

9-18-58  
Express Highways

THE SENTINEL

# EDITORIALS

## A Key Project

**T**HE LOW bid was announced in Sacramento on a key highway project which could greatly affect the pace of growth in Santa Cruz county within the next decade.

Low bid was the combination offer made by Gordon H. Ball, Ball and Simpson and the Lew Jones Construction company to construct 2½ miles of freeway between Bascom avenue and Fourth street in San Jose on State Sign Route 17.

This project will connect the Los Gatos freeway between Los Gatos and Bascom avenue in San Jose with both the Eastshore and the Bayshore highways.

It will mean 11 miles of continuous freeway through San Jose to Los Gatos and the Los Gatos highway when the final link is completed. It will also mean that Highway 17 will be a freeway from Oakland to Los Gatos with a four-lane highway across the Santa Cruz mountains.

As Highway 17 joins Highway 40 in Oakland, it will also mean there will be continuous freeway from Sacramento to Los Gatos within two years.

At the present time the same contractors who presented the low bid are nearing completion of the \$5 million link between Los Gatos and Bascom avenue (near Valley Fair) in San Jose. This project may be finished by the end of the year with a good break in the weather.

The effect of this new freeway on Santa Cruz county will be difficult to determine in advance although it unquestionably will play a vital role in the growth of the county.

Actually it's more than just another freeway—it means travel time between downtown San Jose and the San Jose metropolitan area will be less than 40 minutes travel time to downtown Santa Cruz.

Most of us believe that the highway development could mean a step into a new era for Santa Cruz by more or less eliminating the natural barrier of the Santa Cruz mountains which in the past has isolated this sector from the fast growth of the Santa Clara valley and the San Francisco peninsula.

One result could be the development of more commuters in the Santa Cruz

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growth of the Santa Clara valley and the San Francisco peninsula.

One result could be the development of more commuters in the Santa Cruz area. During 1957, about 15 per cent of our new residents were employed outside of the Santa Cruz area. This percentage may suddenly increase, perhaps even double, with better highway connections to the industrial sectors of the San Jose area.

Normally the 20-mile drive across the Santa Cruz mountains takes from 23 to 30 minutes. Most drivers probably make the trip in about 25 minutes without exceeding safe speed limitations. However, it has been taking another 20 to 25 minutes to drive to downtown San Jose because of the congestion between Los Gatos and San Jose.

The new freeway will probably cut that driving time in half. We can remember when it used to be a 30-minute drive between here and Aptos on the old highway (Soquel drive). Since the freeway was finished in 1948 it is a 10-minute drive.

This reduction in travel time will unquestionably play a big role in the expansion of our recreational trade. We will be so close to more than half-a-million people in the Santa Clara valley that they will think nothing of coming to Santa Cruz for a ride, a visit to the parks and beaches, etc.

It could also mean that our retail stores will be in more direct competition with San Jose and Santa Clara valley stores because highways, like streets, are two-way affairs and not all the business is going to go in our direction.

Probably the most important effect could be the commuter situation with the threat of skyrocketing population which could disturb both existing facilities and future plans.

Fortunately, we do not believe that the highway will suddenly bring thousands of new people into the Santa Cruz area to live. However, it could bring hundreds and on a scale beyond any previous records.

The population growth of Santa Clara county has been almost fantastic in the past three years and it is going to begin to move over the hill whether we like it or not. We've already seen, on a small scale, a definite increase in our population growth. The rate in the future could double or triple past performances in a comparatively short time.

The Santa Clara growth has moved westward from San Jose to Campbell and Cambrian Park, to Saratoga and to Los Gatos. The next step will be into the Santa Cruz mountains and across the mountains to the Santa Cruz area.

It will be well for us to keep a close watch on the events of the future so we can better plan our own development.

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