



April 20, 2015

Via Email

James Hinkamp, Project Planner
455 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063

Re: Comments on Draft Preliminary Planning Study for Highway One Congestion and Safety Improvement Project, February 23, 2015

Dear James,

Thanks for providing me with a copy of the above-referenced Study. The associated On-Line Survey had very limited opportunity to provide anything more than a sentence or two on the Alternatives. Please accept these comments and recommendations on behalf of Committee for Green Foothills (CGF). I have focused my comments on the Mirada Road/Alto Avenue project area due to time constraints.

Background: Phase 1 of the Highway 1 Safety and Mobility Study recommended developing a consistent roadway edge through each context zone (rural areas, transitional areas, and village areas) in the study area, improving intersection visibility, adding entry treatments and roundabouts, managing access, and adding walkways and bikeways.

Phase 2 of the Safety and Mobility Study recommended raised medians in village areas, designated pedestrian and bicycle crossings in high demand areas, consideration of roundabouts, pedestrian and bicycle trails along parallel routes, and parking re-configurations for beach and trail access.

The five proposed projects contained in the subject Planning Study (which could be more aptly described as “Highway 1 Five Crossings Study”) are considered “low hanging fruit” that will implement some of these recommendations more quickly than the more ambitious and more costly projects.

General Comments:

Section 2 Background, page 2-3 and Section 4 Visual/Aesthetics, page 4-18, states that Highway 1 within the project limits is listed as an Eligible State Scenic Highway. CGF notes that San Mateo County has already designated Highway 1 (aka Cabrillo Highway) as a County Designated Scenic Route in the County General Plan (Table 4.6 and Policy 4.42.c and d) and as a County Scenic Road and Corridor in the County Local Coastal Program (LCP Policy 8.30.b) throughout the project limits. As such, these proposed transportation projects should reflect the scenic and historic nature of the study area. LCP and Coastal Act policies regarding minimizing of impacts to scenic and historic resources and avoiding impacts to Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA) while providing for visitor access to the coast support Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS). Caltrans defines Context Sensitive Solutions as;

“ Quality transportation design is the culmination of philosophy and principles in the project development process that provides a transportation system that enhances the place in which it serves. Whether a project is in an urban, rural or natural setting, the transportation facility must be in harmony with the community goals and the natural environment”. (emphasis added)

Section 2. Existing Facility, page 2-1, third paragraph, names major destinations within the project limits. McNee Ranch State Park and Rancho Corral de Tierra are misspelled. Other major destinations that should be included are: Point Montara Lighthouse and Hostel, Maverick’s Surf Break, Surfer’s Beach, and Mirada Surf County Park. The last sentence of this paragraph notes that peak travel demands occur on weekends. Midcoast residents will attest to the fact that peak visitation is highly affected by weather, surf conditions, and/or extremely high or low tides, which are not limited to summer, so peak travel demands can be at any time of the year.

CGF suggests that as part of the proposed improvements, special signage should be developed at the entry to each of the communities of Montara, Moss Beach, and Miramar (and also for El Granada and Princeton as a component of other highway improvement projects) with common thematic design graphics featuring the place name and a special symbol of that community’s definitive scenic, natural history, or historic feature. Possibilities include a whale for Gray Whale Cove, the lighthouse for Montara, and a Cypress tree or starfish for Moss Beach. Beautiful signage with a small area of appropriate landscaping not only would celebrate each community’s uniqueness but would also provide a sense of arrival and traffic calming benefits as noted in the Phase 1 Highway 1 Safety and Mobility Study (page 15).

Mirada Road (n.b., Mirada Road/Alto Avenue would be a more correct title):

CGF questions whether the Mirada Road/Alto Avenue project should be included as one of the five proposed project areas. It does not appear to be a priority for the following reasons:

1. Few pedestrians cross at this intersection. In Section 2.4 Deficiencies, page 2-3, the Report states that at Mirada Road, residents and visitors cross Highway 1 to access Miramar Beach and the California Coastal Trail. CGF questions whether pedestrian crossings pose a significant safety issue at this intersection. There are relatively few residents or businesses east of Highway 1 served by Alto Avenue and Purissima Way. No data is provided as to how many people cross at this location. Nor is there data as to how many people use the bus stop at the Mirada Road/Alto Avenue intersection, but it is likely not many.
2. This intersection has experienced very few accidents. In Table 2-3, page 2-6: which breaks down the 3-year accident history for 2009 - 2012, there have been only three accidents at this intersection, and none involved pedestrians.
3. The planned Parallel Trail along the east side of Highway One will provide an important pedestrian/bicycle route for residents to get to schools and neighborhood services in the Midcoast and Half Moon Bay. CGF has consistently recommended that this southernmost segment of the Parallel Trail in the Midcoast should be built first, as it will connect to the northernmost phase of Half Moon Bay’s Parallel Trail from Roosevelt to the City Limits,

thereby providing much greater connectivity. Residents who live on the east side of Highway 1 will not have to cross the Highway 1 to access local jobs, neighborhood services, and schools except at the signalized intersection at Frenchman's Creek.

4. Alternative 2 Plans for this intersection as depicted in Attachment B propose a continuous raised median and continuous left turn lanes rather than a simple island of refuge for pedestrians at the intersection. This continuous raised median and left turn lanes extend from an unknown point south of the Half Moon Bay city limits to an unknown point north of Medio Drive; it is impossible to determine exactly where this project ends, since the Plans in Attachment B extend beyond the page. This far more extensive project would require increasing the width of the highway by at least 18 feet and would unnecessarily impact sensitive wetlands and riparian habitats (ESHA) on each side of Arroyo de en Medio Creek. Alternative 2 could also potentially make the Parallel Trail more challenging and perhaps infeasible due to significant additional impacts to ESHA at Arroyo de en Medio. (n.b., the name of the community on the Mirada Road Plans should be changed from "El Granada" to "Miramar").

Environmental Issues, Section 4, page 4-17 identifies coastal resources potentially affected by the project. Transportation and Traffic are **not** coastal resources, and should not be included in this list. Overhead street lighting for medians is an important safety feature, but should be carefully directed so that the lighting does not spill beyond the roadway. Special consideration will need to be given any overhead lighting at the Gray Whale Cove area to ensure that fugitive lighting does not shine out to the ocean, which could adversely affect pelagic birds. The suggested Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) at some pedestrian crossings may not be suitable considering the County Scenic Corridor policies. At Gray Whale Cove, RRFBs or similar devices would be important safety measures due to the speed of traffic and limited sight distance. CGF is also concerned that Alternative 2 projects would require removal of 90 trees. What species and size of trees would be removed? The mature Monterey cypress trees are a scenic amenity in Moss Beach and Montara and contribute greatly to the scenic and visual quality of these communities. They should be preserved to the maximum extent possible. Application of Context Sensitive Solutions would support their preservation.

Recommendations, Section 6, page 6-1: The Report states that public acceptance of the alternatives is a key factor for the project moving forward. CGF is concerned that this statement implies that all five projects must be treated as a single project., and the only choice is between Alternatives 1 and 2.

CGF suggests that the Recommendations should include an additional step which further refines the various elements of the Alternatives at each of the five locations to reach a Preferred Alternative that will likely not be simply Alternative 1 or 2 throughout the project limits. CGF strongly recommends "no project" at Mirada Road.

General Recommendations and action items for future studies, page 6-1 include "determine the optimal locations for the pedestrian crossings based on pedestrian counts". In Moss Beach, if there is a continuous raised median to provide refuge for pedestrians, optimal locations may well be at

each intersection, since most people will not bother to go out of their way to cross the highway. In Montara, Alternative 1 provides median islands at key crossings, which CGF supports rather than a continuous raised median.

Finally, CGF requests that the Preferred Alternative, as modified in response to public comments, should be presented to the Midcoast Community Council and the San Mateo County Planning Commission before moving into the Environmental Review and Permitting process. To date there has been a lot of confusion between this project and the Connect the Coastside planning effort.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at: 650-854-0449, or email. Any written correspondence should be sent to my home office address: 339 La Cuesta Drive, Portola Valley, CA 94028.

Thanks for consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lennie Roberts". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Lennie Roberts, San Mateo County Legislative Advocate
Committee for Green Foothills

cc: Supervisor Don Horsley
Midcoast Community Council