

Published in the Marin Independent Journal

January 12, 2000

Dear Editor,

It is noteworthy that on the same day another chilling freeway accident occurred in front of Redwood Landfill, Supervisor Murray and I were on the 15th floor of the CALTRANS building in downtown Oakland, reviewing the Landfill's plans to privately construct an overpass across the roadway. Each harrowing car crushing adds an exclamation point to the need for all of us to work together to improve highway safety in that area.

Everyone has a part to play in building a literal bridge to a safer tomorrow as soon as possible. The Landfill has committed to design, construct, and pay for the improvements and they must continue without hesitation. At yesterday's meeting, I was encouraged that their preliminary plans were considered to be conceptually and technically feasible. Now, the Landfill should press on with their detailed design simultaneous to processing of their Caltrans permit. By working both tracks simultaneously, they can shave four precious months off the project timeline.

Caltrans has a major responsibility as well. Director Yahata must convince his superiors in Sacramento that the fastest way to safety in this area is to make a policy exception to allow a private, interim answer instead of waiting for a permanent public solution. While the exception may be unprecedented, the stakes are enormously high. Caltrans cannot afford to turn down a free offer to dramatically improve safety on a dangerous stretch of their highway system. Local managers are well aware of that, and they have reserved staff time to speed permit processing along.

At the County, we must insure that Caltrans and the applicant stay narrowly focused and determined. We have also agreed to manage the environmental review phase in order to cut out months of staffing delay.

All residents share in keeping this crucial fix on the fast track. I encourage the public to remind elected officials and Caltrans leadership of the urgency we feel as a community. Working together, we can bring this long overdue safety improvement into reality months or years before it will happen if a business as usual attitude is allowed to set in.

Steve Kinsey