

I attended a meeting conducted by Rich Deal, Traffic Engineer for Monterey, at the Monterey City Hall on 11/30/06 to accept public input on the DEIR done for CalTrans on the Holman Highway widening project. This is a summary of my impressions of that meeting.

The plan's objective is to reduce congestion at the SB Hwy 1 off-ramp to Hwy 68 for the benefit of residents and to improve emergency vehicle access to CHOMP. The approach is to widen the SB off-ramp from Hwy 1 onto Hwy 68, reconfigure the Hwy1/Hwy 68 signalized intersection, widen Hwy 68 from Hwy 1 to the merge lane just past CHOMP, replace the Scenic Drive bridge over Hwy 68, and reconfigure the entrance to CHOMP.

After a brief description of the project by Rich and the consultants that prepared the DEIR, about a dozen people spoke on various issues important to them. People from upper Pebble Beach, particularly Crest Road, spoke of their desire for a sound wall along Hwy 68 to alleviate peak noises, not just averages as specified by CalTrans standards. They also objected to the "ugly" abrupt 14' retaining wall and elimination of trees along Sunridge Road next to Hwy 68. The PBCSD GM spoke of the importance to residents to somehow maintain fire and medical emergency vehicle access, particularly while the Scenic Drive bridge is under construction.

Residents from Skyline Forest expressed the desire for separation of SB Hwy 1 exit traffic going to PB from that going to PG. The reasons for eliminating a separate off-ramp from consideration in the DEIR were discussed as too expensive, given CalTrans freeway access restrictions, or requiring major reconfiguration of the PB "hairpin" and relocation of their entrance gates. Some other suggestions left unanswered were to devise internal connections among the Beverly Center, CHOMP, and Scenic to reduce the extent of changes necessary to the major intersection.

While the discussion was interesting, it was less than compelling since Rich indicated there is no real chance that any of this will take place for years. There is no adequate funding source available now or on the horizon. Some of the more innovative suggestions that were made to reduce the impacts would drive up the cost even further out of reach. At most, this will be a plan for the shelf to be dusted off and updated if/when its time ever comes.

It did not seem that the proposed plan is anywhere near optimum, let alone elegant, or that a wide enough array of options were considered for their technical feasibility. Anything requiring authority beyond CalTrans was dismissed as out of scope and even potential exceptions from some CalTrans standards were not considered. Perhaps another study to build on this one will consider such in the future. The plan seems to this observer to be excessive in some aspects and inadequate in others. I suspect traffic consulting will remain a lucrative business in Monterey.

Rich made the point that this plan is not contingent upon the Hwy 1 Gate reconfiguration in the DMF Plan. (They should be compatible since same design consultant worked on both.)

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