

February 17, 2016

Citizens of Carlsbad,

My name is Bruce Urquhart, I recently retired after a 37 year career as a Deputy District Director/Division Chief with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). This letter is written from the perspective of a concerned former resident/property owner with continued ties to the City of Carlsbad.

With all the television commercials supporting Measure A, I took it upon myself to research the measure and learn what the benefits will be for the entire community.

- Typically, projects of this magnitude must go through an environmental review process called the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Last year the California Supreme Court ruled that an ordinance passed by a Citizen's Initiative is not subject to review under CEQA. It's clear that the developer (Caruso Affiliated) is using this loophole in the law to circumvent the environmental process that can take more than a year to complete. To meet the requirement of a Citizens Initiative, the developer presented the City of Carlsbad the 20,000 paid signatures from residents that supported the project and bring it to a council or public vote. The citizens signing the petition were told that the existing strawberry fields that are presently there will stay intact, but were not told that a mall would be built and the strawberry fields will be relocated easterly away from the mall.
- The project includes the addition of a 585,000 sq. ft. shopping mall on the south shore of the lagoon. It needs to be noted that traffic generated by this development is projected to be 35,000 trips a day. This stretch of I-5 near Cannon Rd. is not expected to be improved before 2035, and a responsible developer needs to coordinate any improvements with Caltrans needed to mitigate the increased traffic from the proposed mall. It appears this developer has not done that, but rather ignored the mall traffic impact on our freeways.
- In a letter written by Allan Kosup, Caltrans Interstate 5 Corridor Director, dated July 24, 2015, to Patrick Thomas, Public Works Director for the City of Carlsbad, "as part of the I-5 Express Lanes process Direct Access Ramps (DAR) had been recommended at Cannon Road. The DAR would improve travel and reduce congestion for carpool and Fastrak users from Carlsbad and surrounding cities. Additionally the DAR, if constructed, would improve operations at the I-5/Cannon Road interchange, and the I-5/Palomar Airport

Road interchange. Although the DAR was included in the Draft EIR/EIS, Caltrans deferred a final decision on the DAR until local decisions on land-use and circulation were finalized. For this reason, the DAR was removed from the Final EIR. It is important to note that the proposed development would limit or preclude the region from implementing a DAR at this location. Previous planning studies determined that there were no other feasible sites for a DAR in Carlsbad.”

The amount of increased traffic on this already congested corridor must be addressed and have Caltrans at the table for any discussions to mitigate the thousands of trips generated by this proposed development.

Lastly, on a personal note, Carlsbad is a unique community that requires community involvement on a large scale development like the Agua Hedionda 85/15 Specific Plan Initiative within the city’s jurisdiction. With the Pacific Ocean on the west, Agua Hedionda and Batiquitos lagoons within the city limits, the inhabitants of Carlsbad live in a very special place. During my time as a resident, I became part of the city’s fabric from spending time at Ponto and Tamarack beaches, dining out in the Village, and still participating in the Carlsbad 5000’s and Carlsbad Marathons.

For the most part, the Mayor and City Council have had the best interests of the citizens who elected them into office. However, in this instance, the dollars signs of increased tax revenue are clouding why they are there in the first place – to protect the residents of Carlsbad and the Carlsbad way of life. Let me be clear, I am not against growth; it’s an inevitable by-product of our society. However, smart growth that balances the needs of all affected makes a project something we can all be proud of.

In my opinion, Measure A will not enhance the uniqueness of Carlsbad. Caruso Affiliated have misled the citizens of Carlsbad and their deceptive television ads clearly show that their personal interests trump what’s best for the environment and residents of Carlsbad.

Sincerely,



Bruce Urquhart  
Division Chief, Office of Land Surveys (Retired)  
Caltrans, District 11, San Diego