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July 6, 2009

Supervisor Salud Carbajal
First District Supervisor
105 E. Anapamu St.
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Supervisor Carbajal,

I want to comment on agenda item A-23 scheduled for the July 7, 2009 meeting of the Board of Supervisors. As a member of the public I am requesting that this item be removed from the Administrative Agenda and considered separately. Item A-23 seeks to establish two no-parking zones along Highway 192 between Mission Canyon Road and Tye Rd. I believe the proposed action extends well beyond the stated objectives and policy of the project as previously represented by the County. Additionally, this item has not been subject to adequate public comment or scrutiny. I am opposed to the approval of this agenda item particularly as it addresses only a minor symptom instead of the true cause of the traffic and safety issues in Mission Canyon.

A simple and much fairer alternative to the creation of new no-parking zones would be to stripe the edge of the State right of way and to only allow parking which is completely off of the roadway, i.e. does not cross the white line and encroach onto the State right of way. This would allow existing parking areas which meet the criteria of being completely off of the road to continue to exist without burdening the County with the time and expense of having to create a no-parking zone in the first place and then grant exemptions to the no-parking zone on a case by case basis – not to mention the ongoing cost of parking enforcement and sign maintenance.

According to County documents found online and titled ROUTE 192 MISSION CANYON SAFETY PROJECT “The main purpose of this project is to enhance traffic, pedestrian and bicycle safety along Foothill Road.” Your statement to Nancy Mixon indicating the project was undertaken “...to enhance safety for egress/ingress for Canyon residents, the traveling public, and emergency vehicles...” is incomplete, overreaching and misleading. In fact, the only proposed restrictions on parking for this project, as found on the county web site, state: “Parking is not allowed on the newly placed shoulders.” There is absolutely no mention of blanket no-parking areas as proposed by Agenda item A-23. Regardless of how long the project has “been in the works”, the plan to create the two proposed no parking zones is a very recent change and, contrary to your implication, has not been subject to adequate public examination.

The true root of most of the traffic, infrastructure, parking, pedestrian safety, bicycle safety, and disaster preparedness problems in the Mission Canyon area is the long

standing failure of County Agencies to enforce the existing zoning and usage rules which are conspicuously flouted throughout the area. Illegal rentals, unpermitted conversions of non-dwelling space into habitations and the blatant over occupation of many parcels have led directly to the overcrowded and dangerous situation affecting all Canyon residents. The critical nature of the existing situation is shown in the conclusions drawn by a recent UCSB study modeling small area evacuation and using Mission Canyon as the area to be evacuated. Using a maximum of 2 vehicles per driveway, (which simple observation would suggest is very low estimate of the actual number of vehicles per driveway), the study concludes that:

“Overall, the results tend to suggest that a major evacuation problem exists without significant levels of intervention (i.e. traffic control) and education. First, education is needed so that neighborhood residents park their vehicles facing the street during high fire risk periods. Second, education is needed to convince residents that taking all of their vehicles may save some personal property, but may lead to loss of life (theirs or their neighbors). Without mitigating demand in terms of vehicles leaving the neighborhood during an evacuation event, this neighborhood is faces a serious risk of a disaster. Simply put, there is a chance that a fate similar to those who died in the Oakland Hills fire may befall those living in Mission Canyon.”

In my opinion, the Board of Supervisors should be spending its time addressing the root causes of the Mission Canyon traffic and safety issues, for example the many long standing and long ignored Mission Canyon residential zoning violations, rather than spending its time on poorly thought out symptomatic band-aids such as agenda item A-23

Thank you for consideration.

Sincerely

Michael Bengry
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