

# Eight lanes of bad road lies ahead

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SANTA CRUZ — Picture the year 2005. Now imagine what the highways will be like.

If your vision of the future resembles something out of "2001: A Space Odyssey" then think again.

The state Department of Transportation has dashed those childhood fantasies of future transportation corridors with a much more pedestrian forecast.

Instead of space-age freeways filled with cars that can fly through the air, or even a more earthbound vision of scenic Highway 1 without any potholes, the state has come up with a forecast that county Transportation Commission Executive Director Ron Marquez described as "shocking; perhaps even disheartening."

Caltrans is predicting an eight-lane freeway for parts of Highway 1.

That's right — eight lanes from 41st Avenue to Highway 17 — the portion most congested during commute hours.

That's not all Caltrans is considering. The "2005 Route Concept" for Highway 1 contains a proposal to widen Highway 1 from Rio del Mar to 41st Avenue, from Highway 17 to Highway 9 and from Highway 9 to Mission Street from the present four lanes to six lanes.

Caltrans based its prediction of future transportation needs on the county's proposed land-use and population forecasts.

That is, if the county continues to grow

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# Highways—

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at 2 percent a year, by the year 2005, the state says, Highway 1 will have to be expanded to eight lanes just to maintain the present level of traffic, said Marquez.

"This forecast will not ease any of the present traffic congestion — it will keep it about the same," said Marquez.

The state relied on a population prediction the county released in November, which forecasts 265,500 people living in Santa Cruz County in the year 2000. That figure is based on an overall growth rate of 1.7 percent a year.

The prediction of eight lanes for Highway 1 is contained in a preliminary, long-range study recently released by Caltrans, said Marquez.

Caltrans' assessment of the county's needs will be aimed at coordinating a statewide transportation network, according to Robert Jahrling, a planner with Caltrans.

Marquez said county transportation commissioners were presented with the state's predictions Thursday. They voted to write Caltrans about their concerns that any expansion of this magnitude would have serious affects on the environment. Also, they asked that local views be included in Caltrans' plans.