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Horsley weighs in at MCC meeting

By Alex Orlando 22 hrs ago

[Home](#) / [Local News Stories](#)

The Midcoast Community Council had a special guest at last week's meeting — and he had more than a few thoughts to share on several prominent Coastside issues, including fire prevention and traffic congestion.

At the Jan. 9 meeting, San Mateo County Supervisor Don Horsley wasted little time, launching into a discussion about streamlining traffic circulation in Moss Beach.

"I know some of you are really interested in a roundabout," said Horsley. "We've talked about a cooperative agreement, pretty much like what we had at Surfer's Beach. But it was rather disappointing. What they're saying is that they'd be happy to oversee the site, but that (we) should look for money someplace else.

"Essentially, they're not going to fund it," he continued. "And I know (state) Sen. Jerry Hill was surprised at that as well."

Horsley then summarized a letter from Caltrans regarding the mobility and safety improvements along Highway 1. According to the letter from Caltrans officials, the agency invests more than \$30 million a year for various repairs and safety improvements in San Mateo County, but doesn't deem those necessary near the Cypress Avenue intersection in Moss Beach.

"Caltrans supports your traffic study efforts and goal of evaluating the roundabout as part of the local development for traffic mitigation requirements," said Horsley, reading from the Caltrans statement. "And Caltrans would be available to provide oversight.

"In essence, it's a nice way of saying, in 10 years, maybe we'll look at it," added Horsley. "So, I'll have to go back and meet with them. And I'll bring in Sen. Hill to try and resurrect that."

While roundabouts are still relatively rare in California, studies from the Insurance Institute of Highway Safety and the Federal Highway Administration Office of Safety have found they result in a 75 percent reduction in injury collisions and a 90 percent reduction in overall fatalities.

And according to officials with the MCC, the highest crash rates of all Midcoast intersections occur at traffic signals. The advisory council recently hired Michael Wallwork, a roundabout expert, to prepare concept designs for the intersection at California Avenue and Highway 1.

“If I had my druthers, I think a roundabout at California is probably the best solution,” said Horsley. “All of these ideas about concrete (barriers) in the middle of the expressway just aren’t going to work. I’m not sure that a roundabout is the only answer, but I think we have to do that. We have to do something for that community, if we’re going to put additional housing (in Moss Beach).”

In the wake of several recent, devastating wildfires across California, Horsley also touched on fire prevention and proper management of the eucalyptus trees dotting El Granada. He referenced a 1917 fire that started in Pacifica, devastated Montara and killed 13 people in El Granada.

“Our Parks Department, because we control Quarry Park, is heavily populated with eucalyptus trees,” said Horsley. “And we can’t prevent a fire there, but what we can do is make sure that there are fire breaks to get people out quickly.

“We’re going to start doing some vegetation management,” he continued. “And the board recently authorized the purchase of some additional wood chippers.”

At one point, the discussion halted so Horsley could swear in the MCC’s newest member, Len Erickson, an education consultant who has served on the council in the past.

“I will well and faithfully discharge the duties in which I am about to enter,” said Erickson, his right hand in the air.