

# Two-way traffic loop favored for Aptos Village problems

By BOB SMITH

A two-way traffic loop around Aptos Village seemed to be the preferred alternative Tuesday night of people who attended a public meeting on a county-sponsored Aptos Village traffic study.

County Transportation Planner Ron Marquez had proposed two alternatives, both utilizing the loop road system that included Granite Way, portions of Trout Gulch Road, Cathedral and Soquel Drives, and part of the T. Hopkins right-of-way into the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park.

Marquez found little support in the audience for the staff-preferred alternative of a counter-clockwise one-way loop around the now-developing commercial core in the village.

But while the two-way loop was supported grudgingly by some of the 40 people who attended the meeting at the Aptos Library, others questioned Marquez and Supervisor Marilyn Liddicoat on the need for any road improvements and the land use planning that is presently allowing a mixture of commercial and residential development on the largely vacant land to the north and west of the Bay View Hotel.

The traffic plan alternatives will be submitted to the county Planning Commission on Wednesday, Aug. 13.

Marquez said the road network, which requires extension of Granite Way west to connect with the existing Hopkins right of way, and then a new road built over the right of way to Soquel Drive, would cost \$313,000 for the one-way alternative and \$378,000 for the two-way alternative, which would also require a traffic signal on Soquel Drive at either Trout Gulch or Hopkins right of way.

Marquez said the roadway would probably be built by the developer of a proposed 40,000-square-foot commercial-residential project north of the Aptos Station office complex now under construction, with the county setting up an improvement district so the developer could be paid back over a number of years as other property is developed.

The improvement district would also develop communal parking for the entire village area, Marquez said. "Hopefully, existing businesses and residence would not have to pay anything."

The existing road system, he contended, can't handle the 17,000 new trips expected to and through the village core when the area is fully developed. Recent traffic counts show there are approximately 12,000 vehicle trips per day in the village at present.

The proposal leaves Soquel Drive with two through traffic lanes in the village and a third (center) lane that is used as an acceleration lane from Hopkins right of way eastbound, and a left-turn stacking lane at Trout Gulch Road.

Architect Richard Huick complained that the county is ignoring the problem of two-way traffic on Soquel Drive — "This plan is a fallacy until you address that problem."

Marquez said the Aptos community decided in the early 1970s that they did not want Soquel Drive as a four-lane road through the village area, and then added:

"We haven't left Soquel Drive high and dry. We would have three lanes instead of two. Soquel Drive is an important arterial in the midcounty, and we don't want to preclude it as a regional road."

Merchants in the existing shops on the south side of Soquel Drive also complained about the widening of the road.

One unidentified shopkeeper said, "Three lanes would be very difficult for us. The market is very dependent on parking, but I don't think the developers on the other side of Soquel Drive would open their parking to the market's customers."

"That is why we are recommending a consolidated parking district," Marquez responded. "If a district is set up, then everyone contributes and everyone benefits. And even with the third lane, you could have parking on the street, but it would conflict with the proposed bike lane and pedestrian paths."

Another man in the audience contended there was no parking problem in the village today, and that the only reason roads are being built was "to serve the developers."

He said he believed it should be up to the developers to solve their own traffic problems.

"Things get here little by little," responded Mrs. Liddicoat, "and everyone thinks their home or shop doesn't make a difference.

"It gets down to a matter of fairness," she continued. "Are we going to tell people who have lived here since 1902 they can't use their property now? It isn't fair and, frankly, it isn't legal," she

added, contending that it would amount to inverse condemnation.

"If they want to build on it, let them build," an audience member told Mrs. Liddicoat. "But don't change our traffic."

Another village resident, who lives up the Hopkins right of way, wanted to reopen the issues of zoning and general plans, telling Mrs. Liddicoat he had never heard of the Village Plan meetings (held in 1975 and 1976) and was never notified of the zoning hearings on the village.

Mrs. Liddicoat refused to consider that proposal, telling him it was too late to change the land use designations and that the purpose of this meeting was to consider traffic plans. She did suggest, however, that if he really wanted the general plan for the village changed, he could submit an application, along with the required \$1,000 filing fee.

Mrs. Glenn Specht seemingly spoke for the audience when she told Marquez and the county supervisor that she preferred the two-way traffic circulation pattern, but without the traffic signal on Soquel Drive.