

County of Santa Clara

Roads & Airports Department

Administration



RA12 061907

For rebuttal on paper:

Please see attached rebuttal to underlined statements,
by number.

Prepared by: Dan Collen
Deputy Director

DATE: June 19, 2007 To download the rebuttal, copy this link and paste into browser:
moderntransit.org/expy/murdter07rebuttal.pdf

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: *M. J. Murdter*
Michael Murdter
Director, Roads & Airports Department

SUBJECT: Report Back Relating to Pedestrian Access to Expressways¹

Also, please refer to the page of Board policies (attached, or copy-paste this link):
moderntransit.org/expy-pdf/quote-print-link.pdf

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Under advisement from April 10, 2007 (Item No. 64): Accept report relating to pedestrian access to expressways.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no fiscal implication to the General Fund or the Road Fund relating to this report back.

CONTRACT HISTORY

None.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

On April 10, 2007 Supervisor Alvarado requested a report back relating to concerns raised by Mr. Akos Szobozsly regarding pedestrian and bicycle pathways on expressways in general and Montague in particular.²

General

Staff is aware Mr. Szobozsly would like pedestrian prohibitions removed from the expressways generally and San Tomas³ specifically. The 2003 Expressway Planning Study (www.expressways.info) was a collaborative effort involving close consultation with city staff and review of the plan details by elected representatives serving on a policy advisory board. Some cities preferred more pedestrian access and others preferred a more freeway-like operation. Santa Clara, San Jose and Campbell did not see the need for sidewalks on San Tomas,⁴ so for the most part none were proposed. During subsequent coordination related to the preparation of the Department's May 2004 report to the Board regarding pedestrian prohibitions, city staff also made clear that for safety reasons they do not wish to repeal the pedestrian prohibitions their cities enacted long ago⁵ Interestingly, in recent communications with the Campbell Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, some of their members not only supported prohibitions,⁶ but also saw no need to plan for sidewalks.

Staff is moving ahead with the pedestrian access study⁷ initiated last year and will integrate that study's findings with an update of the Expressway Study later this year. Based on discussions at the outreach meetings already conducted, perhaps some cities will reconsider and request the County include plans for future sidewalk on San Tomas.⁸

Though the pedestrian access study is still under development, it is apparent that some cities are not comfortable⁹ with pedestrian use of expressways in particular situations where the most likely walking path is on the traffic side of the curb. Of course, construction of sidewalks (either asphalt or concrete)^{10A} would allow removal of prohibitions, as we have achieved on Capitol and Lawrence at many locations.^{10B}

In the early 1990's, county road crews were used to clear and compact earthen pathways along some keys segments of Capitol Expressway. However, staff became concerned that dirt pathways were not consistent with requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and that pathway surfaces should be all-weather (asphalt or concrete)¹¹. The concern with earthen pathways was underscored recently by a complaint that the department was engaged in "path destruction" on San Tomas Expressway. The complainant contends that in certain areas the department had created paths by clearing vegetation for safety reasons – paths that were later "destroyed" when the department used a non-pesticide treatment (soil disking) to manage the subsequent weed growth. In these cases the department has neither created nor destroyed pedestrian paths¹² but was simply taking appropriate roadside vegetation control measures. Paved pathways eliminate any confusion about what is or is not a path.

Despite resource limitations, the department has advanced many pedestrian improvements on the expressways and invites all interested members of the public to join us in celebration¹³ of new pedestrian improvements being completed in the next few months on Almaden, Central, and Lawrence.

Montague Expressway

Mr. Szobozsly spoke to agenda item 64 on the April 10, 2007 Board agenda. The item included four Board actions related to County construction contracts, two of which (Contracts 04-15 and 06-17) are on Montague Expressway. Both

projects included construction of new sidewalks consistent with the Planning Study Report (PSR–equivalent) prepared to qualify the project for federal funding, consistent with the Expressway Planning Study approved by the Board in 2003, the environmental document approved by the Board, and the project plans approved by the Board. In addition to adding over 8000 linear feet of sidewalk between intersections, the projects reconstructed the intersections of De La Cruz and River Oaks with Montague to provide more pedestrian–friendly crossing geometry.

Montague widening projects are proceeding consistent with the Board's 1999 resolution¹⁴ declaring highest priority for the Montague improvement project. Due to limited funds, the improvements are being implemented in phases and segments. Several small segments have been achieved through development conditioning and traffic impact mitigation work privately contracted and built under encroachment permits. The segments included in Contracts 04–15 and 06–17 were pursued because of the availability of grant and mitigation funds and in order to close gaps between previously implemented improvements. All of the project work was west of Trimble Road.

Mr. Szobozsly has at times expressed concerns about pedestrian conditions on Montague, but his concerns have focused on areas east of Trimble, outside the work limits of the two subject contracts.

Summary and Planned Actions

Pedestrian facilities will continue to be discontinuous on Montague¹⁵ until all segments of the 8–lane widening project are complete. In many areas the improvement schedule will now be driven by the pace of implementation of the North San Jose development plans, since widening of Montague is a condition of that development.

Staff continues to look for opportunities and funding sources to pursue interim sidewalk improvements at select locations, such as a connection from North First Street to the Guadalupe Creek levee trail. Staff will also be pursuing funding of ultimate 8–lane improvements through the VTA's Expressway Program category, when funds become available, for areas outside the North San Jose development mitigation limits. As we have done in the past, we will continue to entertain input from interested parties¹⁶ on problematic areas for pedestrians due to encroaching shrubbery or other issues which can be feasibly addressed.

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

None.

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

Send notification of completed KEYBOARD processing to:

Dan Collen, Roads & Airports Dept., Infrastructure Development Division

ATTACHMENTS

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