

Wingspread Interchange may be a roadblock

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Initial moves by state and county officials indicate Wingspread developer Ryland Kelly may have trouble winning approval of his plan for building a freeway interchange on Highway 1 in Aptos.

Kelley, a developer from Palo Alto, presented the plan in an effort to win final approval of his plans for the Wingspread Beach conference center on the 66-acre oceanfront Porter Sesnon property.

Santa Cruz County supervisors tentatively approved the controversial development proposal in March. But they made their approval subject to a long list of conditions presented by Aptos-Capitola Supervisor Robley Levy, who holds the swing vote on the heated issue.

The most troubling condition has proved to be the one requiring Kelley to provide direct freeway access to Wingspread.

In a telephone interview yesterday, Kelley said he plans to ask the supervisors to delete the requirement. It would take years get the necessary approval from local and state

transportation officials, Kelley said. The delays would make the condition impossible to meet.

Despite his desire to do away with the requirement, Kelley has submitted two sets of revised plans. The supervisors could consider them as soon as their next meeting, which is scheduled for Tuesday, Jan. 28.

One set of plans shows the project without direct freeway access. The second shows access consisting of southbound on and off ramps only.

Levy said yesterday she remains "very serious about the condition" she imposed nearly a year ago. She said she plans to "take a look" at how Kelley's plan to build a one-sided interchange would affect traffic flow.

Judging from the initial reactions of local and state transportation officials, however, Kelley may have trouble passing through all the hoops he needs to to win approval of the unconventional one-sided design.

The first step toward final approval is winning the approval of the county Trans-

portation Commission, Linda Willshusen, executive director, said.

The commission must include the project in its Regional Transportation Plan and then add it to its work program, known as the Regional Transportation Improvement Program.

In its draft Regional Transportation Plan approved in early January, however, the commission included a typical cloverleaf, or two-sided, interchange.

The commission is expected to give final approval of the Regional Transportation Plan in February.

Preliminary review of the proposal by state Department of Transportation officials indicates Kelley may have trouble winning state approval of the project, as well.

Mike Ellis, senior transportation planner in Caltrans District 4, said the transportation department rarely approves one-sided freeway interchanges.

"It's not a standard interchange," Ellis said. "In general, we have concerns over non-standard interchanges. It

can lead to operation problems. We have to take a hard look at them."

One-sided interchanges can confuse visitors who get off the freeway and expect to be able to get back on going the other way at the same point.

"It can lead to people going the wrong way on the ramp," he said.

According to Wilshusen, Caltrans officials also had reservations about building a full interchange. They said the cloverleaf might infringe on property belonging to Cabrillo College.

The state officials also questioned whether the project called for a new interchange, Wilshusen said.

In addition, the officials said the plan deviated from design standards in another way. It proposes placing freeway ramps less than one mile from the Seacliff and Park Avenue ramps. Federal highway standards call for freeway ramps to be a mile or more apart, Wilshusen said.

The county expects a written response from Caltrans by early next week.

REFERENCE