

## September 2018 Letter to City Council

RE: Proposed Improvements to I-80 Hiddenbrooke/American Canyon Interchange

Dear City Councilmembers ,

After over a decade of studies and on again-off again work, the Hiddenbrooke Property Owners Association (HPOA) Board is pleased that the Council will finally consider a staff recommendation to move forward with improvements to the I-80 Hiddenbrooke Parkway/American Canyon Interchange (item currently scheduled for December 19 Council Meeting). These improvements are required as part of early development agreements for the Hiddenbrooke community and are necessary to improve current and future traffic flow as well as enhance the appearance of the interchange and the entrance to Hiddenbrooke. Through various studies the improvement options for the interchange were narrowed down to two choices – traffic signals or a modern roundabout concept. The roundabout option is clearly preferred, and a recent City-sponsored survey of Hiddenbrooke residents found a high level of support for the roundabout option (68% favored a roundabout over traffic signals). In addition, the consulting firm Caltrans relies on to evaluate roundabout plans has confirmed that a roundabout on both sides of the interchange is geometrically and operationally feasible.

As a side note, HPOA has been involved in this project for a number of years through our I-80 Interchange Committee which has periodically met with City staff to provide input on the various interchange studies. Hiddenbrooke residents have also had several opportunities to provide input on the project through three community meetings conducted by the City in Hiddenbrooke as well as two community-wide surveys, one by the City and one by HPOA. The most recent community meeting in July was well attended and focused on the roundabout concept. Staff later provided answers to questions from the meeting, and HPOA helped publicize the responses on our website and community newsgroups. Overall, we believe there has been an adequate and sufficient amount of public input to advance the project into the detailed design phase with Caltrans.

While the action before the Council is about moving forward with the Staff recommendation for the roundabout concept, we would like to call the Council's attention to several other related issues.

Appearance of the Interchange. As many of you probably know, the Hiddenbrooke side of the interchange is a barren, industrial-looking area of dirt, weeds, trash, a broken down fence, and periodic parking by large trucks and other vehicles on the freeway on/off ramps (despite No Parking signs installed by the City). The community would like to see the appearance of the interchange improved to match the beauty of our entrance and the rest of the Hiddenbrooke community (HPOA's community survey found that 74% of the residents wanted to see the Hiddenbrooke side of the interchange landscaped). Please make sure the project includes adequate

landscaping to beautify our side of the interchange. HPOA is also willing to work with the City to determine the best and most cost effective way to maintain the new landscaping after it is installed.

Status Quo for Informal Park and Ride Lot is Not Acceptable. While encouraging ridesharing is a laudable goal, the truth is that hardly any Hiddenbrooke residents use the informal park and ride lot by the entrance (less than 6% according to the HPOA survey), and there is another alternative Park and Ride lot one exit away at Red Top Rd. There have been many complaints from the community about the lot which is a continuing nuisance and eyesore due to dumped trash, criminal activity, broken down fences, abandoned vehicles, overnight camping, etc. Improving the Park and Ride lot is not part of the I-80 interchange project; therefore, the lot will likely remain in its current unsightly condition for the foreseeable future. The status quo is not acceptable to our community, and we encourage the City to work with other agencies to either find new money to improve the lot and its security or eliminate it, relocate it, or scale it back to a much smaller area.

Project Funding. We understand that it is difficult to accurately estimate the final costs of the project until additional design work is completed and the project is closer to construction. However, based on preliminary estimates, it appears that the money already collected by the City from developer surcharges and excise taxes on Hiddenbrooke homes should be adequate to complete the work. Should this not be the case, we request that the City not use Hiddenbrooke funds (Hiddenbrooke Improvement District Bond or Hiddenbrooke Maintenance Districts funds) to backfill any budget shortfall. Alternatively, if there are excess funds after construction is completed, HPOA would like to be consulted concerning the future use of these funds.

Emergency Back Road Out of Hiddenbrooke. The recent fires in the North Bay heightened community concerns about the need for an alternate route out of Hiddenbrooke if the main exit route using Hiddenbrooke Parkway is not available. St John's Mine Road is a back road to Columbus Parkway that could serve this purpose; however, it is in disrepair and may not be fully usable as an evacuation route. We therefore request that the City investigate the feasibility of making this road a secondary emergency exit route as well determine the costs associated with this function.

In summary, we are encouraged that the Council is taking this important and long awaited step to move the project forward and will continue to help the City as needed with the next phases of the project. As the project advances we would appreciate periodic updates by City Staff on the status of the work. Also, HPOA's I-80 Interchange Committee will continue to be available to provide input and other assistance.

Sincerely,

Jen Pollard  
HPOA President

Cc: Terrance Davis, Public Works Director  
Jill Mercurio, City Engineer  
David Yatabe, Consultant Traffic Engineer