

State may block key condition to Wingspread OK

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SANTA CRUZ — A regional Caltrans official has indicated that state support very likely will not be forthcoming for a direct link between Palo Alto developer Ryland Kelley's proposed Wingspread Beach project in Aptos and Highway 1, an opinion that could spell political trouble for Second District Supervisor Robley Levy.

Levy made the freeway link one of the key conditions for approval of the condominium/conference center and performing arts complex when she cast the deciding vote for the project nearly a year ago. She indicated that the connection was necessary to alleviate traffic burdens which

the project would otherwise place on the surrounding neighborhood.

Since then, Kelley has met virtually all of the conditions laid down by the board majority at the Second District supervisor's insistence, including a 20-percent reduction in the number of condominium units, from 590 to about 470. Kelley's revised plans for Wingspread also call for a reduction of more than 20 percent in the project's "footprint" — the amount of land actually covered by structures or paving. About 85 percent of the development site, which includes the 66-acre Porter-Sesnon property and an adjoining 6-acre parcel, will remain in open space under Kelley's revised plans.

But while he has complied with most of the other conditions, Kelley has sought at

least a partial release from the freeway access proviso. Last July, he offered the county two revised proposals: one with freeway access, and one without.

The developer said then that he was willing to build the freeway ramps but said he wanted the ramp requirement "detached from the rest of the development because that's something that could take years to get approval."

Now Burch Bachtold, Caltrans' regional director, has indicated that a direct link between the Porter-Sesnon site and the adjoining freeway is something that may never be approved by the state.

Bachtold's opinion spells trouble for Levy because if she backs down on the freeway access condition in the face of Caltrans

opposition, she is likely to be accused by Wingspread opponents of renegeing on her promises to area residents. But if she continues to insist on the condition, she could very well doom the project — which she supports.

Bachtold spelled out his reservations about the Wingspread freeway ramps in a letter to county Planning Director Kris Schenk.

Citing a traffic study done by Kelley, he said that the ramps were probably not needed in the first place, because the Wingspread project would not generate enough traffic to justify them and because traffic signals and stop signs, which Kelley has agreed to install, will probably alleviate problems at existing McGregor Drive inter-

sections.

Bachtold indicated that, in any event, under a federal highway policy which requires that freeway interchanges be sited at least a mile apart, it was unlikely that the ramps would be allowed. The existing Park Avenue and State Park Drive interchanges are less than a mile away from the Porter-Sesnon property.

Levy and her fellow supervisors will have to decide what to do about the freeway-access condition when the Wingspread project comes before the board again sometime later this month.

The board had been scheduled to consider the development this week, but the matter was delayed after Schenk declined to release a planning staff report on the project.