

Midcoast Community Council

*An elected Advisory Council to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
representing Montara, Moss Beach, El Granada, Princeton, and Miramar*
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Date: April 13, 2016
To: Rob Bartoli, Project Planner
Cc: Supervisor Don Horsley
Joe LaClair, Planning Services Manager
SMC Planning Commission
Jeannine Manna, CCC District Supervisor
From: Midcoast Community Council/ Chris Johnson, Chair
Subject: **Connect the Coastside** (Development of a Comprehensive Transportation Management Plan (CTMP) per LCP Policy 2.53):
Evaluation of Recommended Alternative and Land Use Policy Options

Thank you for the two recent presentations of the revised transportation alternatives and land use policy options. The following MCC comments reflect community input on the most recent reports and also draw from the community-based planning effort of the Safety & Mobility Studies completed in 2012 and the Midcoast crossings design evaluations completed by the County in 2015.

LAND USE POLICIES

The purpose of LCP Policy 2.53 is to address the cumulative traffic impacts of residential development at LCP buildout, to mitigate for residential development's significant adverse cumulative impacts on public access to the coast, and to thoroughly evaluate the feasibility of developing lot merger, lot retirement, and traffic mitigation fee programs, and expansion of public transit.

From the start Connect the Coastside has been presented to the community as an opportunity to put together a mixed bag of transportation "improvements" to accommodate a level of development that is otherwise unsustainable and not desired by most residents or the public that wishes to come here and enjoy their coast. We are all acutely aware that the Coastside's jobs/housing imbalance is the opposite of the countywide problem and yet a steady stream of new houses is being built here far from the jobs that can support their residents, and cumulatively adding to our traffic woes.

Taking action on permanently reducing potential residential buildout numbers was the course correction the community asked for a year ago, not a shorter 25-year development time frame that relies on extending growth rate limits, masks the consequences of full buildout, and thus delays or avoids needed action and lets our best opportunities slip away.

- Implement the mandatory sub-standard lot merger program without further delay. LCP buildout numbers already assume the corresponding reduction in buildable lots.
- Move forward now with 1:1 residential lot retirement for new subdivisions. Don't wait for the CTMP. Donor sites should be legal, developable, residentially zoned lots to ensure no net increase in residential buildout.
- Implement a conservation lot purchase program to reduce residential buildout

numbers and provide broader benefits such as rounding out existing parkland or adding adjacent parking, managing retreat of subdivided and/or developed areas that are in the path of Sea Level Rise and coastal erosion, and avoiding development in environmentally sensitive and hazard areas.

BUILDOUT ANALYSIS

Midcoast non-residential development and jobs forecast estimates assume all possible commercial properties are developed, which does not seem realistic. Either a reliable market study similar to that done for Half Moon Bay should be completed, or this section of the report should be removed, since it is not an LCP requirement for the CTMP.

PUBLIC TRANSIT IS KEY

Public transportation spending needs to dramatically shift emphasis from facilitating private vehicle travel by building ever more road infrastructure, to developing and subsidizing efficient and convenient public transit. Public transit on the Coastside is so deficient that virtually the only users are those who have no other options and must endure the delays and inconvenience. The CTMP proposed standards will not help because they are designed to prevent bus overcrowding and provide amenities in populous urban areas. The Coastside is a perfect opportunity to establish a good public transportation system because the majority of residents live near or on a single track route (Highway 1) to get to BART, Caltrain, SFO, and downtown San Francisco.

- Seek funding for regular, convenient, SamTrans express routes between Half Moon Bay and BART and between the Midcoast and Caltrain, to better accommodate commuters and reduce peak AM/PM traffic.
- Seek full funding for school buses. To encourage ridership, consider limiting or charging for high school parking and make the bus ride free.

TRANSPORTATION and BIKE/PED

Delay Index Road Segment Standard: The new Delay Index is an easily understood representation of driving conditions, like the green/yellow/red of Google traffic maps, but the assignment of acceptable levels seems arbitrary. The proposed standard of level 2 as acceptable may represent an increased level of congestion over the existing standard in the LCP. We don't know. It seems exaggerated to raise the acceptable level to 3 by simply calling existing paved shoulders bike lanes. It's as though we're told red is the new yellow.

Timeline for projects: In terms of transportation improvements, 25 years is not long when you consider the current Midcoast crossings project which is estimated now to take 12 years to provide one left turn lane and three crossings.

Crossings: Rather than a string of painted highway crossings with flashing beacons, please provide median refuge islands which are a key feature in the Safety & Mobility Study. They are statistically safer than flashing beacons and less likely to cause traffic congestion. Also consider the risk of vehicles being rear ended when stopping for pedestrians on the high-speed roadway. Pedestrian wait time can best be reduced by crossing one direction of traffic at a time without stopping traffic. There are many more gaps in traffic one direction at a time with a shorter distance to walk than there are gaps in both directions at once with twice the distance to walk.

Consistent highway cross section: Instead of paved curbs and gutters along the entire highway, a consistent cross section in rural and transition areas could be as simple as a tactile edge stripe and colorized bike lanes, as suggested in the Safety & Mobility Study.

Roundabouts are preferred to traffic signals if at all possible. They have 75% fewer injury collisions and a 90% reduction in overall fatalities. The highest accident rates of all Midcoast intersections are the ones with traffic signals. Roundabouts keep traffic moving through intersections, and have significantly less delay than signals when managing cross-street traffic during peak hours. They increase intersection capacity due to lower speeds and resulting smaller gaps between vehicles. Fuel consumption and emissions are reduced by vehicles spending less time idling and not starting from a complete stop. Large trucks can make U-turns via the central truck apron. Roundabouts provide traffic calming in village areas and safe crossings, one direction of traffic at a time, set back from roundabout entry points. They continue to function during power outages and avoid the extensive backups caused when malfunctioning signals revert to blinking red.

A roundabout at Ruisseau Français would be preferable and cost half the estimated \$2.6 million for the proposed stacking lanes to address congestion caused by the signal. The previously recommended roundabout at Kehoe, with estimated cost of \$1.2 million, has inexplicably and unfortunately been changed to a signal (though still listed as a roundabout on P.37 and in Table 3).

Moss Beach needs a context appropriate village circulation plan as was outlined in the Safety & Mobility Study. The potential for a roundabout at each end of town (at Vallemar and Cypress) would calm traffic without stopping it and favor right-turn side-street highway entry with convenient U-turns at each end of town. The CTMP ignores the village as a whole and stops highway traffic to favor two side streets, comparable to the situation we are familiar with at Frenchman's Creek (Ruisseau Français), but two-fold. There is no provision for stacking lanes to reduce congestion caused by the signals, and actually doubling the travel lanes through the village would complete the destruction of the community vision.

For the Cypress intersection, please provide the performance analysis of the 130-ft roundabout under various levels of development up to buildout, as well as alternative designs or solutions besides a traffic signal. Please plan to widen Cypress just west of the highway to allow for separate lanes for right and left turning vehicles accessing the highway. A left-turn acceleration lane is already included in Phase 1 of the Midcoast Crossings Project. Providing the extra turn lane will reduce delays and increase safety at this intersection, and may delay or remove the need for signals. In your analysis, consider that at busy times locals wanting to turn left onto the highway will frequently resort to turning right and then left at Marine in order to round the block and re-enter the highway northbound. This useful maneuver can be blocked by only two vehicles waiting on Cypress due to the narrow width of the road.

Feasibility and Cost Estimates: There are glaring cost discrepancies between same or similar designs in the Midcoast Crossings Project and the CTMP. This undermines public confidence in the reports. The same design at Gray Whale Cove is \$440K in the CTMP and \$1.3 million per the Transportation Authority (TA) engineers.

Lighthouse/16th: The community preference for the Safety & Mobility Study concept plan for median refuge island for the lighthouse/16th crossing was thwarted in 2015 when we were told by the TA engineers that it would require extensive road widening and cost \$4.6 million. The only other choice given was painted crosswalk with flashing beacons for \$520K. Now the CTMP estimates only \$170K for the Safety & Mobility Study concept plan we had initially strongly supported. This creates a crisis of confidence for people who participate in the planning process in good faith and give their input based on the information provided.

Access Consolidation should also be considered in the Midcoast. Limited highway access restrictions should be enforced in Moss Beach where some businesses have block-long uncontrolled highway access, and new residential development continues to be approved with direct highway access instead of requiring side street access.

El Granada: Coastal erosion and sea level rise must be incorporated into planning for Highway 1, intersections, and trails fronting El Granada. The diagonal parking proposal was part of one concept alternative for the relocation of Highway 1 at Surfers' Beach. This may not be the best temporary parking solution for the existing road configuration. Alhambra & Obispo specific sidewalk location and design should await design of the Parallel Trail through this area.

Main St & Carlos Traffic Calming: Speed display units and speed humps are proposed in the report narrative, although the cost estimate appendix (Project R17: \$522K) has the actual features from the Safety & Mobility Study. It's hard to know what is intended for the CTMP and if the cost estimate matches. These streets are proposed for the Parallel Trail route and any improvements will likely be made in coordination and with community input. Therefore we recommend this be left out of the CTMP.

Capistrano & Airport St: CTMP proposes Airport St Class III bike route (\$239K), which it already is. The details of community-based planning for this area are best left to Plan Princeton, therefore we recommend this be left out of the CTMP.

Trails: Paving of dirt segments of the Coastal Trail is not necessarily desirable and should be left to a community planning effort. Correction on P.30, first bullet: There is no existing Parallel Trail segment between the Pillar Point RV Park and Coronado. This bullet should refer to a segment between 2nd St and Coronado.

Bike lanes with road widening: For Highway 1, from Montara to Devil's Slide, the cost estimate doesn't appear to account for grading, retaining walls, and environmental damage to widen the roadbed on the coastal cliffs. It's important to have a complete and realistic estimate of the cost.

Route 92 bike lanes are deemed feasible in the report, with no mention in the \$21 million cost estimate of the challenges of widening the road cuts through the mountains nor of retaining walls and environmental mitigation. Given the distance, mountainous terrain and athletic ability required, bike lanes over 92 would be unlikely to take many cars off the road or justify raising the acceptable delay index to 3. Prior Caltrans proposed curve correction and widening project for Route 92 between lower and upper 35 was dropped due to extensive mitigation and land acquisition requirements.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.