

# Transportation plan draws fire from improvement group

## A 'political document' designed to control the county's growth

By BOB SMITH

Directors of the Rio del Mar Improvement Association will join members of other Aptos area improvement associations and the county's Chambers of Commerce Thursday in trying to scuttle the county's Regional Transportation Plan.

The Transportation Commission will hold its final public hearing at 9 a.m. Thursday in the Board of Supervisors chamber of the County Government Center on the plan which becomes the county's master plan, or long-range blueprint for transportation in Santa Cruz County.

Rio del Mar president Mel Deerwester was instructed by his board Monday afternoon to ask the County Transportation Commission to throw out the proposed transportation plan — which envisions the county placing greater and greater dependence on public transit as its population reaches an estimated 280,000 by the year 2000.

Residents will be making 1,231,120 trips per day.

The commission goal is to cut the share of automobile usage down to 66 percent — about 580,385 motor vehicle

trips a day.

Transit usage will rise from the present eight percent to 20 percent, bicycle riders will account for 10 percent of all trips, and walking, four percent.

Ron Marquez, the commission's executive director says the ridership projections are simply goals for the community to move toward if adopted.

The proposed plan includes a long list of road improvement projects in each of the four cities and the unincorporated areas of the county.

But there are no plans to construct any new east-west or north-south corridors in the county — particularly in the Midcounty.

"The road system proposed for the year 2000 can be described simply as the existing road system plus recommended improvements . . .

"For the most part, these improvements are relatively minor means of increasing the capacity of the existing roadway sections, including widening at intersections, new traffic signals, and bus turnouts.

"Major improvements such as major widening, freeway

interchange modifications and new sections of roadway to provide missing connections are recommended at only a few locations," the document states.

RDM director Vincent Casey, who is one of the board members studying the plan and meeting with other associations and a Chamber of Commerce group, called the plan "a political document of how people in this county will travel."

The plan, he said, "is being drawn up by the political people who say we want no growth in this county. That plan says we will absorb all growth through the year 2000 without any changes in the streets and highways.

"The way they see the county developing is that more people will ride bicycles, walk or ride buses," Casey added.

The plan's opponents want a "broad-based" citizens committee appointed by the commission to draft a new "realistic" plan that forecasts continued dependence on the private automobile and improvements to and expansion of the county's road network.

The group, along with the other improvement association members of the Aptos Council of Improvement Associations will be asking Second District Supervisor Robley Levy to push the idea of dividing the county's gas tax receipts into funds for each of the five supervisorial districts and then set up a committee in the Second District that will decide what projects will be funded each year.

Deerwester will also be asking the commission to include in its list of priorities work on the Clubhouse Drive-Rio del Mar Boulevard intersection.

The transportation commission is now studying Rio del Mar's traffic problems and

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plans a report for later this spring but the improvement association wants to make sure that work on the critical intersection is included in the master plan document now being considered by the commission.

The transportation commission will be faced Thursday morning with a barrage of requests from county groups who are opposed to the present plan to postpone any action for

six months and allow a citizens group to have its say.

"No one has a clear idea," Rio del Mar director George Truckell said, "of how to change this plan.

"But everyone wants to ask for a six months extension and to ask for a division of the gas tax by supervisorial districts," Truckell said.

He said the transportation commissioners will receive presentations from several groups.

"Each group will put on their own pitch but the crux of the whole thing is to get that damn thing extended," Truckell said.