

Local news

Fishhook revamping on hold

Highways
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SANTA CRUZ — Deciding whether to revamp the Fishhook will have to wait until the new year.

The Santa Cruz County Transportation Commission voted Thursday to put off any decision about improving the notorious interchange until its January meeting. Officials opted to wait until Caltrans could provide revised cost estimates and until visual models of the project could be available to the public.

In the meantime, the commis-

sion has requested that Caltrans consider making the following revisions to the latest design:

- make the Ocean Street offramp from Highway 17 two lanes instead of one;
- shorten the additional lane in each direction of Highway 1 so that it runs from the Highway 17 junction to Morrissey Boulevard instead of La Fonda;
- use low-cost solutions — like new signs and restriping — to slow drivers at the Fishhook. A grass-roots group of local residents called the “Coalition for an Improved Fishhook” called for this measure.

The recommendations are based on comments made by local residents at a public hearing in Aptos last month. A design had already been selected earlier this year but was revised after public outcry on the aesthetics and scope of the project.

According to statistics, the Fishhook has a high accident rate. It is to be torn down and rebuilt to improve safety. The latest design 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, and two for traffic coming from Highway 1.

Cost of the new interchange originally was estimated at \$30.8 million. But various features that had been planned for the second stage of the project must be done sooner.

Plans to make the Fishhook safer began in 1985, when the local transportation commission asked Caltrans to study the junction. The interchange was found to have an accident rate five times that of the state average.