

# Transportation commission backs freeway interchange for Wingspread project

By STEVE STROTH

STAFF WRITER

The Santa Cruz County Transportation Commission ignored the objections of state transportation officials yesterday and recommended that a full freeway interchange be part of the proposed Wingspread Beach development in Aptos.

The commission included the recommendation in a long list of proposed improvements to local roads and highways in its Regional Transportation Plan. The plan is a regularly updated document which outlines transportation policies and methods of funding over a 20-year period.

The full freeway interchange, complete with overpass, for the Wingspread project was included in the plan at the request of project opponents and neighbors concerned about its traffic impacts on the area.

It isn't clear what effect the commission's action will have on the controversial project's chances. But it goes even further than the current position of the county Board of Supervisors that some sort of freeway access, which could be less than a full interchange, be provided if the project is built.

County planners have yet to make any recommendations on the freeway-access issue. But an official at the state Department of Transportation has said his agency would oppose any overpass in that area, and indicated it would probably oppose any freeway access at all.

Developer Ryland Kelley proposes to build 468 condominium units, a conference facility and performing-arts center on the Porter Sesnon property near New Brighton State Beach.

A freeway access to the project would be situated between the Park Avenue and State Park Drive interchanges. Caltrans says a Wingspread

overpass would be too close to the others and isn't needed since improvements can be made on existing streets to handle increased traffic.

A majority of the transportation commissioners yesterday rejected a compromise proposal by Aptos-Capitola Supervisor Robley Levy, who is also a commission member.

Instead of calling for the full interchange with overpass, Levy suggested the commission adopt only a freeway access to the project.

Levy blasted the traffic consultant who reviewed the regional transportation plan for not recommending against an overpass.

"The adverse impacts of a full freeway interchange are fairly massive," she said. "I find it absolutely extraordinary that there would be no response from the consultant."

The consultant, John Gilcrest of Monterey, said getting into the "nitty-gritty details" of an overpass wasn't necessary for a countywide plan. A more detailed review would probably be done by the developer if the overpass is ordered by supervisors, he said.

Levy charged the commission with "leaping to a decision without the facts."

Santa Cruz-area Supervisor Gary Patton, who has opposed the Wingspread project and is a commission member, said proposing a complete overpass is just good planning.

"If we're going to do something to mitigate the traffic ... I think we should go the full way rather than half way," he said.

Patton was less supportive of two other items in the transportation plan.

At his request, the commission killed plans to develop a Broadway-Brommer Street extension in Live Oak and dropped consideration of an

eastern access to UC-Santa Cruz.

Transportation planners had recommended both projects as remedies to traffic problems in both areas.

The Broadway-Brommer extension would create a new east-west access road in addition to Soquel Avenue, thereby reducing traffic. But the project would also require the street be widened to four lanes, and would bring heavy traffic to surrounding neighborhoods. The road would also impinge on the city's protected "green belt" area to the north of the Small Craft Harbor.

A petition opposing the extension was signed by more than 100 residents and business people in that corridor.

The commission also killed any hope for an eastern access to the university any time soon.

A commission majority also killed a proposal by Watsonville City Councilwoman Betty Murphy to encourage Monterey County to seek the widening of Highway 1 from Pajaro to Castroville.

Murphy also tried to get the Pajaro Valley highways (1, 152 and 129) elevated to the level of key issues in the plan, but was rebuffed by the commission's Santa Cruz majority.

Murphy said the commission should study the impact of a projected housing boom in southern Santa Clara county on the Pajaro Valley.

"The traffic there is awful right now, and in 10 years we're going to see more development in southern Santa Clara County, and it's going to impact our roads," she said.

The Santa Cruz-Capitola area, where traffic is often at a standstill during peak commuting hours, is the area of most concern, said Santa Cruz City Councilman Mike Rotkin, a commission member.