



Dotted line is the 'new' Aptos Village traffic alternative.

'New' Aptos Traffic Alternative Presented

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An apparent forgotten alternative for the Aptos Village Traffic Plan was re-kindled Wednesday night by the county Planning Commission as it set a new public hearing on the issue for Sept. 17.

The alternative was suggested by Aptos Chamber of Commerce members Glenn Specht and Lucile Aldrich, two of the five persons in the audience. The alternative would create a street from the Trout Gulch-Cathedral Drive intersection to Granite Way-Hopkins right-of-way. The new street would run parallel to Granite Way, which under the alternative would not be extended as a through street.

The new street would also go through vacant land that is zoned commercial. That was the primary reason, according to Aldrich, that the alternative was dropped some four years ago by the Planning Department.

County traffic planner Ron Marquez agreed that one of the disadvantages to the alternative would be that the new street would split future commercial development and, subsequently, split the core of Aptos Village. While noting that it would "serve traffic the best way," he told commissioners it could move traffic problems presently on Trout Gulch Road to the new extension.

Steve Raas, assistant civil engineer for the county, explained after the commission meeting that the new street alternative was not considered because direction from the Board of Supervisors a year ago only directed study of two alternatives. Supervisors adopted the Aptos Village Urban Design Plan at that time, but left the traffic circulation question unanswered.

The two alternatives county planners suggested involved one and two-way systems centering on Trout Gulch from Soquel Drive to Cathedral, on Cathedral from Trout Gulch to Granite Way, and on Granite from Cathedral to Hopkins right-of-way.

Despite public sentiment to the contrary, planning staff's recommendation was for the one-way system. They cited that not only was it cheaper (\$313,000 to \$378,000), but it also had the capacity to

hold 50 percent more traffic. Predictions are for 17,000 new vehicle trips to be generated once the village is fully developed.

Commissioners, led by Bob McKenzie, Timothy Sadlier and Ivan "Skip" Eberly, immediately took a liking to the new alternative. All commissioners expressed problems with staff's recommendation since they believed a two-way system would be more appropriate over a one-way system at this time.

Commissioner Celia Von Der Muhll termed the improvements "piecemeal" and questioned the need of such a plan now. "I think it's a little bit like putting the cart before the horse since we don't have a traffic problem there now," she said.

Von Der Muhll also questioned the adopted plan for the village itself in saying the total buildout was too high. She pointed to the much-publicized water shortage in the Soquel Creek County Water District, which serves the village, in noting that traffic improvements are based on future developments paying for them.

That hit a sore spot with Eberly, who repeated his sentiment, "I fail to see what traffic has to do with a water purveyor."

Commissioners unanimously directed staff to return Sept. 17 with a cost estimate of the new alternative. They also asked staff to work with the Aptos Chamber of Commerce to conduct a survey of property owners and businesses in Aptos Village on the feasibility of establishing a parking district.

If owners agree, fees would be assessed to both present businesses and property owners for a parking district which would improve and maintain parking spaces.

Staff also was directed to return with an explanation as to how a development in the village was approved by the zoning administrator when last year the commission had directed that no new developments be built until the traffic plan was passed. The development in question is called Aptos Station. It would include 16,000 square feet of commercial shops and professional offices being constructed at the intersection of Soquel Drive and Hopkins right-of-way.