

Design Exceptions –Caltrans Alternative Direct Connector #2

Overview

August 29, 2017

Within Volume II, Appendices F starting on page 91/800, is a section called “**Non Standard Features/Design Exception**”. These design exceptions have been evaluated based on the updated 6th Edition **Highway Design Manual (HDM)**. There are **82 Features requiring an Exception** to the HDM. Of these 82, there are 27 Headquarters approved Mandatory exception and 17 exceptions are listed as “District Delated Mandatory Design Exceptions”. The remaining 39 design exceptions are “Advisory”. The Caltrans project is 2.1 miles on I-5 and 2.5 miles on SR-56 for a cost of \$289 million dollars costed in 2016 price index dollars. If the project was brought to the standards in HDM an **additional \$ 541 million** would need to be added.

None of these Caltrans Design Changes were presented or clarified within the Draft Environmental Impact Report of 2012. Under CEQA, the public was denied the opportunity to ask questions about Preferred Alternative 2 and the impacts of all these exceptions. Even in the Final Environmental Impact Report no data is provided for comparison to Alternative 4’s need for Design exceptions or cost related issues, if any.

The I-5 corridor within Torrey Pines and Carmel Valley is a mixture of business parks, residential, commercial development, the Del Mar Hills Academy, other public schools and the Los Penasquitos Lagoon. The SR-56 project area includes residential, hotel, open space, and public and private schools. One major land issue is the Carmel Valley Restoration and Enhancement Program (CVREP) area located to the southeast of the I-5/SR-56 proposed interchange. “The CVREP has been identified as a critical environmental resource and **must not be impacted** by the proposed project.” Caltrans states that “further impacts to private property were to be strictly avoided in order to provide an **environmentally viable build alternative**”.

The Portofino Drive Conundrum

Caltrans needed to shrink down the size of I-5 within Torrey Pines by exceptions to **Horizontal Clearance, Shoulder width, Lane widths, and standard curve radius** or “**acquisition of five full**

property parcels located along Portofino Drive, just north of Portofino Circle.” Headquarters Mandatory Design Exception Feature #1: **Horizontal Clearance** states “ **the minimum shoulder** width for a freeway with six or more lanes is **10 feet** for the left and right shoulders.” The requested exception is for spot locations along I-5 to provide a horizontal clearance of “**approximately 1 foot.**” Southbound I-5 to Eastbound SR-56 Connector and 5 feet from the structure bent no.2 of the Del Mar Heights Road overcrossing. If the standard 10 foot horizontal clearance is not provided the five homes on Portofino Drive would need to be acquired.

Design Exception Feature #2: the **minimum shoulder** width for a freeway with six or more lanes is 10 feet for the left and right shoulders. The requested exception is 6 feet at various spot locations along both northbound and southbound I-5. If the standard 10 foot horizontal clearance is required then the five homes along Portofino Drive (parcels) would need to be acquired.

Design Exception Feature #6: **Lane Width** “**The minimum lane width on two lane and multi-lane highway, ramps, collector roads shall be 12 feet.**” Exception for proposed lane widths for HOV lane #1 and general purpose lanes #1 and #2 to be reduced to **11 feet**. If the standard lane width was required (12 feet), this would result in the five full property acquisitions for the parcels located along Portofino Drive, just north of Portofino Circle.

The horizontal clearance, minimum shoulder, and lane width exceptions appears **to save Caltrans 16 or less feet** and save \$16.7 million dollars in additional right-of-way acquisitions. **What Caltrans failed to mention is that they intend to up to 3 feet of the level backyards from the 5 Portofino Drive homes, anyway.** So Caltrans is still taking property but can claim they are ‘**avoiding any full property takes**’ as stated in Design Exception Feature #8.

Shell Gas Station on Carmel Valley Road - Design Exception #8

In order to provide a standard horizontal **curve** radius, the South to East connector would have to be redesigned with an 850 foot radius curve not the requested 722 foot curve. This design change would make the 50 mph curve only capable of handling 46 mph curve speed. If this exception was not accepted then the Shell Gas Station would need to be acquired. Caltrans claims they cannot provide a suitable relocation site for the gas station.

During the Caltrans Steering Committee(s) meeting, it was made crystal clear to the Carmel Valley and Torrey Pines Community Planning Board that the gas station could not be saved. The Torrey Pines Board in December, 2007 passed a motion to oppose any I-5/SR-56 connector options that resulted in the **taking of any homes**. A gas station is not a residential property! Caltrans incorrectly states "(TPCPB) formed the opposition group "Stop Taking Our Property" (STOP). The TPCPB did not create this STOP group of private concerned citizens. This is simply a preamble for Caltrans to save \$3.1 million and install a curve that may not be safe at highway speeds.

Is Del Mar Heights Road or rather SR-56 in the wrong location?

Design Exception Feature #4: The minimum interchange spacing shall be **two miles** outside of urban areas and **two miles between freeway-to-freeway interchanges**. The current spacing between I-5/Del Mar Heights Road and I-5/SR-56 interchange is 1.2 miles. In order to provide the required 2 miles the DMHR would need to be demolished and reconstructed 0.75 miles to the North and require \$90 million cost to construct.

Caltrans fails to mention that the original route for SR-56, known as SR 680, was rejected by Encinitas, as it would have passed through Olivenhain along Rancho Sante Fe Road. Then Caltrans set into motion future plans to connect this freeway just south of Torrey Pines, as SR-56. Caltrans should have known better than choosing the proposed SR-56 which they admit is geographically constrained by CVREP to the south, steep topography to the north, and surrounding private properties within the narrowing portion of I-5 in the county.

Safety Design Issues

Design Exception IIE, Feature #10 & #11: Vertical **Stopping Sight Distance**. The Carmel Creek Road to eastbound SR-56 on ramp does not provide the minimum **stopping sight distance** (SSD). The SSD should be 465 feet but only 360 feet is provided by this ramp rated for 45 mph. To cure this SSD issue the ramp would need to be shifted 164 feet to the east along SR-56. Caltrans solution is to provide more lighting. No discussion about how many more accidents will occur due to not providing a the required Stopping Sight Distance.

The same SSD issue has been identified for the Carmel Country Road to westbound SR-56. The SSD for this ramp is 650 feet and only 427 feet is provided for a design speed of 60 mph.

Design Exception IIIH, Feature 22: **Location of Ramp Intersection on Crossroad.** “Ramp terminals should connect where the **grade of the crossing is 4 percent or less to avoid potential of overturning of trucks**”. Exception is requested for the ramp intersection at the Del Mar Heights Road Overcrossing of approximately -5%. In order to achieve a standard ramp intersection with a overcrossing of 4% or less, the “**road elevation through the intersection would have to be raised considerably**”. Caltrans would need additional retaining walls and realignment of intersections at a cost of \$7.3 million dollars. What is the cost to the nearby neighborhoods if a truck overturns and catches fire or creates an environmental spill?

CONCLUSIONS

- Caltrans **failed to provide adequate comparisons** during the DEIR process and Caltrans Steering Committee meetings for the public, local community planning boards, and Country and San Diego City official to judge the merits of the 5 alternatives.
- Caltrans has failed to provide an environmentally friendly and viable build alternative but rather has **chosen to directly impact the health and quality of life of all Torrey Pines** residents and school children within 1,000 feet of the Caltrans Preferred Director Connector Alternative 2.
- The Torrey Pines Community Planning Board supports the need for a comprehensive traffic relief programed approach on I-5/SR-56.
- The Torrey Pines Community Planning Board ***selects and supports*** the **HYBRID Alternative #4** as its Preferred Alternative. This Alternative still supports the Direct Connector from West to North along SR-56 and Carmel Valley. The **direct environmental impacts and health related issues are reduced** by selecting the Hybrid Alternative #4 which provides a more distant buffer zone than Alternative #2 which is within a few feet of residential development along the 2.1 miles within Torrey Pines and the Del Mar Hills Academy.