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**Why Traffic is Not Like Weather**  
Reversing the gridlock trend in Marin.  
By Supervisor Steve Kinsey

Are traffic and weather similar? People always talk about the weather even though there is no way to change it. Many feel a similar lack of control over Marin's traffic woes. They think that no matter what we say or do, creeping gridlock will continue to erode our quality of life. I understand such pessimistic feelings because for decades that has been the national and Bay Area trend, including here in Marin. However, I have grown optimistic that we can reverse that pattern in our county, in part because of distinct advantages we enjoy in Marin, and in part because we have spent several productive years clarifying our needs and options.

First, let me offer our unique advantages.

- **A tradition of environmental leadership pays off.** Thanks to the diligent and never ending work of private citizens, environmental organizations, and public agencies, 85% of our county is preserved in parks and agriculture. We continue to improve our environmental protections for creeks and baylands while adding land use controls such as urban growth boundaries to prevent sprawl. For 30 years, Marin has been the slowest growing Bay Area County and that trend is not expected to change. Limited future growth will be an enormous advantage in addressing gridlock, because our efforts won't become quickly obsolete.
- **Most of our congestion comes from local drivers.** Contrary to popular belief, our traffic problems are overwhelmingly generated by Marin residents driving to work, to school, to the doctor, shopping, and so forth. Our lifestyles have changed. Today, Marin has almost one car per person – and we're all driving more. Without ignoring regional issues, we can concentrate our investments on improving our own traffic patterns and infrastructure.
- **Effective collaboration is firmly in place.** Marin's eleven cities and towns have been jointly working with the County as the Marin County Congestion Management Agency (CMA) for more than a decade. In recent years, joint meetings with counterparts in Sonoma County have increased regional coordination and improved our success in attracting Federal and State funding partners. Currently, legislation merging 3 separate entities with interest in the railroad right-of-way into one independent rail authority is moving forward and a policy group from Sonoma and Marin are jointly overseeing highway improvements. Often, competing jurisdictions form the greatest obstacle to reducing congestion.

Working with these helpful conditions, the CMA and the Board of Supervisors are about to complete our very first Integrated Transportation Plan. It will identify a full spectrum of improvements and management programs customized to address our county and regional traffic challenges. It will also include a financial plan that illustrates how much each project will cost, what funding sources are available, and how much additional money is needed.

Many interests have participated in shaping the plan, and there is still time for other voices to be heard. For those who want to become fully engaged, please see our website for any upcoming meetings. Other may find visiting our website, at [www.co.marin.ca.us/pw](http://www.co.marin.ca.us/pw) (select "Reports and Links" ) a better means to review the research. To express your opinions via email, send to [Traffic@marin.org](mailto:Traffic@marin.org). For those who prefer the phone, call 499-5078 and a staff member will help answer your requests or make note of your comments.

When completed, the plan will serve as a road map to a less congested future. It should also provide the clarity that voters expect before dedicating new tax dollars toward the program.

I believe brighter days lie ahead for Marin's traffic, no matter what the weather is. You're ready. We're ready. Let's do it.