

# MidCoast Community Council

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

*Serving 12,000 coastal residents*

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Via Fax and email: 9 Pages total

**To: Mike Schaller**

San Mateo County Planning and Building Division

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**re: PLN2001-00799**, the Caltrans application for a CDP to conduct geotechnical exploratory work for the Devil's Slide Tunnel.

**cc: San Mateo County Planning Commission**

Dear Mike,

The MidCoast Community Council and the Council's Public Works Committee have reviewed PLN2001-00799, the Caltrans application for a CDP to conduct geotechnical exploratory work for the Devil's Slide Tunnel. The Public Works Committee met on January 15 and the Council discussed this issue at our January 23 meeting, with Caltrans personnel in attendance.

Caltrans Project Manager Skip Sowko was kind enough to arrange a site visit on January 17. Public Works Committee Chair April Vargas and I joined you and Caltrans staff in an exploration of the tunnel area and other locations adjacent to the Hwy 92 widening project that have been successfully revegetated following construction.

The revegetation plan for the drilling sites is one that is of particular concern to local residents. Caltrans Senior Landscape Architect David Yam had several photographs showing conditions immediately following construction projects on Devil's Slide in 1985 and the later project on Highway 92. The Council recommends that these photographs be included as part of the Staff Report for the CDP application, complete with recent photographs showing the same revegetated areas as they appear currently. We also recommend that the County also specify that irrigation or any other means required to ensure revegetation of coastal scrub must be provided by Caltrans following completion of the drilling operations.

Other Council concerns include:

- the discovery of inaccuracies within the Biological Reports and Surveys. A listing of these errors, prepared on January 22th after review of the reports and discussion of the issues at our Public Works Committee meeting, accompanies this letter, along

with a follow-up letter from a scheduled field trip to the site on January 28th. Skip assured us that the necessary corrections would be made and submitted to the County before this application request is heard by the Planning Commission.

- the possibility of the work continuing into the wet weather months next winter. The Highway 92 project encountered many problems with erosion and creek contamination due to adverse weather conditions and insufficient contingency planning. Mitigation for these incidents have yet to be completed. We ask that the County closely monitor all activities associated with this CDP request and ensure that all mitigation measures outlined in the Biological Reports be strictly followed. If necessary, drilling operations can be suspended during wet weather.
- the lack of third party review of the biological documents submitted. The Council requests that biologists with local expertise review the reports and be invited to make comments and suggest revisions to improve the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the data submitted. The Council further requests that all comments received by other reviewing agencies be included as part of the Staff Report for this application.

The Council voted to recommend the approval of the Coastal Development Permit with the conditions noted above. In addition, a subsequent visit to a former exploration site confirmed the presence of damage which has yet to be repaired. A separate document, outlining this damage complete with recommendations for its rehabilitation, is also attached to this letter.

The MidCoast Community Council appreciates the opportunity to comment on this matter and looks forward to continuing cooperation among Caltrans staff, the County and the local community.

Sincerely,



Chuck Kozak  
Chair, MidCoast Community Council

**Follow-up notes on PLN2001-00799: Biological Reports and Surveys for Caltrans' Coastal Development Permit application for geotechnical exploratory work for the proposed Devil's Slide Tunnel.**

This follow-up is based on discussions with Skip Sowko, and a site visit with David Yam, Sid Shadle and Richard Vonarb of Caltrans. Refer to January 22 Initial report for corresponding items of concern,

1. Caltrans Report (Biological Survey Report for the Devil's Slide Tunnel Bridge Geotechnical Investigation Program) – November 20, 2001: field survey conducted week of September 3, 2001.
  - a. Methodology and wording for disposition of drilling spoils and site disturbance will be made consistent between the two reports.
  - b. This item was our misinterpretation of the site location in the report – the analysis given in the original report is correct. Analysis was based on a continuing survey of the area over time, not just at the time of the report preparation.

Still, further surveys should be conducted during work at the appropriate time of year to determine if the sites exhibit characteristics that could be determined as habitat for species of concern in the area.

- c. See comments in 1b above concerning timing of survey and characteristics of species of concern.
2. CH2MHILL Report (State Route 1 Devil's Slide Bypass: Biological Surveys of Geotechnical Investigation Sites) – December, 2001: field survey conducted week of August 27, 2001.
  - a. This application is for a separate CDP that is a preliminary investigation process for the proposed tunnel project. Impacts from activities of this project should not be justified or mitigated through another project that is not fully approved or designed, and reasonable and acceptable mitigation and restoration plans will be developed for each impact of this separate application independent of any potential future activities.
  - b. As these sites concern one of the clearly delineated wetland sites of the project, these access issues will be clarified, detailed, and determined to have minimal impact before approval of the application.
  - c. Refer to 1a above.

- d. Areas from earlier exploratory drilling work that were damaged and left unremediated in erosion control, runoff, revegetation and invasive species control will be repaired and reconstructed during the course of this work, including installation of proper drainage on the road access area above the riparian area above the South Portal to prevent further slope failure and damage to the riparian area and surrounding habitats. Specified erosion control measures in approval conditions should be included.
- e. See concerns detailed in 2d above on potential impacts of constructed roads and pads during periods of heavy storm runoff.
- f. No further action indicated.
- g. See notation about date of surveys addressed in 1b above.
- h. Incorrect specifications of plant species in report to be corrected and missing species of concern to be included.
- i. Include the ridge that sits between the proposed disposal area and the South Portal area as a potential habitat for Hickman's cinquefoil.
- j. Note that three species noted as food plants for these butterflies, may be found within or in the near vicinity of the project area.
- k. Methodology for restoring the Northern Coastal Scrub habitat to be augmented by replanting of established plants, targeted reseeding, and careful preservation and replacement of removed root crowns of mature specimens.
- l. Methodology on restoring the Central Coast Riparian Scrub to include runoff and stormwater management for existing and newly constructed roads and trails to prevent slope failure that could severely impact these communities as seen from the earlier exploratory work done in the South Portal area. See 2d above.
- m. Conduct surveys and searches for the RLF at the South Portal. An established population is known to exist in Green Valley, immediately to the south, and, especially in the summer when the animals range quite far from their breeding ponds, could easily be found within the construction areas.
- n. see comments in 1b, 1c, 2g and 2h above.