

'Fishhook' interchange lane additions approved

Highway
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After a yearlong battle, Santa Cruz County transportation officials have approved new lanes for the notorious "fishhook" freeway interchange in Santa Cruz.

But work on the on-again, off-again project is not expected to begin for at least three years, said Linda Wilshusen, executive director of the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission.

"We're not talking about any-

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thing imminent," Wilshusen said. "They haven't even designed it yet."

Named for its awkwardly sharpening curve, the fishhook interchange at Highways 1 and 17 has an accident rate as much as four times the statewide average for similar intersections. The transportation commission, made up of local elected officials, approved about \$30 million in funding in 1990 to improve safety at the fishhook.

But when preliminary designs
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'Fishhook' changes must wait

■ FISHHOOK

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were unveiled last year, Santa Cruz residents and their elected leaders balked. They said it was so big and ugly that it belonged in a metropolis such as San Jose or Los Angeles, not in a quaint coastal community such as Santa Cruz.

The California Department of Transportation redrew the plans to meet critics' concerns, but in the

sion voted to kill the project, then reversed course and put it on hold pending further study.

Caltrans and the commission staff recommended adding merge lanes around the interchange as a way to improve safety and traffic flow within the project's original cost.

The commission last week voted 6-4 in favor of that plan. Opposed were Santa Cruz City Council members Katherine Beiers. Mike Rotkin

The project would add a lane from northbound Highway 1 at Morrissey Boulevard to Pasatiempo Drive on northbound Highway 17, with two lanes exiting Highway 1 to Highway 17. Southbound Highway 1 would get an extra lane from Ocean Street to La Fonda Avenue a half-mile past Morrissey.

The actual fishhook structure would not be rebuilt but would be restriped down to one lane.

Caltrans must design the project