



May 20, 2015

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Dear Mr. Schonbrunn:

Thank you for your thoughtful letter of March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015. You received an initial reply. This letter supplements that letter of April 28, 2015. I express appreciation for your patience regarding our research into the elements you have suggested in your letter. As you know, several of your suggestions are already part of the plan for the corridor. In particular, thank you for your support in doing a Categorical Exemption/ Categorical Exclusion under CEQA/ NEPA. It was your suggestion that helped propel that environmental plan forward and secure Caltrans and MTC support.

You have responded to a presentation by TAM that reflected the challenges associated with the opening of a Third Lane and Bikeway on the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge. In particular, you have offered suggestions and innovative ideas for opening the lane as soon as possible. Thank you for your thoughtful treatment of the issues.

I would like to address the points you raise in the letter individually. Be assured that the usage of a shoulder area as a lane on a daily basis has been successfully achieved elsewhere in the United States. That has propelled Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration forward regarding allowing the daily usage of the shoulder on the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge. But with the travelling public exposed to a new feature, other standards must simultaneously be met to the best extent possible, so drivers can be confident they can safely navigate this new roadway feature.

1. Regarding traffic entering from Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, you are correct in that this traffic will enter the Richmond Bridge, staying in its own lane. That traffic will not be required to merge with traffic on I-580 coming from Highway 101. The use of the lane will be encouraged by changeable message signing that indicates the lane is available. No doubt, with heavy traffic flows from 2:00-7:00 pm weekdays, the lane will be very attractive to users.
2. While I recognize that your suggestion is for Sir Francis Drake traffic to exit at San Quentin, then get right back on I-580 entering the new lane on the bridge, I do want to point out that the current plan is to have that same traffic stay in a new lane that gets on the bridge without having traffic exit at San Quentin. This is a much better option – not having all that regional traffic exiting to San Quentin Village's Main Street.

There is a need to construct this new lane over the bridge over San Quentin's Main Street. Fortunately, the bridge is wide enough to allow room for the lane. We would be glad to share plans for this with you as they are being developed.

The eastbound onramp from Main Street does need to be reconstructed, to allow traffic entering I-580 to have a safer merge into what is now three lanes on 580. Those three lanes will always be in effect at that location. The third lane will be dropped out on the trestle section of the Richmond San Rafael Bridge. And so during the off-peak period, there will be two lanes—and a shoulder—on most of the Richmond San Rafael Bridge.

On the eastern end of the Richmond San Rafael Bridge, the shoulder of I-580 once you exit the bridge is insufficient to handle vehicular weight over an extended period. This section of shoulder will need to be reconstructed.

The reconstruction of the shoulders can be done outside of the commute period, most likely at night. Staged freeway reconstruction is a common practice around the Bay Area. The shoulder area can be made available each day after the overnight construction is completed.

3. You are absolutely correct in your point regarding the elimination of the merge as the key benefit to this third lane implementation. There is no doubt that the elimination of the merge and the addition of the extra capacity will create significant traffic relief upstream from the bridge in Marin.
4. Shuttling traffic down the San Quentin offramp and back up the onramp is inefficient and unacceptable to those living in San Quentin Village and working at San Quentin Prison. The community has been working with the County of Marin to address the access impacts of the "queue jumpers" that exit presently. To route the very heavy flow of regional traffic to the offramp and onramp movement is also an impact to those leaving eastern San Rafael and entering the Richmond Bridge Corridor. Steady growth of this movement has occurred as commercial development has happened in the East Francisco/ Kerner Blvd corridor.

The development of Home Depot and Target in eastern San Rafael, along with the adjacent professional business development, is a benefit to Marin. Many of the workers and the consumers entering this corridor use the San Quentin off-and-onramps to travel from the East Bay to both shop and to work. The San Quentin ramps are being closely monitored by San Rafael with a commitment by the developers to signalize them as soon as demand from the eastern San Rafael corridor indicates the need for signalization.

To flood these same ramps with regional pass-through traffic will have a significant impact to traffic using them now from the developed eastern San Rafael area.

5. The San Quentin community is exceedingly frustrated with bottlenecks created by queue jumping traffic and are requesting that traffic exiting to San Quentin from the eastbound Sir Francis Drake connector to I-580 be prevented from going straight through the intersection. The team is considering a raised median of some sort that prevents queue jumping traffic and forces only local traffic to exit at that location. Whatever feature is implemented, it must accommodate the steadily increasing traffic flows from the eastern San Rafael commercial and business corridor.

With the addition of the new lane, coming from Sir Francis Drake Blvd. and entering the bridge, the queue jumping can be reduced and the local San Quentin community demands to more easily access their own community can be met. Traffic will stay on the freeway that enters from Drake. This is an important aspect of the project.

I appreciate your recommendation to alleviate traffic congestion in this corridor as soon as possible. As mentioned above, there is not a current viable plan to have traffic coming from Drake exit at San Quentin then re-enter I-580 at the onramp from San Quentin. It would create an inability for local traffic accessing San Quentin Village to get in and out of their community. It would dis-allow a steadily growing amount of traffic coming from the Eastern San Rafael/Kerner corridor to enter 580 eastbound at the San Quentin ramp, thereby forcing those trips into the Bellam Avenue area or downtown San Rafael. This significant redistribution of trips is unacceptable.

Your letter goes on to make additional recommendations regarding the corridor:

6. There has been substantial discussion regarding the usage of the shoulder on eastbound I-580 between the Richmond Bridge structure and the Richmond Parkway offramp at Castro/ Marine Street. That shoulder is substantially constrained adjacent to a large retaining wall immediately adjacent to the freeway lanes for a distance of about 500 feet. It is this location that presents the biggest hurdle to implementing the Third Lane on the Richmond side. After looking at moving the lanes over to the left, and narrowing the lanes, the speed that is possible given the restricted stopping site distance in the Third Lane, without moving the wall over, is 38 miles per hour. That means the area would need to be speed restricted to 35 miles per hour. Caltrans has determined that they would not allow that condition on this Interstate facility.

We will appeal to Caltrans once again regarding allowing this to occur for the few afternoon peak hours it would be in effect.

7. You are also correct about changeable message signs on the bridge. They will direct the usage of the lane during its allowable hours of operation. There is a need to maintain overhead legal vertical clearance on the lower deck of the Bridge; this means that signs directing usage of the lane must be adhered to the bridge carefully, not impeding that vertical clearance. Structural analysis must be conducted to assure that the sign can be attached effectively.
8. We will raise the issue of traffic speed deterrents such as the rumble strips you suggest when we appeal to Caltrans to allow usage of the shoulder on the Richmond side without the planned improvements that are currently proceeding.
9. TAM approved funding for a bike shuttle that could be put into place to carry cyclists from the Point Molate path entrance onto I-580, along I-580 eastbound to the Richmond Parkway exit. Cyclists are currently allowed to use the freeway shoulder—if the shoulder is used by vehicles before a planned replacement multi-use path can be built, then the shuttle service will be necessary.
10. The painting contractor currently engaged to conduct painting maintenance on the Richmond San Rafael Bridge has access to complete the necessary bridge painting / maintenance until the Summer/Fall of 2016. Yes, that painting contractor could be paid to stop work, or conduct work in a different manner. However, neither Caltrans nor MTC has indicated a willingness to fund this.
11. Again, regarding the Main Street detour option, as outlined above, the directing of the heavy flow of regional traffic onto the San Quentin offramp/ onramp is not feasible.

I finally want to mention that there is strong evidence that access to this Third Lane from Northbound Highway 101 on the Marin side will need to be improved. To that extent, TAM is looking at improvements through the eastbound 580 off-and on-ramp area at Bellam, and improvements along Sir Francis Drake. These will be dependent on local government acceptance of the improvements.

Letter to David Schonbrunn

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Again, thank you for your patience and I would be glad to meet with you personally to discuss the project further, brainstorming possible additional solutions, with appropriate team members available as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "D. Steinhauser".

Dianne Steinhauser

DS/dmm