

# State plans to straighten Fishhook within five years

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SANTA CRUZ — The infamous curve at the interchange of highways 1 and 17 may shed its nickname after the turn of the century.

The Fishhook, known for its high accident rate and heavy traffic during rush hour, should be demolished within five years by the state Department of Transportation — if plans go according to schedule.

The state is inviting the public to comment on the proposed plans for a completely new intersection which would include 42-foot-high noise walls, rights-of-way acquisitions, and a major new skyway.

"We want to find out what the public's concerns are," said Tom McDonnell, an environmental

planner for Caltrans. The state will hold a hearing on the project from 5-9 p.m. Wednesday at the Health Services Agency Auditorium, 1080 Emeline Ave., Santa Cruz.

Two models for the intersection will be displayed at the hearing.

"Residents are sensitive to the look and feel of being overrun by a massive freeway interchange," said Stewart Ng, project manager. "There have been a lot of comments about concern over a massive structure. There is a desire to try and soften it.

But, he added, "There are not too many ways you can build a bridge."

Both alternatives include getting rid of the Fishhook, and both include a big skyway. The lower-cost alternative — about \$5 mil-

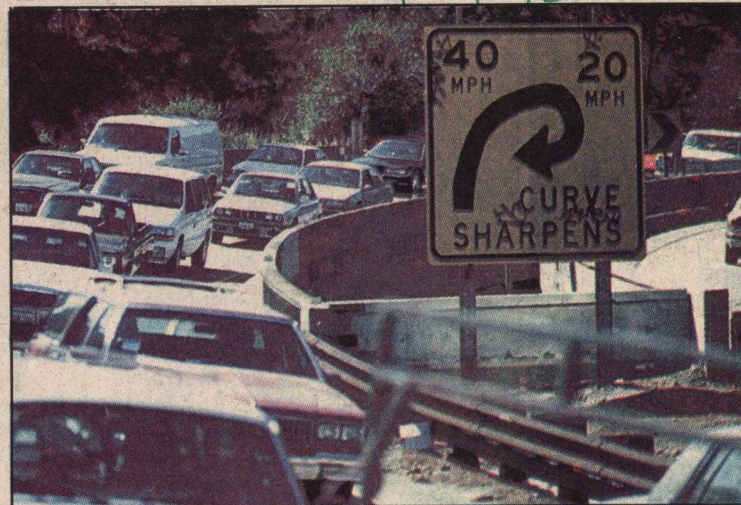
lion cheaper — includes an on- and off-ramp to Ocean Street.

The project has already been pushed back four years. Construction was scheduled for 1997 but the state moved ahead with seismic strengthening of highways and bridges, keeping the new intersection on hold.

No construction date has been set, but estimates are work will begin in five years.

Rebuilding the Fishhook is the first phase of a two-phase project. Only the first phase was funded back in 1990 for \$28 million. It is not known whether the state will fund the second phase, which includes widening the bridge over the San Lorenzo River and replacing on- and off-ramps for the two highways.

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Dan Coyro/Sentinel file

The infamous Fishhook curve, which twists from Highway 1 to Highway 17, should be rebuilt within five years.

## Fishhook

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Total estimated cost is between \$55 million and \$60 million, depending on which alternative is chosen.

"We don't know if phase two will happen," said Linda Wilshusen, executive director of the county's Regional Transportation Commission. It was her office that proposed the project to the state. "We haven't been

able to get funding. We're not expecting to get it for awhile."

But the Fishhook project will go ahead whether or not the second phase is funded.

An average of 13,700 commuters clog the the intersection at Highway 1 and Highway 17 during peak commute hours. It has been one of the highest accident locations in the state, Wilshusen said.