

## **CTMP's Excellent Adventure**

How the Comprehensive Transportation Management Plan (CTMP) came to impact Sausalito, Marin City, Tam Valley, Muir Beach, and Stinson Beach

In the 1970s owners of private beaches in Marin built parking lots. Then they sold off beaches and parking lots to the state Parks Department, which in turn sold them off to the National Park Service. These parking lots were usually built on former wetlands, estuaries, or floodplains--the flat spots. The county roads leading to the lots were usually built along the creeks that fed the wetlands, estuaries, or floodplains.

No one then did any environmental analysis for these lots and roads, and not surprisingly they have had some problems--growing ones. Access problems were addressed by maintenance crews with a series of small repairs and modest changes, again without any environmental review. Meanwhile the roads became clogged with more and more cars that cannot fit in the officially designated parking lots. County road crews cut back roadside vegetation to add more parking spaces outside the lots; again, no environmental review is done. Drippings from car engines now run into the creek. More cars come, and safety concerns mount, but there are no more easy places to expand parking.

People living far from the parks are happy to have more parking, but people living near the parks complain that visitor cars are overflowing into their communities. The county sets up a tax on hotel rooms and promises that this money will go toward offsetting some of the impacts. Instead the money disappears into the general fund and visitor cars continue to clog local streets. The situation is confused by the multiple jurisdictions of the county sheriff, California Highway Patrol, and National Park Service.

Finally, beginning in 1999 the Park Service and Marin County get a grants to study the traffic mess. Their consultant begins measuring the problems, but counts cars on only one day in each community, regardless whether it is sunny or foggy. The original lot and roadside spaces that had no environmental analysis, as well as all illegally parked cars, are counted as "demand" that must be accommodated.

A couple of years later, the Park Service and the County hold "scoping" meetings to get ideas from the public on what issues need to be studied in an Environmental Impact Statement. After 30 years of ineffectual efforts, the scoping meetings are met with skepticism and are not well attended. The Park Service, County, and consultants now disappear for a year or so while they have funding problems, analysis problems, and internal disputes.

The next stage should be to analyze possible actions, detail their drawbacks and advantages, and approaches the public for more input. Instead the agencies published a glossy brochure containing transportation components selected and excluded largely

without explanation and organized into three distinct alternatives . The measures don't correspond to what communities had favored during scoping, and the three alternatives alarms the communities by making it appear that planning is almost complete.

No one knows the environmental carrying capacity of these parkland sites, yet planning is progressing to accommodate more visitors. The process seems driven by the calculations of traffic engineers and funding deadlines, rather than the needs of the habitats that visitors come to experience.

Further, the process discourages communication among communities. Sausalito loves every shuttle parking site except Rodeo; Tam Valley loves every shuttle parking site except Manzanita; and everybody loves the Marin City site (except Marin City). Stinson wants more parking; Muir wants less. Tam Valley residents love the proposed southern entrance to Stinson; Stinson residents loathe it. Each community feels it is bearing a disproportionate share of the burden and wants impacts pushed to the other communities.

The danger is that the County, Park Service, and funding agencies may rationalize that the public's input cancels itself out, and that they can thus chose any plan component that best fits their traffic calculations and funding deadlines. In fact, the agencies' process has largely blocked off and fractionalized constructive public input. Supervisor Annette Rose has set up a process to involve Tam Valley about its component (the possible Manzanita Shuttle site) Supervisor Steve Kinsey has made little effort to involve the communities in his district; and there is no single public format that has effectively brought together all the local communities, affected stakeholders and interest groups

What you can do:

Write to Supervisor Steve Kinsey at:  
3501 Civic Center Drive  
San Rafael, CA 94903;

as well as Brian O'Neill, superintendent of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area,  
at:

Building 210  
Fort Mason  
San Francisco, CA 94123.

Tell them that the CTMP planning process needs to return to its original purpose: to reduce impacts on both local communities and parkland habitats. It needs first to determine the carrying capacity of the parkland habitats and *then* to achieve an appropriate balance between public access and the concerns of local communities.

The process needs to be fully transparent, with representatives selected by a wide variety of stakeholders sitting at the same table and with access to the same information. While the planning is progressing, an effective parking enforcement system must be set up and demonstrated conclusively to work.

Gordon Bennett, Sierra Club representative to the Tam Valley Gateway Coalition