

EMERGENCY STORAGE PROJECT LAKE HODGES MULTI-AGENCY UPDATE MEETING SUMMARY

DATE: April 28, 2004

TIME: 3 p.m.

ORGANIZATIONS: City of San Diego, County of San Diego-Traffic, San Dieguito River Park JPA, Water Authority, Del Dios Town Council Representatives & The Cains

MEETING LOCATION: The San Diego County Water Authority, Kearny Mesa Office

MULTI-AGENCY ATTENDEES: John Crayton, Annie Kaskade, Alex Newton and Tim Smith, San Diego County Water Authority; Jesus Meda, City of San Diego; Hank Morris, County of San Diego Department of Public Works; Shawna Anderson, San Dieguito River Park JPA; Jim Lindell, MWH Global, Inc.; and Jennifer Dill, Katz & Associates

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES: Drusilla Cursi, Del Dios Town Council; John and Lori Cain, Lake Hodges area residents; Nicholas Christenfeld

PRESENTATION SUMMARY:

Purpose of the meeting

Tim Smith welcomed all of the participants and allowed everyone to make introductions. He then emphasized the purpose of the meeting was to discuss access road alternatives in response to the public's request for additional information at a previous Del Dios Town Council meeting. He stated that the Del Dios Highway alternative directly to the aquatic center was too steep and would result in too many environmental impacts. Tim also re-emphasized that the Water Authority is required to choose the least impacted area. The Water Authority's research concluded that the alternative to use the existing access road and place a temporary traffic signal at the Del Dios Highway/Rancho Drive intersection was the most feasible choice. The original idea was to place a flag person there, however, this is not practical due to safety issues.

Questions and Comments Asked During the Meeting:

Q: What are the plans for the wind surfer area?

A: Jesus Meda stated that there were no plans to make improvements to the access area. He also mentioned that the lease for the concession area expired earlier last year, and, that due to budgetary constraints, the City has no plans to renew its lease.

Q: Will the access road be open to the public during construction?

A: Once construction begins, there will be no use or access plans for the general public.

Q: One person mentioned a conveyor belt system at the last meeting. The belt could move material during the day and truck it out at night. Is this still an option?

A: We did review this option, however, we'd have to get a new access route and remove coastal sage scrub to pursue it. The environmental impacts would be significantly more than the alternative identified in the EIR and the resource agencies would require the least impactful alternative to be selected.

C: Night traffic would impact residents along Del Dios.

Q: Would it be possible to set up a loading facility at the construction site?

A: It is possible, however, the Water Authority cannot take responsibility for how the contractor performs his work. This is referred to as the "Means and Method" process, which means that we (The Water Authority) can't dictate the methods of the contractor. To do so, would result in increased risks and lawsuits.

Q: Will a traffic signal invite morning cut-through traffic?

A: Hank Morris responded by saying that it might, however the signal could be controlled to allow longer waiting periods to deter cut-through traffic. The signal would operate 24-hours per day and rest in "green" except when turns are required from Rancho Drive and when trucks are crossing from Del Dios Highway.

Q: Evening traffic is also a big concern for us (residents). How will this issue be addressed?

A: Hank added that controls might be added to the signal to prevent evening cut-through traffic also. He stated that this is not a perfect traffic-control solution, however, it is the most feasible one.

Q: How will this project benefit the residents in the Del Dios area?

A: The project will provide 20,000 acre-feet of emergency storage should there be a water emergency. The water level in Lake Hodges will also be maintained at a higher level, which will allow more recreation on the lake. We can assume that the dollar value of homes in the area will increase once the water level at the lake is raised and remains that way.

C: Tim Smith mentioned that the total number of truck traffic trips would be reduced from what was originally planned since they've decided to stockpile some of the muck at the site. The access entrance to Lake Drive would also be modified and a fence will be added to prevent evening access.

C: Hank Morris added that "if" it is a County-maintained road, then it must remain open. However, he doubted that it was a County-maintained road since a gate already exists at the entrance. He will investigate further.

Q: How many trucks will be coming and going daily?

A: Approximately four trucks per hour at the peak of the project.

Q: What about the stop sign proposal to stop Lake Drive traffic for trucks to swing wide?

A: This is not a good idea since not everyone stops at stop signs, especially unexpected stop signs.

Q: How about re-positioning the road away from our (the Cain's) home to allow additional room for trucks to turn?

A. The road will be widened at the Lake Drive/Rancho Drive intersection and the turning radius for the trucks will be further away from the house.

C: The Cains expressed concerns about traffic moving at high speeds in the area beginning at 2:30 p.m. Lori Cain noted that the last time the road was studied, it was documented that 60 cars per hour pass through the area. She also noted that traffic begins at 2:30 p.m.

A. The construction traffic hours currently being considered are from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m.

Q: How much tunnel boring will there be?

A: The tunnel boring process will continue 24 hours per day, however because it occurs so far underground, there should not be any impacts to the residents in the area.

Q: How large is the planned staging area?

A: Approximately 9 acres.

Q: Has anyone contacted Hernandez Hideaway regarding the details of the construction project? He (the owner) may be a threat to any type of traffic control in the area.

A: The Water Authority will follow-up with the owner at Hernandez Hideaway. The excess parking area across from Hernandez Hideaway is owned by the City of San Diego. Jesus Meda was unaware of an existing agreement with Hernandez Hideaway to use the land across the street from the property for overflow parking.

Q: Traffic along Lake Drive is the number one concern in the community. Are there any studies being conducted to evaluate the problem?

A: Hank Morris responded by saying that the County is reviewing the information provided by the Water Authority given the constraints that the Water Authority is under. "We're doing our best." The Water Authority is conducting its own studies.

A: Tim Smith also confirmed that traffic studies were conducted by the Water Authority and will continue to be conducted.

Q: Do you study when and how drivers respond to cut-through deterrents and when cut-throughs are most frequently used?

A: Unfortunately, this is a human element that is almost impossible to determine based upon the "chaos theory." The Water Authority will come up with the best solution according to the hard numbers and then adjust our procedures accordingly after the project begins.

Q: What about the lake access road – isn't the road eventually supposed to be developed and paved with a new parking lot?

A: Jesus Meda responded by saying, "As far as I know, there are no plans to widen the road."

C: Shawna Anderson of the San Dieguito River Park commented that the River Park plans to extend the Lake Hodges hiking trail, but there's no place for a staging area. She also mentioned that the trail would be closed temporarily during the Water Authority's

construction project. The River Park will work closely with the Water Authority to minimize hiker inconveniences.

C: While we appreciate the mitigation efforts, we don't believe that the existing access road is the best alternative for the people.

Q: Do the conveyor belts make noise?

A: Yes. Noise, dust and odors are considered as factors in the environmental review process. The conveyor belt option would also require the removal of a large amount of Coastal Sage Scrub.

C: Shawna Anderson noted that the permit process for such projects is always challenging.

Q: Would the Water Authority be willing to fully research the potential impacts and costs of the conveyor process?

A: The Water Authority does not feel that spending approximately \$150,000 of public funds to "research" potential mediation efforts for a project is an appropriate expenditure since it would likely be rejected by the resource agencies due to the increased environmental impacts. This would be up to the contractor if they felt the conveyor was a feasible method to remove muck and they were willing to spend the money on the environmental research.

Q: Why wasn't the conveyor belt option thrown into the original mix early on?

A: The Water Authority prepared a qualitative analysis and selected the preferred alternative based upon the amount of property that would be least impacted.

Q: How about installing a tram?

A: A tram would be more expensive.

Q: This sounds like it is a "done-deal." Is there a legacy that you can leave for us, like the installation of speed bumps? Is there something that you can leave us to make us feel that all of the disruption was worth our while?

A: Yes. As mentioned earlier, higher water level at Lake Hodges, which almost guarantees a higher property value. We're currently at the 60 percent design stage. The good news is that we recently received approval to designate this project as a design-build. This means that the contractor has more leverage in developing other feasible solutions along the way. The entire construction team (construction and engineering) will work on solutions that are best for the community.

Q: Can we move the location and path of the tunnel boring machine? Perhaps utilize a vertical shaft?

A: No. Vertical shafts are generally three to four times more expensive.

Q: Is the stop sign on Lake Boulevard (Date Street and Lake Boulevard) staying or going?

A: Our (County of San Diego Public Works) safety and traffic engineers are still evaluating this. However, the stop sign currently appears to be working.

Q: Why are speed bumps prohibited in the area?

A: The California Vehicle Code does not require speed bumps in the area because it is not considered a "typical" residential with track homes. Also, speeds are too high in the area to consider installing speed bumps. The speed limit is 55mph. The California Vehicle Code mirrors other similar speed laws in the U.S. The only option is to have a state legislature pass a law lowering the speed limit and allowing speed bumps – this is a very difficult process.

Q: Has the traffic qualification report been analyzed recently?

A: Yes, it has been analyzed within the past two years.

Q: So we (the Cains) get a full lake and fewer parking spaces behind our home – is this it?

A: And potentially a sound wall behind the Cain's home.

Q: Are there weight limitation on trucks?

A: Yes, but they only apply to vehicles that are passing through the area, not ones that are in the area for a purpose. A videotape of the road will be made prior to construction to assure that

the contractor restores it to its original condition or an improved condition following construction.

Q: Are there jake brake restrictions (compression brakes)?

A: Yes. The Water Authority will work closely with the contractor regarding this matter.

Q: Who is liable for accidents in the area?

A: The contractor would be liable. The County monitors projects for safety and would shut down a project if was deemed unsafe.

Q: Will trucks only work on weekdays?

A: Yes, they will only transport on weekdays. They may conduct periodic equipment repairs at the site on the weekends.

Q: How many estimated workers will be on-site each day?

A: Approximately 200 during peak construction. They will park on-site or car pool.

Q: At this point, would you say that the conveyor belt option is dead, the alternate route option is dead and the traffic light alternative is a yes?

A: We're 90 percent sure, however with the design-build option, this could change. The Water Authority will review the contractor's options to make sure that they do not suggest alternatives that could potentially cause greater community impacts than the current recommended alternatives.

Conclusion

It was determined that construction access would be from Del Dios Highway, to Rancho Drive, to Lake Drive as originally planned. A temporary traffic signal is required at the intersection of Del Dios Highway and Rancho Drive for truck turns. Flagmen will be used at the intersection of Rancho Drive and Lake Drive to keep the traffic safely flowing. Tim Smith concluded by saying that the Water Authority team plans to attend the June 2004 Del Dios Town Council and provide a status update.

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