavy opposing force of water. I believe the Bridge District is trying to alleviate the problem to the extent that it can be done.

The Dead Storage of Parked Cars

While the ferries provide a public service, traveling back and forth many times a day, by contrast parked motor vehicles occupy space from 6 am to 6 pm merely as dead storage.

If you open Google Earth and study the bird's-eye view of Larkspur Landing, you'll see that a large portion of it is already given over to car storage: at the ferry terminal, at the shopping center called Marin Country Mart, and in the vast open space below the SMART station and tracks the car parking extends from U.S. 101 easterly past a movie theater to the far end of an office building complex. And yet the entire area is a prime piece of real estate. Wouldn't it be better to use the proposed garage site for something more productive than parked cars?

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing, one of MTC/ABAG's major goals, should be considered as an alternative; it would provide homes for people priced out of the single-family houses typical of some 70% of Marin County.

Moreover, the site lies within easy walking distance of the ferry (slightly over ¼ mile); it's less than 20% of a mile to Marin Country Mart; ¾ mile to the Cost Plus Shopping Center; about 80% of a mile to the Bon Air Shopping Center; and within easy e-bike distance to The Village

Shopping Center (about 1.5 miles); and roughly the same distance (1.5 miles) to Redwood High School and Hall Middle School.

The question remains: if parking is not increased by means of a new garage, how can people who live beyond Larkspur Landing access the area? Given the present situation with COVID-19, that cannot be reliably determined, because a new means of access involves a new kind of transit.

A New Kind of Transit: AV's

When COVID-19 struck, both GM/Cruise and Waymo were on the verge of rolling out their electric robo-jitneys in a few selected cities. The GM/Cruise robo-jitney (or "robo-taxi") would carry six people at a time, and wouldn't that be preferable to six SOV's occupying the roadway? Once the jitney reached the ferry terminal and discharged its riders, it could pick up other riders for a return trip. Even if some jitneys returned empty during heavy commute times, that would still be a net reduction of four SOV's.

These AV's could also, of course, serve the SMART station.

While I don't anticipate that AV's will be able to tangle with human drivers on the freeways for quite some time, robots can do well on set routes. Even before the virus has passed, we should be making tentative plans for these routes connecting Larkspur Landing with nearby areas of Marin. Enough robo-jitneys, and the existing parking space at the ferry terminal might even be used in part for their maintenance and storage.

An Unpredictable Future

The question remains, what will be the public's attitude toward transit of all kinds, including the ferry, several years from now? At present, we know that ridership is way, way down, including on the ferry. Part of the drop-off is due to fear of infection, part due to working from home. Whether transit use will ever rebound to its pre-virus level seems impossible to determine at present, and thus any design and funding of a new parking garage should be postponed until the answer is clear.

There's yet another question: what will be the public's future attitude toward accessory parking? Reportedly, that demand is waning and had been even before the virus struck. Uber and Lyft seem to have been the cause. Assuming these TNC's eventually morph from human drivers to robots, private parking lots and garages may well become under-used and unprofitable.

In spite of these uncertainties, if it should be decided that a new parking garage must absolutely, positively be built, concentrated thought should be given to its life span and the societal and transportation changes that may occur during that time. Since these changes will be difficult to perceive, MTC should seriously consider an "adaptable" design.

This architectural concept incorporates features that permit all or part of the parking structure to be converted to residential units in future years. For example, the ramps are located on the exterior; the floors are level; the height of each floor is increased. These modifications will cost maybe 10% - 15% more, but in my view the flexibility would be worth it.

The idea comes from No One at the Wheel, by Samuel I. Schwartz, 2018, published by the Public Affairs Division of Hachette Book Group, www.publicaffairsbooks.com. Mr. Schwartz was formerly New York City's traffic commissioner and New York City's DOT chief engineer.

He refers his readers to Andy Cohen of the design firm Gensler at 45 Fremont Street in San Francisco.

Conclusion

Despite the transit uncertainties of the near future, one thing is plain now: central Marin has too many solo drivers in vehicles that are way too large on roadways that are next to impossible to widen. We must reduce our dependence on the car culture. Any decision to proceed with a new parking garage should be made only after the most careful research and analysis.

A new parking garage is not mode shift. It would merely reinforce and expand the old time-worn status quo – and for the next 60 or 70 years.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Winter

