Comment 5

October 22, 2008

Re: Fort Bragg, CA
Simpson Lane / Highway One
Intersection

Dear Ms Rosas,

I support a scaled down version of Alternatwe # 2 (signalization) for the above intersection

Many of the environmental impacts of the signal can be reduced or eliminated by reducing the number of lanes proposed under Alternative # 2. Currently, the proposal calls for 4 lanes running north and south through the intersection. We only need the 3 lanes currently in existence: one south bound, one north bound and the center turn lane. East/west traffic is not expected to increase substantially as the parcels in the east are nearly fully built out. Parcel sizes in that area are restricted by the lack of public sewer or water systems. The Mendocino County General Plan is now in the process of revision. The anticipated life span of the plan is 20 years and no large scale zoning changes (which could increase cross traffic) have been proposed for that area.

I object to the proposed roundabout because there will be no signal to help slow moving foot traffic to dart across all of those lanes, the elliptical unfamiliar shape is going to be more challenging for senior citizens on dark rainy or foggy nights, it forces "through" traffic to merge several times within a few seconds and there are no alternate detours available for people who find a road design such as this confusing. Many of our tourists find the local roads challenging. Most have never driven through a roundabout. The roundabout design will prevent a number of senior citizens living south of the intersection from driving to Fort Bragg because of their fear of merging with other traffic.

The "Impacts checklist" boxes are not labelled. I disagree with the conclusion that the XV Transportation / Traffic d "Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g. sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses." box can be checked "No impact". There is no provision for pedestrians. The ellipse is an unfamiliar shape and will have some impact.

Karen Calvert
P.O. Box 70
Albion CA
95410-0070

5.a

5.b

5.c

Response 5

Response 5.a
Roundabout Lanes and Design
Roundabouts can handle larger volumes of traffic than traffic signals. The intricate relationship between entering, exiting, and circulating traffic on all legs of a roundabout creates this large capacity. Volumes on each leg need to be somewhat balanced in order to create the ideal situation; the greater the balance, the greater the capacity. Roundabout controlled intersections can efficiently service traffic with decreased delay and greater efficiency than traffic signals. This is particularly true where traffic volumes entering the roundabout are nearly balanced on all legs and where there is a high number of left turning vehicles. The high number of left turning vehicles at Simpson Lane coupled with the balanced traffic volumes in both directions on SR 1 provides a balanced volume relationship. Additional factors that can enhance capacity of roundabouts are the size of the roundabout, lane widths, and other geometric factors. Compared to a signalized intersection, there is much less wasted time at a roundabout. Intersections controlled by traffic signals can cause unnecessary delays because of the need to provide a minimum of green light time to each movement in every cycle, thus creating time intervals in which no vehicles are entering the intersection. In contrast, traffic can be present in the roundabout at all times. This continual use is a key factor in the capacity.

A volume balance is required between the various legs for the roundabout to operate properly for all directions of traffic. In the case of the proposed roundabout, Old Coast Highway requires little consideration since its traffic volumes are extremely small. Therefore, we can look at this roundabout as having 3 legs. The left-turning volume from SR 1 to Simpson Lane is the crucial factor. Without this volume, SR 1 becomes solely a heavy commuter route through this intersection, and a small volume from the minor leg would have difficulty entering during peak commute times; but this is not the case with Simpson Lane. During the evening commute, left-turning traffic from southbound SR 1 will interrupt the northbound SR 1 flow, thus providing gaps for Simpson Lane traffic to enter. Traffic counts indicate that there is also a fair volume of left-turning vehicles during the morning commute and at other times of the day. These vehicles will help to produce gaps at all times of the day. We also must acknowledge the fact that northbound SR 1 vehicles will be required, by the roundabout geometry, to slow as they approach the entry. This deceleration, paired with driver hesitation as they look to their left for southbound left-turning vehicles, will also produce gaps for Simpson Lane traffic.

Response 5.b
Senior Citizens
Adequate signage will be posted at each approach stating that there is a roundabout ahead with an advised speed of 15-20 mph and "yield ahead" signs will notify drivers that they may need to come to a complete stop at the roundabout. Another factor that will enforce speed reduction is the curvature and channelization (with raised islands and sidewalks) at the entries. Furthermore, the central island will be built up like a small hill to provide "target value" to the driver. In other words, the central island will be an “attention getter” for the driver and will indicate that he/she is approaching a roundabout. Lighting will be installed on the approaches and within the roundabout to enhance safety during nighttime hours.

Response 5 Continued

The project would not create a reduction in the speed limit; however, the new roadway geometrics will require traffic to slow to speeds of 15-25 mph based on their path through the roundabout. For this reason, there will be a signed "advisory" speed limit through the intersection, which vehicles will have to maintain in order to safely navigate the facility.

Modern roundabouts operate on a "yield at entry" rule, which gives traffic within the roundabout, the right of way. Vehicles wishing to enter must wait for an opening or gap in traffic. If no traffic is present, entering vehicles will slow down and proceed into the roundabout. On a well-designed roundabout, the speeds of the entering vehicles and circulating vehicles are very close, making the merge easy and comfortable. For a multi-lane roundabout, pavement markings and signs will provide lane assignments. Lane use for a two-lane entry at a roundabout is exactly the same as at any intersection with a two-lane approach: vehicles turning left use the left lane, vehicles going straight use either lane, and vehicles turning right use the right lane. Pavement markings and signs will show this directional method, which ensures correct position on entry.

Also, see “Response 1” for further information regarding roundabouts and senior citizens.

Response 5.c
Pedestrians
Shared-use paths or sidewalks will be provided around the perimeter of the roundabout for use by pedestrians and bicyclists. These paths will connect crosswalks on each respective quadrant, giving pedestrians total access to all areas of the intersection. The sidewalks will end with smooth transitions to the existing shoulders of the roadway. Pedestrians will cross only one direction of traffic at a time, making the roundabout a one-decision-at-a-time environment. Furthermore, the crossings are set back from the roundabout by a minimum of 25 ft, allowing drivers to deal with pedestrians before entering the circulating lane. Refuge areas are provided for pedestrians in each splitter island, allowing the pedestrian to cross one direction, stop at the refuge area, then cross the other. Buffer strips are provided between the sidewalk and roadway to provide added security by increasing the separation between vehicle and pedestrian.

Bicyclists have two options when traveling through a roundabout. The first option is to claim a lane as a vehicle and travel through the roundabout, which is an easy maneuver because the roundabout entry geometry has slowed the motor vehicles to bicycle speeds. Experienced bicyclists would probably choose this option. The other option is to use the shared paths and crossings as a pedestrian.

Comment 6

Darla Tate/D03/Caltrans/CAGov

"Rebecca Deerwater"
<rtm@mcn.org>

10/02/2008 08:42 PM To<Steven_Blair@dot.ca.gov>

cc

SubjectRoundabout at Simpson Lane and Highway 1

Dear Steven:

We sent the following letter into the Advocate-News and Mendocino Beacon expressing our strong support for a roundabout at the intersection of Hwy 1 and Simpson Lane. We were very impressed with your presentation and knowledge on March 31, and we hope you continue the great efforts you have made already in moving this project forward.

Rebecca and Raven Deerwater

Roundabout Sensible Solution for Simpson Lane

We don't know where Phoebe Graubard gets the authority to claim that the residents of the Simpson Lane area want a traffic light as opposed to a roundabout at the intersection of Highway 1 and Simpson Lane. We might all agree that the current situation is unacceptable, but Ms. Graubard does not speak for us. We are strongly in favor of a roundabout.

We, too, were a tad surprised upon first hearing of a roundabout solution at the meeting on March 31, 2008, held at Town Hall in Fort Bragg. But once we learned of the roundabout's benefits, we were convinced that it is the proper and correct solution for implementation by Caltrans.

Here are some of the benefits of a roundabout as opposed to a traffic signal.

Less waiting time. A traffic signal is inherently inefficient. The intersection can only be used by those with the green light. In switching from green to red, there are times when the intersection is empty. A roundabout efficiently directs the traffic and allows for continuous use of the intersection and traffic flow.

At the meeting, Caltrans provided statistics of average times to wait to get through the intersection. The roundabout clearly allowed more cars to get through the intersection more quickly. They also provided data on projected growth in traffic. The roundabout's waiting times are dramatically less (as compared to a traffic signal) with increased traffic.

Less impact on the environment. An additional benefit of less waiting time is the fact that cars will spend less time emitting pollutants into the air while idling and waiting for the light to turn green. An efficient intersection is an environmentally friendly intersection.

Perhaps counterintuitively, a roundabout will take up less space on the planet than a traffic signal. This is because to implement a traffic signal, Caltrans must realign Ocean Drive and Simpson Lane so they are exactly across from each other. Also the approaches in all 4 directions to the intersection have to be redone no matter if there is a traffic signal or a roundabout. The total physical changes is actually less with the roundabout.

Safety . Despite Ms. Graubard's claim that a roundabout will cause more traffic accidents, this is unfounded. This is not the first roundabout Caltrans has implemented. There will be signage and safety measures as part and parcel of putting in a roundabout. There are many communities that have roundabouts without more accidents; drivers adjust to the road conditions.

This specific roundabout also gains some safety. With a traffic signal, often drivers accelerate through the yellow light or brake suddenly. A roundabout slows all the traffic down from all directions. A roundabout requires attention by drivers. In addition, at the Simpson Lane intersection, many drivers "cheat" through the intersection by cutting through the gas station, creating unsafe situations. This problem has been specifically addressed by the roundabout, and access in and out of the gas station will force drivers to use the roundabout.

On March 31, when Caltrans made its presentation comparing a roundabout and a traffic signal; it was the roundabout that cost less and was quicker to construct. The reason so many local officials are for the roundabout is due to the gains made in engineering and safety and cost effectiveness. Many emergency personnel leaders were at the March 31 meeting as another topic of discussion that night was access into the Simpson Lane area if Simpson Lane was blocked due to a storm. No one in attendance mentioned any problems or delays in providing emergency services with a roundabout.

We agree with Ms. Graubard in that you should make your voices heard. We believe that if you learn of the benefits of a roundabout at the intersection of Highway 1 and Simpson Lane, you will join us in the support of a safe, efficient, and elegant solution.

Rebecca and Raven Deerwater

Response 6

Thank you for your support of the roundabout alternative and for your participation in the public comment process. With regard to your safety comment, Caltrans agrees that Ms Graubard's statement about the roundabout causing more accidents is unfounded.

We have also determined that the roundabout will have less wait time. See Table 5 on page 40 for delay comparisons.

Comments 7 & 8

Sandra Rosas/D03/Caltrans/CAGov
10/20/2008 07:12 AM

To Darla Tate/D03/Caltrans/CAGov@DOT
cc Steven Blair/D01/Caltrans/CAGov@DOT
bcc
Subject Fw: comments for Mendo Co

Sandra Rosas
Senior Environmental Planner
(530) 741-4017

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----- Forwarded by Sandra Rosas/D03/Caltrans/CAGov on 10/20/2008 07:12 AM -----

"Henrietta Bensussen" <gardnrz2@mcn.org>
10/19/2008 09:40 AM

To <sandra_rosas@dot.ca.gov>
cc
Subject comments for Mendo Co

Hello Sandra, Re Caltrans intent to adopt a negative declaration for the Simpson Lane/Rte 1 intersection in Ft. Bragg, I vote for the multi-lane roundabout. As a citizen of Ft. Bragg who often drives this route, I think the roundabout an economical, more safe option than the conventional traffic signals.
Henrietta Bensussen
P.O. Box 2435
Fort Bragg, CA 95437
gardnrz2@mcn.org

MICHAEL BELISLE <belislemichael@hotmail.com>
10/21/2008 08:32 PM

To <sandra_rosas@dot.ca.gov>
cc
Subject roundabout in fort bragg

Do the roundabout in Fort Bragg it is a great idea. The people who don't want in don't understand it.

Mike Belisle

Get more out of the Web. Learn 10 hidden secrets of Windows Live. Learn Now

Responses 7 & 8
Thank you for your interest in the project and your support of the roundabout alternative.

Comment 9 & 10

Abbie Colbert
<abbiecolbert@comcast.net>
09/26/2008 12:56 PM

To darla_tate@dot.ca.gov
cc
bcc
Subject Fwd: Simpson Lane Intersection Project

sorry, we're just to the South & on the west side of Hwy 1.

Begin forwarded message:

> **From:** Pelican Storage <pelicanstorage@comcast.net>
> **Date:** September 26, 2008 12:54:40 PM PDT
> **To:** darla_tate@dot.ca.gov
> **Subject: Simpson Lane Intersection Project**
>
> Hi Darla,
> we own a business just to the North of Simpson Lane on Hwy 1, Pelican Storage. We like the roundabout design. So happy that I didn't even have to ask for landscaping because you already incorporated that into the design. Good job on the report.
> I see that there are new requirements to protect Bishop Pine in our area. What is the website where i can find out more about the restrictions on the ESHAs?
>
> Thanks,
> Abbie Colbert

"Paul Clark"
<pclark@mcn.org>
12/10/2008 11:13 AM

To <Steven_Blair@DOT.CA.GOV>
cc
Subject Simpson Lane Fort Bragg

Please add this to the comments for the proposed roundabout for Simpson Lane south of Fort Bragg. No No and No. the citizens of Fort Bragg fought long and hard for Cal Trans to get the Noyo River Bridge approved. Please don't use us as the experiment for Roundabouts. Our visiting population is occupied enough with the scenery and traffic to guarantee accidents with this proposal. If needed to put in a light some wetlands to dedicate for the project let me know, we can find it. This proposal has Mendocino with Little Lake Street and Road with a traditional light. North to Hwy 1 and 20 a normal light. Now between these your are thinking about this roundabout.
They don't mix well with log trucks and motor homes, let alone bicycles. Support us as we have you. No roundabout. Lights only.
Thank you.

Response 9
For this project, the Mendocino County Planning Department has jurisdiction over the coastal zoning code.

Response 10
How will large trucks safely negotiate the roundabout?

Trucks are to claim both lanes (straddle the lane line) while entering a multi-lane roundabout. This will prevent other vehicles from attempting to enter with the truck and thus prevent conflicts, such as cut-offs. A large truck will require the use of both lanes while traveling through the roundabout. Furthermore, since all vehicles in the roundabout circulating the lane have the right of way, once the truck is in the roundabout, entering vehicles will be required to yield before entering. Turning simulation software has been used to ensure that roundabouts can accommodate the turning requirements of the largest vehicle expected to use the facility.

How will tourists and unfamiliar drivers know how to use a roundabout?

Modern roundabouts are emerging as viable intersection alternatives in many areas throughout the country. Chances are that most people know roundabouts, although drivers may not be familiar with the rules of driving a roundabout. However, drivers are familiar with reading signs and interpreting striping and pavement markings, as these are common to any transportation facility, whether it's a roundabout or a stretch of the interstate. With a roundabout, the unfamiliar driver will have a low-speed environment that will be adequately signed and striped. These instructions guide the unfamiliar driver through the roundabout. As in any traffic situation, drivers do need to exercise caution.