



County of Santa Cruz

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November 28, 2011

Santa Cruz County Regional
Transportation Commission
1523 Pacific Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Dear Members of the Commission:

On December 1, 2011, this Commission is receiving a recommendation from our staff for our priorities for the 2012 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Throughout the process of deciding on our priorities, we have heard much about the critical need for an increased level of investment in local streets and roads infrastructure, as well as the need to continue funding Highway 1 improvements. We face increasing infrastructure needs and decreasing funding sources.

At our last meeting, there was a great deal of discussion about our priorities as a Commission. We do not intend the recommendations in this letter to be a vehicle for revisiting that debate. Rather, we are proposing that Commissioners work together to address all the needs, as well as we possibly can, in as cooperative a way as possible.

As traditional revenue streams shrink and the backlog of critical projects continues to grow, it is imperative that we work together strategically and thoughtfully. It is clear we will need to plan for the longer term and recognize that our transportation needs are more likely to be solved through collaboration rather than through argument. There will never be enough money for all the transportation projects that need to be built and there will always have to be compromises.

We have come to a point in the Highway 1 project where we need to reconsider how we move forward. It has become clear that we cannot expect to have the funding to build a \$500 million project. Instead, it seems more likely that we will only be able to do smaller pieces of that project in the future. Exactly when, where, and how we do those projects is something that we need to plan. We would hope that all Commissioners will support these efforts, which would be a compromise between those who support the full Highway 1 HOV project and those who oppose any improvements to Highway 1.

The other piece for us to consider now is the need for additional funding for local road improvements and repairs to storm-damaged roads. The unincorporated county faces many millions in storm-damaged road repairs, and all of the local cities have infrastructure needs that far exceed the available funding.

The first compromise we are asking our fellow Commissioners to consider is to request that the California Transportation Commission allow the majority of the 2012 STIP funds to be used for local road improvements and storm damage repair. We have asked staff to prepare a STIP plan that delays the final design and right-of-way work on the Highway 1–Soquel to 41st Avenue Auxiliary Lane project for two years and, instead, divides those funds among the projects proposed by the Cities and the County. That proposal is attached. The next step will be for the Commission to support an allocation to the Soquel–41st Avenue Auxiliary Lanes right-of-way and design project (which includes the Chanticleer Bike/Pedestrian Bridge), when the next opportunity arises for the RTC to request STIP funding. The proposal outlined above does not change the Commission’s commitment to program \$370,000 in RSTP funds to complete both the Tier 1 program level EIR for the Highway 1 corridor and the Tier 2 project level EIR for the Soquel-41st Avenue Auxiliary Lanes project.

We find ourselves in a unique situation that encourages us to step back and consider how this Commission should function in the future. People in all of our jurisdictions are asking for solutions to failing local streets and roads. People are also begging us to make progress on Highway 1 improvements and alleviate the choking congestion so many people face on a daily basis. We need to find ways to meet both needs as well as we possibly can and demonstrate a level of leadership which our constituents rightfully expect of us.

We therefore recommend that the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission adopt the attached revised STIP recommendations for 2012, that we all work together to advocate for these allocations now, and that we advocate for Highway 1 improvements in future STIP cycles.

Sincerely,



ELLEN PIRIE, Supervisor
Second District



MARK W. STONE, Supervisor
Fifth District

EP/MWS:ted
Attachment

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