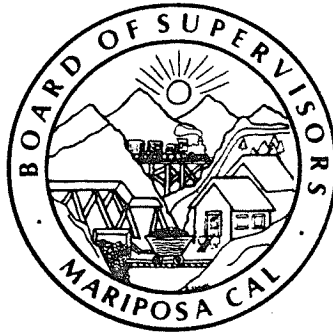


Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

District 1.....PATTI A. REILLY
District 2.....DOUG BALMAIN
District 3.....ROBERT C. STEWART
District 4.....GARRY R. PARKER
District 5.....BOB PICKARD



VACANT
County Administrative Officer

MARGIE WILLIAMS
Clerk of the Board

P.O. Box 784
MARIPOSA, CALIFORNIA 95338
(209) 966-3222
1-800-736-1252

FAX (209) 966-5147

RES. NO. 02-393

October 23, 2002

Mark Orr
Traffic Safety Operations
California Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 2048
Stockton, CA 95201

RE: Request to Defer Installation of a Four-Way Stop at the Intersection of Highways
140 and 49 North in the Unincorporated Community of Mariposa, CA

Dear Mr. Orr,

Thank you for taking the time to present the information regarding the safety improvement proposed for the intersection of Highway 140 with Highway 49 North and Jones Street in Mariposa. The Board appreciates CalTrans' commitment to safety in our community. We share a desire to ensure safe intersections for residents and visitors of our county. A comprehensive, long-term look at the future development in the area of this intersection may assist with a good, safe solution. We believe the interim four-way stop is not an effective action at this time.

Recognizing that the process to install a four-way stop commenced almost four years ago, the Board of Supervisors respectfully requests that the installation of a four-way stop sign at this intersection be abandoned or at least deferred until other options are considered. We find there is no demand for such an improvement in the town of Mariposa. Today's conditions have changed since the collection of data during the latter part of the last century. CalTrans' own traffic counts show average daily traffic has *declined* since the end of the last century.

In your presentation of the warrants for the safety improvement, there were two components of data cited which today do not appear to be relevant: traffic volume per hour and the intersection accidents. Considering this data, our staff finds potential for significant problems created by the four-way stop without offsetting benefits.

First, we are concerned that the proposal does nothing to eliminate the contributing factors to the accidents. Fifteen accidents over two years are cited at this intersection, yet it appears from your presentation that more than ten were actually associated with area driveway encroachments, leaving fewer than five accidents directly related to the intersection. This problem may be eliminated by a comprehensive assessment associated with the design of more than ten driveways accessing the State highways within a couple of car lengths of this intersection.



Second, we are concerned that the proposal does nothing to alleviate the design problems at the intersection. The superelevation of Highway 140 makes it impossible for passenger car drivers on Jones Street or Highway 49 North to see the pavement of the facing intersection. Traffic moving northbound from Jones Street across the intersection to Highway 49 North. The southbound lane on Highway 140 enters the intersection at a wide angle aligning into the right turn lane from Highway 49 North.

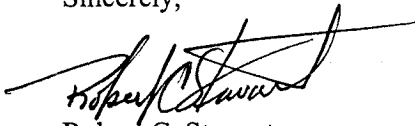
Third, we believe there are other alternatives that CalTrans should consider to alleviate the safety concerns at this intersection before installing stop signs. For example, "rumble strips" combined with "congested area ahead" signage on Highway 140 may be beneficial to slow southbound traffic. Similar approaches are used on US 395 in Kern County and Highway 20 in Lake County. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) "Flexible Highway Design Manual" also has options in character with Mariposa County's plans.

Fourth, the proposed four-way stops are inconsistent with Mariposa County's adopted General Plan, the adopted Mariposa Town Planning Area Specific Plan, and Mariposa County's proposed General Plan Update.

Finally, if the data from 1999 is correct, we are greatly concerned about the traffic jam occurring every morning for four hours. Presently, during our brief morning and evening "rush hour," drivers may have an inconvenient wait of 30-50 seconds to cross the intersection or make a left turn. However, your data shows over 500 vehicles per hour for four morning hours on Highway 140 and over 200 vehicles on the Highway 49 North/Jones Street legs. If this is correct, eastbound traffic on Highway 140 will back up from the four-way stop for a distance of more than one-third to over one-half of a mile or more. With the steepness of the climb on the eastbound Highway 140 leaving the intersection, traffic clearing the intersection will be further hampered by slow-to-accelerate vehicles.

Although safety improvements may normally be exemptions from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), it would appear that the traffic congestion generated by the four-way stop sign might significantly effect the air quality in Mariposa County. CEQA does provide that normally exempt projects can be subject to review if there are impacts crossing environmental significant thresholds. No studies have been shown to the county identifying potential effects on air quality as a result of this project. We believe installation of the four-way stop signs is not needed as a permanent or interim solution. We urge the California Department of Transportation to explore other options to improve the safety at this intersection.

Sincerely,



Robert C. Stewart
Chairman
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

RCS/pm