

**Ron and Barbara Carr
21798 Ridgedale Drive
Perris, CA 92570**

December 27, 2008

Cathy Bechtel
RCTC
P.O. Box 12008, Riverside, CA 92502-2208

RE: Support for the No-Build Option for the Mid-County Parkway

Dear Ms. Bechtel:

Please consider this letter to be our comments on the draft EIR for the proposed Mid-County Parkway (MCP). We are in opposition to alternative #9 as described in the report. In the Lake Mathews region, where the proposed route runs parallel with Ridgedale Drive and intersects with the end of Descanso Drive, a substantial amount of pristine countryside will be destroyed. The hillside above Lake Mathews is a unique, environmentally sensitive geographic area and this alone makes alternative #9 ill-conceived. The rural locality, a disappearing type of community in Western Riverside County, will be unalterably and severely damaged. The negative impacts of the MCP on the environment and the area residents are too extreme to be effectively mitigated.

The devastation created by alternative #9 is irreversible. The land-use decisions we make today will be vested upon our grandchildren and generations beyond. Bulldozing and paving over irreplaceable hillside is our lasting legacy if alternative #9 is chosen and implemented. We believe we can do better and we urge the Riverside County Transportation Commission to reconsider alternative #9 as the preferred option.

We live in a very different financial world today than when the idea for the MCP was hatched. Funding this project with diminished transportation dollars is not realistic in the foreseeable future and funneling scarce resources toward environmental and engineering studies, and right-of-way acquisitions for a project of this magnitude, given the current financial outlook, does the residents of the County a disservice. Money budgeted for the MCP could be better used for more short-term and immediate needs such as the widening of the Cajalco expressway. Further, even if the MCP is completed in a reasonable timeframe, the transportation planning behind this project is flawed. The MCP, as it is currently designed, will only serve to channel greater volumes of traffic onto already overloaded roadways such as SR 91. Money earmarked for the MCP would be better spent investigating how to increase the functionality of SR 91. Developing the MCP prior to improvements to commuter routes into Orange County is simply forcing more traffic onto already overloaded transportation corridors.

New Economic Realities

We hope the board members of RCTC will consider placing the selection of a route for the MCP on hold until the original assumptions used to support the need for this project can be revisited. Since the project's inception, growth in the region has slowed considerably and industrial development has been severely curtailed. The fact that DHL recently announced it would no longer fly domestic flights out of March AFB is compelling evidence that the need for the MCP may be decades beyond what was initially projected. Taking the time now to re-analyze the MCP's underlying assumptions in light of current and future economic conditions does not represent a slowing of progress but rather a prudent course of action that may well prevent a regrettable decision with far-reaching and long-lasting consequences.

Negative Aesthetic Impacts

Every alternative considered for the MCP, but #9 in particular, has severe aesthetic impacts. One only needs to look at RCTC's own renderings to begin to visualize the damage to the scenic resources and degradation of the visual character of the countryside above Lake Mathews. The grading and paving needed for this project will forever destroy the natural scenic beauty of the area in question. This impact is permanent, unalterable, and cannot be effectively mitigated.

Negative Air Quality Impacts

The residents in the hillside above Lake Mathews, adjacent to the proposed MCP route will be subjected to unacceptable levels of air pollution as engine exhaust fumes permeate the area. This is another negative impact of the MCP that cannot be effectively mitigated.

Growth Inducement

A major roadway such as the MCP will undoubtedly spur growth along its route. The increased commercial and industrial development in this rural area is inconsistent with the character of the current community as well as existing zoning and land use plans and guidelines.

Noise and Vibrations

Development of the MCP will expose the residents along alternative #9 to excessive levels of noise and vibrations. The existing EIR does not include sound contour maps for the subject area. However, the existence of a major roadway will, without question, create extreme levels of noise and vibrations for all residents in the area. The substantial increase in ambient noise inherent in this project is another impact that cannot be effectively mitigated.

Hazardous Materials

It is reasonable to assume that hazardous materials will be transported along the MCP. This increases the risk of the residents of the Lake Mathews area to exposure to toxic material through spillage or accidents on the roadway. The release of hazardous materials also has the potential to seep into the Lake Mathews Reservoir.

Light Pollution

The MCP will necessitate roadside lighting and cause formerly dark skies to be lit and thus cause high levels of light pollution and light at night (LAN) in the area in question.

Biological Resources

The hillside area above Lake Mathews is rich in wildlife habitat. The MCP conflicts with established wildlife habitat plans and will render the area unsuitable for plant and animal life.

Fire Hazard

The dry grass and shrubbery native to this area are susceptible to combustion and the area in question has experienced numerous grass fires. A roadway will add to the threat of fire and serve to endanger people and property.

Global Warming

The MCP promotes the burning of fossil fuel and thus contributes to global warming. Funneling more vehicles onto SR 91 will result in excessive idling and increased carbon emissions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we respectfully request the RCTC to adopt the No-Build option. At the very least, we feel the underlying assumptions of the MCP should be revisited and re-evaluated in light of the recent, yet long-term, changes in the local economy and in population growth patterns.

In our opinion, and for the economic reasons cited in this letter, *a finding of overriding consideration is not a supportable outcome* of the EIR process for this project. If, however, this is the choice of the RCTC, please enter a request for the following mitigation measures into the record:

- RCTC will offer to purchase all houses in our neighborhood for fair market value in order to create a buffer between the remaining rural community and the MCP.

- RCTC will include a sound wall along the MCP through our neighborhood to somewhat shield the remaining residents from excessive levels of noise and vibration.
- The roadway will be constructed with rubberized asphalt to absorb noise and vibration through all inhabited areas.
- RCTC will impose and enforce strict emission standards on all vehicles using the MCP.
- RCTC will provide funding for our residence to build a block wall in our front yard to shield us from the negative aesthetic impact of the MCP.
- RCTC will provide funding for double-pane windows and any other reasonable noise reduction measures available at the time that construction begins on the MCP.
- RCTC will provide a trail system through the Estelle Mountain Reserve to allow residents in the area to enjoy recreation opportunities and to somewhat escape the harsh negative impacts of the MCP.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the MCP EIR.

Sincerely,



Ron Carr



Barbara Carr

Cc: Bob Buster, Riverside County Supervisor
Army Corp of Engineers