



MENDOCINO  
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
367 North State Street~Suite 206~Ukiah~California~95482

PHILLIP J. DOW, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Telephone 707-463-1859  
Fax 707-463-2212  
www.mendocinocog.org

January 26, 2011

Thad M. Van Bueren, Chairperson`  
Westport Municipal Advisory Council  
P.O. Box 307  
Westport, CA 95488

Dear Mr. Van Bueren:

Again, I apologize for my non-response to your email of September 22, 2009 with an attached letter of Highway 1 safety concerns. After Westport MAC Board Member Scott came by my office in late November, 2010 with a copy of your letter, I found your un-opened email. As you confirmed just recently, the hard copy letter was not mailed to MCOG.

As we discussed, State Route 1 poses some unique problems. Not only are there physical constraints because of the topography of the North Coast, but also regulatory constraints imposed by the Coastal Act. Although, as the regional transportation planning agency, the Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG) has programming authority for the regional share of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), the STIP is primarily for capital improvement projects that improve capacity. As you are aware, Route 1's location within the coastal zone precludes capacity improvements except within urbanized areas of the route.

My response to each of the safety concerns printed on the back of your letter is attached. I shared my draft response with Caltrans District 1 earlier this month. They provided some comments to me regarding similar issues that had been identified in a letter from Mr. Sean Hogan on August 24, 2009. These comments from Caltrans have been incorporated herein.

The issues identified by the Westport Municipal Advisory Committee have been placed on the MCOG agenda for consideration at our meeting on February 7, 2011. I look forward to seeing you, other Westport MAC members, and Westport residents at the meeting.

Sincerely,

Phillip J. Dow, P.E.  
Executive Director

cc: Dan Gjerde, MCOG Chair  
Jesse Robertson, Caltrans District 1

Attachment

## Westport Municipal Advisory Council

### Highway 1 Safety Concerns, Ten Mile Bridge to Rockport

#### **1. No Northbound passing lane between Fort Bragg and Westport**

Passing lanes are generally provided on highways where there are extended highway segments either where there are no passing opportunities or where passing is prohibited. Passing opportunities in this segment exist, but they are limited due to topography. In general, the need for passing lanes increases as a function of traffic volume. In recent years the average annual daily traffic ranges from about 1500 vehicles per day near MacKerricher Park to 900 vehicles per day in Westport. The benefit/cost ratio of such an improvement would likely be very low, especially since much of the highway right-of-way on this segment is prescriptive. Unless passing lanes are warranted as a safety improvement, construction is unlikely. The California Coastal Act requires that Highway 1 remain a two-lane facility, and limits widening to capacity improvement projects in to urbanized areas (Fort Bragg & vicinity). Passing lanes are considered capacity-increasing improvements. Since Highway 1 is expected to function above its concept level of service (LOS E) through 2020 and the area of concern lies outside urbanized areas, I believe there is little chance of developing passing lanes in this area.

#### **2. No marked pullouts for slower traffic between Fort Bragg and Rockport**

In general, Highway 1 occupies narrow, prescriptive right-of-way north of Fort Bragg. Much of the highway has little or no shoulders, with unpaved portions of the right-of-way occupied by drainage ditches, utilities, and cut or fill slopes. Opportunities for turn-out development are, by the nature of Highway 1, limited. There may be some opportunities to create turn-outs at locations where roadside conditions are favorable and conditions allow safe use. I understand that the Caltrans District 1 Traffic Operations Office is evaluating this segment for suitable turn-out locations.

#### **3. No signage advising slower traffic to pull over between Fort Bragg and Rockport**

I would expect that Caltrans would not erect standard "Slow Traffic Use Turn-Outs" signs unless there had been pullouts constructed to certain standards at specific locations. As this concern is directly related to the prior concern, the response is that there may be a possibility to construct a series of pullouts with proper signing on this highway.

#### **4. Inconsistent and poorly located speed limit signs in the Village of Westport**

The establishment of speed zones on State highways is a process that considers the prevailing travel speeds of highway traffic, safety, and roadway conditions. Over time, roadway and traffic conditions may change and that may result in speed zone changes. Often in rural areas there is transitional zoning that promotes a staged decrease in speed on approach to a community, whereas there is a staged increase toward normal highway speeds in the opposite direction. This may be an explanation for the perceived inconsistency. If individual speed limit signs are located in areas where they are obscured, either the obstructions can be removed or the sign relocated. In general however, the signs need to be placed as closely to the established limits of the speed zone as possible.

#### **5. No pedestrian walkways and only a single crosswalk in the Village of Westport**

Pedestrian facilities are needed in the majority of rural communities in Mendocino County. MCOG does have access to limited funding sources for pedestrian facility construction and may be able to assist with other grant funding opportunities for pedestrian facilities. We would be interested in meeting to discuss the community's pedestrian improvement priorities.

There are two general types of crosswalks. Crosswalks occur at the corners of every intersection or junction (3-way intersection) whether or not they are marked. Marked crosswalks are less frequent and are meant to direct pedestrians to a preferred crossing point, whether it is at a mid-block location or at the standard intersection/junction location. The absence of marked crosswalks does not mean there are no crosswalks, but merely that preferred locations have not been identified.

#### **6. Lack of signage for narrow, sharp, steep sections of roadway**

Generally, the more traffic signs that are deployed along highways, the less effective they become in relaying their messages. That is why warning signs are reserved for atypical conditions. Much of Highway 1 is narrow, curvy, and steep. From any direction, motorists traveling to the Westport area would have already traversed many miles of similar highway on S.R. 1, S.R. 20, or S.R. 128. I understand that Caltrans is investigating roadway conditions on 5 specific segments of Route 1 (between PM 66.5 and PM 72.75) for shoulder widening, guardrail, and signage needs.

**7. Lack of guardrails in some locations with negligible shoulder and steep cliffs adjacent**

Caltrans has developed guidelines in their Highway Design Manual for the construction of guardrails. The steepness of the slope, curvature, prevailing speeds and roadway geometrics are considered. Since accident severity can actually be increased by guardrail placement, considerable care is taken in guardrail placement. MCOG will defer to Caltrans in responding to guardrail placement at specific locations.

**8. Increasing numbers of large, slow recreation vehicles with drivers who are unfamiliar with the type of driving conditions they face**

Along most of rural Highway 1, the major operational constraint to large vehicles and to unfamiliar drivers is roadway width. Section 30254 of the Coastal Zone Act of 1976 requires that "...Route 1 in the rural areas of the Coastal Zone remain a scenic two lane road." Although this highway will remain two lanes, less than half of Highway 1 meets minimum width criteria. When roadway rehabilitation is scheduled, minimum width will be brought up to desirable standards. Development of rehabilitation projects on the State highway system can be a lengthy process.

**9. No Daytime Headlight Advisory in an area that can have significant daytime fog**

Daytime headlight zones are established in response to unusual hazardous conditions or very often on road segments that have experienced vehicle collision rates far in excess of the statewide average for similar facilities. Just as is the case for warning signs, measures taken that are intended to warn of "usual" or frequently occurring conditions rapidly lose their effectiveness and contribute to an overall disregard for traffic control devices.

Caltrans evaluated this segment of highway in 2009 for applicability of a Daylight Headlight Section (DHS) and found that this segment did not warrant implementation per established guidelines.

**10. Mix of sightseers, bicycles, RVs, lumber and other commercial trucking on narrow and winding roads**

As it is subject to restrictions in the Coastal Zone Act of 1976, Highway 1 will not be widened beyond two lanes except within and immediately adjacent to urbanized areas it happens to penetrate. Route 1 in the rural areas of the Coastal Zone will remain a scenic two lane road. In segments where rehabilitation is scheduled, shoulders will be widened to the extent possible to provide added width for bicyclist and pedestrians. Added shoulder width also has a safety benefit by providing added recovery area for vehicles that might otherwise drift off the edge of the roadway. In recent years, Caltrans has identified priority segments for systematic shoulder improvements along Highway 1 because of width concerns and the route's continuing popularity as a bicycle touring route.

**11. No signage, bicycle lanes, or other accommodations for bicycles, even though this section of highway is designated part of the Pacific Coast Bicycle Route and is subject to heavy use in dry months of the year**

The draft 2010 Mendocino County Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) addresses the lack of improvements to the Pacific Coast Bicycle Route, as has every RTP for decades. The Route Concept Report for the Route 1 Corridor (Caltrans District 1, 2003) notes the concerns of the Mendocino Council of Governments regarding the absence of improvements for the Pacific Coast Bicycle Route.

The Caltrans District 1 Pacific Coast Bicycle Route Study was completed several years ago. Caltrans has identified bikeway improvement needs and has begun programming priority improvements. Since the Congressional designation did not provide a funding source for improvement, improvements consistent with the Caltrans District 1 Pacific Coast Bicycle Study must compete for funding in the State budgeting process. Unless a dedicated source of funding is identified, widening and other improvements will be constructed systematically over many years, as funds are identified.

**12. Generally increasing volumes of all types of traffic**

Caltrans monitors traffic volumes on all State highways. In the area of concern, there are three monitoring locations on Highway 1 that are reported annually by Caltrans. These reports do not indicate that there has been an increase in traffic in recent years. In fact, the numbers indicate that there is a reduction in overall traffic.

**State Route 1 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) in Vehicles Per Day (VPD)**

YEAR	PM 64.858	PM 77.660	PM 90.874
2003	3500	1200	520
2004	2700	1100	780
2005	2700	1100	780
2006	2700	1000	750
2007	1500	900	750
2008	1500	870	720
2009	1500	850	700

PM 64.858 MacKerricher Park

PM 77.660 Westport

PM 90.874 Junction of SR 211 (Usal Rd.)

Caltrans does not have resources to conduct volume monitoring at all its counting locations each year. Evidently though, there has been enough monitoring since 2003 to indicate a regular decrease in traffic over 2003 levels. Traffic flow has a direct relationship to economic activity. The most recent economic recession is likely reflected in the volumes reported for 2007, 2008, and 2009.

PJD  
1/24/11