

March 11, 2024

To: Trinidad City Council,
From: Kathleen Lake and Tom Davies, Trinidad residents

Re: AGENDA ITEM: Continued Discussion/Decision regarding Letter of Support for Trinidad Rancheria RAISE Grant for the 101 Trinidad Area Access Improvement Project

Dear Trinidad City Council,

A letter of support for the RAISE grant being pursued by the Trinidad Rancheria is unwarranted at this time. This project, and the plans as written, have incorrect information regarding issues, impacts **and the project's alignment with the Trinidad Local Coastal Plan and General Plan** which are yet to be determined. The City of Trinidad has not offered residents a time to publicly discuss this project, nor has the city clarified to the public the project impacts to the Trinidad LCP or GP.

Planning Commission Meeting notes WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 17th, 2021, include:

*"According to the December 2017 Project Study Report produced by Caltrans "to address the transportation deficiencies between the unincorporated community of Westhaven and the City of Trinidad," adding roundabouts to the Trinidad-Main Street interchange would be adequate to accommodate future growth (rather than an additional interchange), **but the roundabout alternative was rejected because, according to the report, it would "significantly alter the existing rural and unique character of the Trinidad-Main Street interchange" and likely "be considered incompatible with the rural fishing village character of the City of Trinidad."** If the City disagrees with this assessment, the LCP should clarify that roundabouts would be acceptable.*

Trinidad Rancheria and CalTrans are currently working on a project to construct an interchange or other improvements on Highway 101 that would provide improved access to and connectivity within the Rancheria. This is an environmental justice issue for the Rancheria, but also has the potential to impact the City. An interchange will not only affect traffic patterns in and around town, but also facilitate development on the Rancheria property which will also have implications for the City of Trinidad.

Comments from the City Council at this time **should be** directed to the Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report Reference: California Code of Regulations, Title 14, (CEQA Guidelines) Sections

15082(a), 15103, 15375. **Project Title: US 101/Trinidad Area Access Improvements Project**

We realize the RAISE grant is a separate issue altogether from the legally mandated CEQA Notice of Preparation. However, the City has yet to obtain any input from the citizens in order to consider real impacts of the project prior to supporting the RISE Grant for the project.

We do not support a City Letter in support of the RISE Grant at this time because the impacts to Trinidad have not been discussed or determined. That must happen prior to agreeing to support this Grant.

Tom Davies and
Kathleen Lake
P.O. Box 1164
Trinidad, CA 95501

Our Comments to CalTrans 3/10/2024:

Jason Meyer, Environmental Branch Chief
California Department of Transportation
District 1
1656 Union Street
Eureka, CA 95501

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report
Reference: California Code of Regulations, Title 14, (CEQA Guidelines)
Sections 15082(a), 15103, 15375.

Project Title: US 101/Trinidad Area Access Improvements Project

Project Location: US 101 in Humboldt County from post mile (PM) 99.6 and 101.1.

To Whom It May Concern,

We are writing to share our concerns regarding the preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (D-EIR) for the Trinidad project. During this scoping period many issues were brought up to consider in the D-EIR, however, many issues have also been omitted, or are unclear. Also, two of the three reasons stated in the "Project Purpose and Need" are clearly incorrect. The maps and plans as written are ambiguous and vague. The project has great potential to create issues that will not be addressed. These problems must be strongly considered and a **No Project** should be the determination for this plan.

The project states:

Project Purpose and Need as stated by the Rancheria for the proposed project.

The purpose of the project is to:

- ***Provide safe and sustainable access to and from US 101 for multi-modal transportation to the surrounding communities along Scenic Drive.***
- ***Reconnect Tribal lands.***
- ***Relieve projected traffic congestion associated with planned future development.***

1. ***Provide safe and sustainable access to and from US 101 for multi-modal transportation to the surrounding communities along Scenic Drive.*** The North Side of Scenic Drive, Trinidad exit to the Casino is **currently in good shape**, safe and sustainable. The portion of Scenic Drive that is in need of repairs is South of the Casino. The purpose of the plan is incorrect. This must be corrected.
2. ***Reconnect Tribal lands.*** The project does not "reconnect" Tribal lands. The report states that the tribal members live on both sides of the freeway due to their land being cut in half by the 1962 freeway (101) construction. Public record has shown this to be untrue. Tribal members who live on the east side of the freeway live on land that the tribe purchased in 1988, not 1962. A new connection to tribal lands is very different from correcting a problem from the past. The tribe has continued to acquire lands and these lands are also not "connected". This "reconnection" appears false as written. This must be corrected.
3. The maps and plans of this project are vague and confusing. They are very difficult to understand, ambiguous, and open to more than one interpretation. Difficulties understanding both exactly what the plan is and therefore exactly what the impacts will be, were acknowledged at the

scoping meeting. On 2/20/2024 the consultant at the meeting stated that the maps did not match up with the verbal language in the Notice of Preparation. It was stated verbally that the plan is to create a walking/bike path as an overpass from the Rancheria to the tribal housing on North Westhaven Drive. However, the current plan in writing states:

*The newly constructed pedestrian over-crossing and Cher-Ae Lane **would temporarily provide vehicular access across US 101** between Scenic Drive and Westhaven Drive so access is maintained to the City of Trinidad and the Westhaven community.*

The point was made that the pedestrian overpass plan was made to avoid putting more traffic on Westhaven Drive. What is unclear is why the vehicular overpass is built into the project plan as a “temporary” measure for vehicle access? What is the difference between a temporary overpass and a permanent overpass? This has not been addressed and must be clearly understood.

The following issues in the project plan clearly create environmental impacts:

1. The project area lies on a portion of highway 101 that is eligible for designation in the California Scenic Highway System.
2. Animal, plant, and bird life.
3. Cultural resources: ancient Native American remains or other artifacts including prehistoric artifacts.
4. Geology and soils.
5. Greenhouse gas emissions during road construction.
6. Impacts to groundwater and creeks.
7. Land use and planning: How does this affect the Trinidad Local Coastal Plan and General Plan?
8. Noise: During construction, and as a result of re-aligned roadways.
9. Recreation: Beach closures.
10. Utilities: water, power, internet, sewage.

Given the incorrect information provided in the *Project Purpose and Need*, as well as the vague and ambiguous project plan and the unforeseen needs for the scoping/D-EIR, **we are requesting a NO PROJECT determination.**

Thank you,

Tom Davies

Kathleen Lake