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Supervisors to decide shape of village traffic plan

By CAROLYN HEEBNER-SWIFT

Pros and cons of three traffic circulation alternatives, and a parking district recommendation included in the Aptos Village Traffic Study, will be discussed in a public hearing scheduled at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday before the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors.

The study, prepared by the County Transportation Commission, is a result of the traffic analysis requested by supervisors at the time of the board adoption of the Aptos Village Plan.

Since then, transportation planners have met numerous times with segments of the Aptos community, and there have been two public hearings before the county Planning Commission.

Commissioners voted Sept. 17 to recommend board adoption of a third traffic circulation alternative which was proposed by Aptos residents. It calls for creation of a new two-way street parallel to Granite

Way in a loop system around the village core. But while this alternative was recommended by the Commission, the Aptos Chamber of Commerce is supporting adoption of the second alternative plan, and county staff has favored the first alternative.

The first two staff-developed alternatives have the same basic road systems. The only proposed new construction is an extension of Granite Way from Cathedral Drive to the T. Hopkins right-of-way entrance to the Forest of Nisene Marks Park.

The staff-favored alternative calls for two-way traffic in and out of the state park and on Soquel Drive, and one-way traffic in a counter-clockwise direction on Trout Gulch Road, Cathedral Drive and Granite Way. Estimated construction costs are \$313,000.

Advantages of this system are that it has 50 percent more capacity than the two-way system; eastbound Soquel Drive traffic is not

stopped; there is uninterrupted movement at Trout Gulch and Cathedral Drive and at Cathedral Drive and Granite Way; and there is a reduced need for signalization on Soquel Drive.

Disadvantages are that the alternative will call for a substantial number of traffic signs and channeling to avoid confusion. Some motorists will be forced to travel farther to reach their destinations, and it may be necessary to redesign the entrance to Aptos Post Office.

This alternative has proved the least popular with the public. Planners have recognized that nearly 90 percent of those who have commented on the circulation patterns favor a two-way system.

The second alternative is similar, but with a two-way loop. It would require signals at one or both of the intersections on Soquel Drive. Advantages are that it is less confusing; requires less channelization and

eliminates any need to redesign the post office entrance.

This proposal has less traffic capacity than a one-way operation, and would require arterial stop signs at Trout Gulch Road and Cathedral Drive, and on Granite Way. Other disadvantages are the additional signalization; the conflicts to be created at access points to the commercial village core; an increase in delays along Soquel Drive, and an increased need for alternate access roads to the area north of the village.

The price for the second alternative will be an estimated \$378,900 in construction cost only.

The third alternative calls for development of the direct connection between the intersection of Trout Gulch Road and the Hopkins right-of-way, plus the addition of one lane on Soquel Drive through the village. Signals would be needed at one or both of the intersections on Soquel Drive.

This is the most direct route, calling for fewer intersections and suitable for either one-way or two-way traffic. However, it is not consistent with the village design plan and would require a change in the General Plan. Another disadvantage is that 15 percent (1.67 acres) of the village core is severed from the commercial area. The county would need to obtain right-of-way permission from four different parcels.

Estimated costs for this alternative are \$376,300.

County Planning Director Kris Schenk explained details of the Aptos Village Traffic Study in a summary letter to the County Supervisors, and he noted the present need to address the village's traffic problems.

"It is estimated that 17,000 new daily trips will be generated by new development at full buildout," he said, "This amount of traffic will severely impact the existing transportation network."

He said the study suggests alternatives in order to mitigate foreseen problems of the future. Recommendations are also provided in the study for improvement of pedestrian, transit and bicycle travel in Aptos, as well as the proposed parking district.

It is proposed that costs associated with traffic mitigations be paid through an improvement fund. Money would be contributed by new development in the village, and each would be assessed in proportion to the amount of traffic to be generated.

"It is anticipated that the

costs of the circulation improvements will be paid by development contributions," Schenk said.

A parking inventory and option of a parking district for the village are also reviewed in the Aptos Village Traffic Study. The study says that while some businesses are under-supplied with parking, others have too much. In addition, a good deal of the parking that now exists is privately-owned land — and those that use it are technically trespassing.

Since the amount of available land for parking is shrinking with new develop-

ment, planners have suggested that the Aptos business community consider the creation of a parking district so that parking areas are jointly used in a coordinated system.

The study also recommends a village parking coordination study be made to help resolve the major parking problems. The County Planning Commission has urged Supervisors to initiate a parking study as soon as possible. This suggestion was seconded by the Aptos Chamber of Commerce at its October meeting.

GREEN SHEET
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APOTOS VILLAGE TRAFFIC STUDY
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