

Midcoast Community Council

An elected Municipal Advisory Council to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors

Serving 12,000 coastal residents

Post Office Box 248, Moss Beach, CA 94038-0064

<http://mcc.sanmateo.org>

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February 10, 2010

San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
Hall of Justice, 400 County Center
Redwood City, CA 94063

Honorable. Board of Supervisors,

The Midcoast Community Council recognizes that Highway 1 is the critical highway link for the Midcoast community, providing access between all the villages and neighborhoods and connection to the Coastside and the Bay Area. At its January 27th meeting, the MCC invited residents to share their concerns and suggestions about the highway with specific emphasis on automobile, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic through the villages of Moss Beach and Montara. Two immediate factors led to this meeting:

- Public comments of concern about speed limit violations in Montara at an MCC meeting in late 2009
- An accident in Moss Beach on Thursday, December 3rd at 5:15pm, in which a 12-year-old boy was struck by a vehicle while riding his bike across Highway 1 near the Moss Beach Sheriff's substation.

Three other factors were background to the January 27 MCC discussions of Highway 1:

- The planned presentation (February 24, 2010) of a report funded by a Caltrans Community Based Transportation Planning Grant begun in 2009 to study Highway 1 Safety and Mobility Improvement Study in the Midcoast. This funded phase of the study included the unincorporated villages of Princeton, El Granada, and Miramar, which is partly within the City of Half Moon Bay.
- Concern about a dangerous intersection between Moss Beach and Montara which is characterized by high speeds, poor access and visibility and where a fatal accident occurred within the last few years.
- The fact that future developments will only increase traffic on this portion of Highway 1. This includes the opening of the Devils Slide tunnel which is expected to increase both commuter traffic and recreational visits to and through Moss Beach and Montara. In addition, the "Big Wave" development if undertaken will also significantly increase traffic through this area.

The January 27 discussion was extended to the MCC meeting on this date, February 10, 2010, and has resulted in two requests to the Board of Supervisors.

1. The MCC requests that the Board of Supervisors engage Caltrans as soon as possible to take action to implement studies as required to review speed limits on the section of Highway 1 between the HMB Airport and Montara 14th Street.
2. The MCC strongly supports the efforts of the Board to obtain a second Community Based Transportation Planning Grant to complete the Highway 1 Safety and Mobility Improvement Study. We request high priority be given to the grant request to study of the needs of the villages of Moss Beach and Montara which will make the full report representative of the entire Midcoast.

The remaining sections of this letter provide additional details to support these requests.

Sincerely,

[SIGNED]

Neil Merrilees
Chair, Midcoast Community Council

Highway 1 - Current Concerns and Action Opportunities

The MCC recognizes that important long term studies are underway to improve the safety and usability of Highway 1. Such studies and follow on projects are of necessity long, protracted processes or eventually make physical improvements to the highway. At the January 27th meeting, our community expressed the need for immediate action to improve safety. In the previously mentioned accident of December 3rd the victim, a young boy, sustained severe injuries and was transported to Stanford Medical Center for treatment.

A number of ideas for improving safety were discussed. While we recognize that some of these ideas may not be feasible as short term solutions, we will mention them here for completeness. These include:

- Reduced speed limits and more signage
- Protected pedestrian islands
- Flashing light pedestrian crossings
- Reducing and simplifying cross street access
- “Michigan “left turns
- Stop lights

From a practical perspective, reducing speed limits and increasing signage for Highway 1 between the Airport and Montara appears to be the most effective in terms of cost and time to implement. Currently the speed limit from the Airport to Montara (14th Street) is 50 to 55 MPH. The limit drops to 45 MPH north of 14th Street through Devils Slide. Upon study of the process required to modify speed limits, we discovered:

1. California law does not allow local governments to establish or change speed limits on state highways. These limits are set by statute or established and changed by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) on the basis of engineering and traffic surveys.
2. Engineering and traffic surveys are performed by Caltrans about once every 5 to 7 years, but a local government may ask for one at any time.
3. If Caltrans proposes, on the basis of an engineering and traffic survey, to change a speed limit, it must first consult with the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and a local government may conduct a public hearing on the proposed change. Caltrans must then consider the results of this hearing prior to determining the speed limit.

Thus a multi-agency and legislative initiative appears to be required to modify local speed limits.

We understand that the California Highway Patrol conducted a field assessment of this portion of the highway and determined that a limit of 40 to 45 MPH would be most appropriate given conditions. However, Caltrans must also conduct its own study and then consult with CHP and the County in order to implement a speed limit change. We

believe that a Board of Supervisors request to Caltrans to take up this issue with the goal of reducing speeds through Moss Beach and Montara is the next logical step in the process.

The MCC therefore requests that the Board of Supervisors engages Caltrans to quickly implement whatever studies are required to review speed limits on the section of Highway 1 between the HMB Airport and Montara 14th Street as soon as possible. The MCC stands ready to help mobilize and focus community support both for this immediate need as well as for the longer term study and improvement process.

Highway 1 - Long Term Study of Safety and Mobility Improvements

The long term study initiated by a grant effort led by the San Mateo County Parks Department is a second critical part of improvement for Highway 1. In partnership with the Local Government Commission, the grant was used to fund a professional multi-disciplinary consultant team. With substantial community input, this team authored the “Highway 1 Safety and Mobility Improvement Study”, focused on the communities between Frenchman’s Creek in the City of Half Moon Bay and the Half Moon Bay Airport located in unincorporated San Mateo County. The study included the unincorporated villages of Princeton, El Granada, and Miramar, which is partly within the City of Half Moon Bay.

The Midcoast Community Council strongly supports the efforts of the Board to obtain a second Community Based Transportation Planning Grant to complete the Highway 1 Safety and Mobility Improvement Study begun in 2009 so that it provides detail review of the needs of the villages of Moss Beach and Montara and will thus include the entire Midcoast.

The original grant application process was led by the San Mateo County Parks Department. In partnership with the Local Government Commission, the grant was used to fund a professional multi-disciplinary consultant team. With substantial community input, this team authored the “Highway 1 Safety and Mobility Improvement Study”, focused on the communities between Frenchman’s Creek in the City of Half Moon Bay and the Half Moon Bay Airport located in unincorporated San Mateo County. The study included the unincorporated villages of Princeton, El Granada, and Miramar, which is partly within the City of Half Moon Bay.

The Study group decided to defer the detailed review of the section of Highway 1 from the Airport north to Devils Slide. This section of the highway includes the unincorporated communities of Moss Beach and Montara. However, the study did produce an overview of issues affecting the northern portion of the highway. Among the issues identified are:

- Speed
- Number of public street accesses and access management
- Crossing traffic
- Side street sight distance
- Inconsistent roadway edge

- Underdeveloped frontage "Main Street"
- Highway adjacent parking

There was a strong consensus for the need to improve safety and mobility for automobile, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic through the villages of Moss Beach and Montara. Highway 1 essentially bisects both villages, with unique community assets on either side of the road. Among these are recreational facilities such as the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, the Moss Beach Community playground, and several beach access points, and essential service providers including the Seton Coastside Medical Center, San Mateo County Sheriffs Office, the Moss Beach Coastside Fire Protection Station, and two U.S. Post Offices. These facilities generate a significant volume of automotive and bicycle traffic making turns into the communities and pedestrian traffic crossing the highway. As already noted future developments will only increase traffic on this portion of Highway 1.

For all of these reasons, the MCC supports any and all actions the County may take to obtain funding for the second phase of the study for Highway 1 Safety and Mobility.