

# Fishhook redesign rediscussed

✓ *Highways*  
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APTOS — Whenever the public is asked how it likes the Fishhook redesign, the most vocal residents respond by posing their own question: Why not just leave it alone?

The resounding question was asked — again — at a meeting Monday evening to gauge local sentiment on the project. The public hearing was held in Aptos to attract residents and commuters from throughout the county.

About 200 people crowded into a room at the Seacliff Inn for a special meeting of the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission where Caltrans engineers were on hand to explain their latest design for the notorious interchange of Highways 1 and 17.

A design had already been selected but was revised after public outcry. The commission took no action Monday and will again discuss the issue at its Nov. 6 meeting.

The Fishhook, which has a high accident rate, is to be revamped to improve safety. The latest revision uses an elevated connector and changes the way southbound Highway 17 and southbound Highway 1 would merge. The interchange would have four lanes — two for traffic coming from Highway 17, two for traffic coming from Highway 1.

Despite the bigger question posed to the commission — should the work be done at all — most of the crowd who at Monday's meeting said they preferred the latest Fishhook plans over those shown last spring.

"I support Caltrans on this redesign," said Kevin Tucker of Watsonville, who had been one of the project's critics. "Something has to be done (about the Fishhook)."

Still, the larger issue of whether to proceed with the \$30.8 million project kept coming up.

"I'm still not convinced that the proposed interchange is going to be

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an improvement," said Eloise Graham, one of the leaders of a neighborhood group called Coalition for an Improved Fishhook Interchange. The organization is made up mostly of residents whose homes would be directly affected by the project.

Among other things, the coalition has called for a design that would lessen the impact on surrounding neighborhoods, reduce congestion, and improve seismic safety. The group also urged officials to improve safety by using simpler and less costly measures — such as restriping and adding signs to slow motorists.

Dave Danielson of Aptos was one of the few who spoke in favor of proceeding with the project. "I've been a commuter for quite a while," he said. "Everyone seems to be so against the automobile but I happen to think it's the only way to get around. ... Get this thing built."

Others urged the commission and Caltrans to reduce regional congestion instead. That could be done by widening and/or improving Highway 1.

Commissioners can discuss options and should decide how to proceed at the next meeting, said Linda Wilshusen, executive director of the commission.