W-48

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—BUSINESS, TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING AGENCY ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, Governor

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**
DISTRICT 1, P.O. BOX 3700
EUREKA, CA 95502-3700
PHONE (707) 441-2009
FAX (707) 441-5869
TTY (Teletypewriter #707-445-6463)

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April 19, 2007

1-HUM-General
Humboldt County General Plan Update

Tom Hofweber, Senior Planner
Department of Community Development Services
County of Humboldt
3015 H Street
Eureka, CA 95501

Dear Mr. Hofweber:

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on draft chapters 20 and 21 for the Noise and Safety elements of the Humboldt County General Plan Update (GPU). We have the following comment:

Of the three alternatives considered in the GPU Noise Element, we agree with the County staff recommendation to select the Goals and Policies stated in Alternative B, with the exception of Policy N-P5 US 101 Speed Limits/Noise Barriers, which we do not agree with. We recommend that Policy N-P5 be deleted from both Alternative B and A for the following reasons:

- Policy N-P5 US 101 Speed Limits/Noise Barriers proposes a speed limit reduction from 65 mph to 60 mph along Highway 101 in the vicinity of Arcata and McKinleyville for the purpose of preventing significant noise impacts. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) published guidance on Highway Traffic Noise Analysis and Abatement suggests that a 5 mph reduction in highway speed is not likely to achieve a significant noise reduction benefit. Rather, a 20.5 mph reduction in speed is necessary for a noticeable decrease in noise levels. Spot speed reduction of highway traffic to this degree is likely to result in significant and unacceptable traffic safety and operational concerns, outweighing any noise abatement benefits gained at this location. We do not anticipate the approval of any request from the County proposing to reduce speed limits on Route 101 as a noise reduction measure.

- Caltrans does not finance or construct noise barriers for developments approved after the highway's initial development, unless mitigating for significant noise impacts created by subsequent Caltrans' highway projects. As acknowledged in the GPU's policies N-P1 and N-P2, it is the responsibility of local land use agencies to prevent incompatible land uses and to establish patterns of development minimizing a community's exposure to excessive noise. Caltrans will consider requests from others to install noise barriers within the State right of way on a case-by-case basis. Please see this letter's attachment for more information on this process.

We look forward to continued cooperation with the County on this project. If you have questions or need further assistance, please contact me at the number above or contact Lezlie Kimura of District 1 Community Planning at (707) 441-4542.

Sincerely,

Jesse Robertson
Associate Transportation Planner
District 1 Community Planning

Attachment: Letter to County of Humboldt re: Noise Barriers in State Right of Way (4/17/07)