

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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W15b

3-24-0550 (CALTRANS HIGHWAY 1 SIGN/SPEED LIMIT PROJECT)

MARCH 12, 2025 HEARING

CORRESPONDENCE



Big Sur Highway Signs

From Sam Farr <farr.point16@gmail.com>

Date Thu 12/5/2024 3:50 PM

To Stevens, Eric@Coastal <eric.stevens@coastal.ca.gov>

Cc Annie Notthoff <abnotthoff@gmail.com>; Ken White <jwhite293@sbcglobal.net>; Kate Daniels <electkatedaniels@gmail.com>; John Laird <johnlaird9@aol.com>; Martha Diehl <mvdiehl@mindspring.com>; Dawn J Addis <dawnjaddis@gmail.com>

I strongly object to a waiver on Cal Trans Signage for Big Sur Highway 1 for the following reasons:

1. Big Sur Highway was the first State Scenic Highway in the U.S. So significant that the First Lady, Lady Bird Johnson came to California in 1966 to join my father, late Senator Fred Farr, author of Scenic Highways legislation, to dedicate Coast Highway 1 as a nationally recognized State Scenic highway.
2. The basis for Scenic Highway protections is to prohibit Billboards and other signs, leaving the driving experience to uninterrupted views.

While I was in Congress I got money to do a Big Sur Highway Maintenance Study on all aspects of maintaining and repairing the State's most renowned coastal highway. A chapter of that report focused on sign criteria and prohibitions. Cal Trans ignores these prohibitions, claiming they're exempt for safety reasons required by the Federal Government.

None of what Cal Trans is proposing would be allowed in the federally managed "Parkways" around Washington, such as the George Washington Parkway, etc. where safety signs are strictly limited and have to reflect content sensitive design.

The Commission should reject Cal Trans proposal because the Department has never asked the Feds for alternatives to their proposed sign pollution. The USDOT has designated Big Sur Coast Highway One as an "All American Scenic Highway". Which is as close as a nonfederal highway can be to a Federal Parkway. Cal Trans should seek consultation before allowing Highway signs in Big Sur just like any other highway. I am sure waivers could be made to standard Highway signage as they have on Federal Parkways.

3. Former California Highway Patrolman, Capt. Ken White, was the resident CHP on Highway 1 for over a decade and was the first to call out Cal Trans sign pollution on Highway. Too many unnecessary signs. The road itself controls the traffic, not the signs. Renowned photographer Ansel Adams, who lived next to the Highway, called Cal Trans signs unnecessary "urban achine". Cal Trans response is "the Feds make us do it". Don't accept that without further study.

4. This waiver request is the only opportunity the State has to require a study of options before granting Cal Trans request. Finally the Coastal Commission has a chance to question the necessity for so much signage on the State's world recognized Scenic Highway. No other entity can ask Cal Trans to rethink its one size fits all signage proposal. Please do.

I bring this request from a history of working on the original Coastal Act Initiative along with my close friend Peter Douglas. I led the famous Prop 20 bike ride pointing out the "keep out signs" all along the Coast in support of strong publicity for the Prop 20 initiative on the 1972 ballot. Later as a County Supervisor I served on the Regional Coastal Commission prior to LCP adoption. I authored the Big Sur LCP, which championed the "View Shed Protection" concept for development in Big Sur. That concept also applied to highway signage not distracting from the view shed.

As State Legislator I authored the largest State Park Bond Act, at that time, helping to acquire Andrew Molara State Park, Lime Kiln State Park and Garrapata State Park. And as a Congressman I authored the legislation to create by a President Clinton Executive Order placing the entire California Coastal Rocks and Islands into Federal Monument Protection.

I write this to you as a Big Sur landowner who drives the highway all the time. I am proud that this State has a Coastal Act, I am thankful that the Big Sur LCP has worked, but shamed that Cal Trans on signage has not been interested complying with the Monterey County Coast Management Plan.

The Commission is the only check and balance to check out their signage proposal. Each sign, in each place, needs public scrutiny before instillation is done. Just driving the Coast right now will easily demonstrate why this attention is needed. I'd Be glad to accompany Commissioners and Staff to show why.

. Please deny waiver until all alternatives are looked at. Big Sur Scenic Highway is too unique to be treated as just another highway. Thank you,
Congressman Sam Farr, (Retired).

Sent from my iPhone