



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY GROUP
 Of The Ventana Chapter
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July 10, 2014

Matt Fowler
 50 Higuera Street
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

RE: Route 1/9 Intersection Project in Santa Cruz

Dear Mr. Fowler,

The Sierra Club is concerned that the proposed changes to the Route 1/9 Intersection do not address the reality of global climate disruption. This project can do more to encourage sustainable modes of transportation as well as preserve our heritage trees. Narrowing sidewalks for pedestrians, creating substandard 4 feet wide bike lanes and increasing crossing distances at a busy intersection do not help reduce automobile trips.

The proposed changes violate the goals pertaining to bicycle, pedestrian and transit travel of the City General Plan and the Master Transportation Study. The proposed project is even more appalling since it does not significantly improve the situation for motorists.

We oppose the removal of the grove of heritage eucalyptus trees at the northern corner of Highway 1/9 intersection. This grove has a long history. It is a last remnant of rural Santa Cruz and its loss will dramatically alter the look and feel of the area, creating an urban sterile environment-not a welcoming green appearance for visitors entering our city. The heritage redwood tree in front of the medical office on the southeast corner of the intersection should also be saved.

People visit Santa Cruz to enjoy the natural landscape. Do you want to create an attractive entrance with trees and landscape or a hardscape that looks like L.A.?

This project does not fulfill the goals of the Sierra Club Transportation Policy:

- The Sierra Club supports transportation and systems that:
 minimize the impacts on and use of land, airspace and waterways, minimize the consumption of limited resources, including fuel, and reduce pollutant and noise emissions;
- provide everyone, including pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users, with adequate access to jobs, shopping, services and recreation;

—National Sierra Club Policy

Please improve cyclist/pedestrian safety and save trees in this project:

- 1) The project is in conflict with the Santa Cruz City General Plan.

Sierra Club, Santa Cruz Group

- The project does not deal with the problem of only one entrance/exit to Harvey West area. Goal M3, Action M3.1.1.13 of the General Plan calls for improved access to and from the Harvey West area.
 - Policy M3.2 is to improve the condition, safety and efficiency of the Route 1/9 intersection for motorists as well as for pedestrians and bicyclists. This proposed project does not improve the intersection for cyclists and pedestrians: It removes landscape strips, narrows sidewalks and bike lanes and increases crossing distances.
- 2) The landscaping in front of the Page Smith House should not be removed. This greenery and the landscape strips on River Street make commuting along Route 9 more bearable for pedestrians and beautiful for motorists.
- In your current plan, the 8-foot sidewalk and 5-foot tree-planted landscape strip along both sides of River Street would be narrowed to a 5-foot sidewalk with no landscape strip. A tree-lined landscape strip increases pedestrian safety and comfort and buffers pedestrians and cyclists from the motor vehicles. Existing street trees on River Street would be cut down and converted to a traffic lane.
- 3) The conceptual design of the project does not employ best practices for pedestrian and cyclist safety.
- Increased crossing distances expose walkers to motor vehicle traffic for longer periods of time and are more dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists.
 - Green lanes or clearly marked bike lanes are needed to direct the pathways for cyclists to follow from the bike lane/shoulder to the marked bike lane at the front of the intersection. These markings serve to alert motor vehicle drivers of cyclists' presence.
 - The median islands are not shown to have "noses" on the intersection side of the marked crosswalks. Such islands shield pedestrians from motor vehicles.
 - No cyclist/pedestrian counts were contained in the report. Casual observation of this intersection shows cyclists and pedestrians crossing frequently. The Page Smith House and Santa Cruz Homeless Services Center generate many pedestrian trips across the intersection. The Emma McCrary mountain bike trailhead, Costco, other businesses are destinations for many cyclists using this intersection.
 - The added lanes on the two legs with the marked crosswalks would increase the distance that pedestrians and cyclists would have to travel to cross the intersection. **Sufficient green traffic signal time is necessary for pedestrians and cyclists to cross this wide intersection before the light turns red.**
 - The tiny pork chop island on Route 1, which acts as a pedestrian refuge would be removed. Vehicles turning right at this intersection would get the green light to turn at the same time the pedestrian would get the walk signal to cross River Street. To make pedestrians more visible to drivers, they should be given a Leading Pedestrian Interval to begin crossing River Street before drivers get a green light. Additionally, there should be increased enforcement of California law which requires drivers to STOP on the red light before turning right. Currently most drivers do not stop, and are looking left for oncoming vehicles instead of looking right to see pedestrians
 - Appropriate traffic island design, pavement markings and signage are needed to ensure motorists slow down and yield to any cyclists and pedestrians before merging onto Highway 9 or River Street.

- A curb cut is needed where the bike/pedestrian access to the Gateway Shopping Center intersects River Street.

4) The Initial Study states that the San Lorenzo Multipurpose Path under Route 1 is now considered the primary north/south route for pedestrians and bicyclists. This is not acceptable for people commuting by foot or bike.

- This path does not work for pedestrians whose origin or destination is the Homeless Services Center since it is a much longer trip.

- Walkers and Cyclists taking the path under Route 1 must pass transient encampments and questionable characters even during the daytime.

- The lighting is not adequate with only two such lights, one on either side of the underpass. Many people do not feel comfortable and safe walking on this path under Route 1 during the day and especially after dark. The adjoining portion of the San Lorenzo River Walk is closed at sunset.

5) A second entrance is a better solution.

A better solution to the traffic congestion that will also be better for pedestrians and bicyclists is a second entrance to Harvey West which would eliminate the need to widen the I/9 Intersection. A second entrance/exit should be a higher priority than the proposed project which does not alleviate the current problem.

We urge you to consider these comments to preserve our environment and create a green, beautiful entrance to our city.

Sincerely:



Greg McPheeters
Chair, Santa Cruz Group, Sierra Club