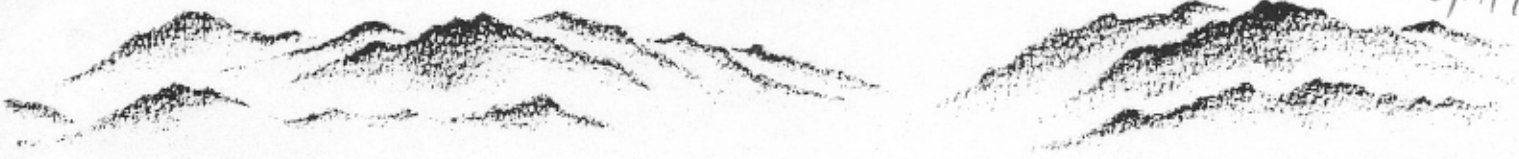


8/17/94



SIERRA CLUB • LOMA PRIETA CHAPTER
San Mateo • Santa Clara • San Benito Counties

August 3, 1994

Councilmember James Marsh
Mid-Coast Community Council
P.O. Box 64
Moss Beach, CA 94038

Dear Councilmember Marsh:

I am writing you today to request your help to preserve Montara Mountain, McNece Ranch State Park and the rural environment of the San Mateo County coast. You are likely aware of the attempts by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to build a freeway bypass of Highway 1 at Devil's Slide. Despite local opposition and the existence of a better alternative, Caltrans has adamantly insisted that a four-lane, 4.5 mile freeway over Montara Mountain is the only solution to the problem of the very occasional closure of the existing road due to landslides and rock falls. In addition to permanently scarring the spectacular mountain, the bypass would destroy a state park that is considered among the best in the region for hiking, biking and viewing a diverse plant and wildlife population.

Caltrans' bypass proposal is currently tied up in court and the legal issues will not be resolved any time soon. Even if Caltrans wins the legal battle, they would need to find upward of \$50 million before beginning construction. Current cost estimates for the bypass are running in excess of \$100 million, twice as much as Congress allocated for the project in 1983. The rest of the money would likely have to come from the state transportation budget, which is currently almost \$3 billion in the red. Caltrans won't admit it, but the truth is that with desperately needed projects, such as earthquake retrofits still unfunded, this is a project the state and the county simply can't afford.

Fortunately, there is a solution that would permanently repair Highway 1, would not require any additional state or county funding, would provide a substantially safer road, and would not cause the irrevocable environmental damage that the Sierra Club finds unacceptable. The modified MDA, described in the enclosed factsheets, would move the slide material entirely below the highway and construct the road on solid ground several hundred feet inland from the current alignment. It would result in a straighter roadbed built on a broad plateau with plenty of room for shoulders and guardrails, making it safer than either the existing road or the bypass. It could be built for less than \$50 million, so the project could get started right away.

I hope you will join us in taking a fresh look at this issue in the harsh light of fiscal reality and help us craft a practical solution that we can all get behind. I have enclosed a statement of opposition to the bypass that I urge you to sign and send back to us. Until Caltrans is forced to abandon its single-minded pursuit of a bypass, they will not seriously consider alternatives. I have also enclosed three factsheets that detail the problems that doom the bypass and that delineate the feasibility of building an MDA. I believe the facts are overwhelming - the bypass is a boondoggle and the wrong solution for our county. I hope you agree. If you have any questions, feel free to contact us at the number below.

Sincerely,

Maurianne Webster
Maurianne Webster
San Mateo Group Chair
Sierra Club



Sierra Club • Loma Prieta Chapter
3921 East Bayshore Road, Suite 204
Palo Alto, CA 94303
415 390-8411
FAX 415 390-8497