

# COUNTY OF EL DORADO

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February 18, 2015

Donald C. Rushton, Chief Traffic Operations Branch  
California Department of Transportation, District 3  
703 B Street  
Marysville, CA 95901-0911

Dear Mr. Rushton,

I am writing to you on behalf of El Dorado County (County). The intent of this letter is to express our opposition to the recent letters from California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) indicating an intent to increase speed limits on specific sections of State Highways 49 (in the Coloma and Cool areas) and 193 (in the Georgetown and Kelsey areas) and set forth the reasons therefor. As provided in California Vehicle Code (CVC) section 22354.5(b), on February 10, 2015 the County held a public meeting to discuss the proposed increase of the speed limits on sections of State Highways 49 and 193. As the result of that public meeting where the community expressed significant concerns, the County respectfully requests that Caltrans retain the current and subsequently does not increase the speed limits on those sections of State Highways located within the County.

We recognize that the CVC requires an engineering and traffic study be conducted at regular intervals to prevent "speed traps" and therefore make speed limit violations enforceable. In so doing, CVC section 627 which defines an "Engineering and Traffic Study" sets forth various factors to be considered including the prevailing speeds as determined by traffic engineering measurements; accident records; and highway, traffic and roadside conditions not readily apparent to the driver. This statute also focuses on the proximity of the speed limit increase to residences and businesses, which is further addressed below. Additional concerns arise due to the timing of the recent study, as we believe the study does not reflect an accurate portrayal of average speeds on each section of highway studied. Of greater concern is the increased safety risk posed to County residents, visitors, children, bicyclists, and other constituents due to the intended speed limit increases. These safety concerns are addressed in greater depth below.

To help ensure the safety and wellbeing of County residents and visitors alike, we believe that a comprehensive analysis of conditions should take place in conjunction with an engineering and traffic study. Of particular concern are issues as identified below:

- State Highway 49 – Coloma – As indicated through a letter from Mr. Jeremy McReynolds, Superintendent of Marshall Gold Discovery Park (attached), this stretch of highway is proximate to the Park which attracts a significant number of school children, pedestrians, bicyclists and commuters that require access and egress to and from the Park via Highway 49. Additional concerns arise from increased speed limits that may result in additional traffic

accidents with a corresponding increased risk of damaging historic buildings, and increased risks for wildlife hit and killed by motorists. This section of highway also has a significant presence of vehicles parked on the shoulder, where an increased speed limit could pose additional risks for pedestrians entering and exiting these vehicles.

- State Highway 49 – Cool - Recently the County completed work on a \$3.9 million dollar Class 1 bike path project along the west side of this stretch of Highway 49 from Highway 193 to Northside School (Cave Valley Road). This project recently won a regional award from the American Society of Civil Engineers. A significant portion of this funding is tied to Safe Routes to School dollars that the County secured to provide school children a safe path to and from their school(s). Increasing speed limits would most certainly cause an increased risk of school children and path users being struck by vehicles travelling at greater speeds. This increased risk directly contradicts the intent of the bike path project and provides an unnecessary increased risk to any person utilizing the path, commuters on this stretch of highway, and wildlife.
- State Highway 193 – Georgetown/Kelsey – These areas of State Highway 193 are fairly heavily travelled with numerous bicyclists traversing the area. The proposed increases occur very near a Church (Kelsey) and local businesses/a downtown district (Georgetown). Increased speed limits could pose an additional risk of motor vehicle accidents within or near these sensitive areas along with further endangering wildlife crossing these highways.

The concerns above are certainly not exhaustive and simply intended to highlight issues that were not made evident as the result of the Caltrans' engineering and traffic study. As noted, safety is of paramount concern for the County, as we expect it is for CalTrans, and for this reason along with several others the County respectfully requests that Caltrans does not increase speed limits as intended. If other methods are available to accomplish these goals the County is open to dialogue on such approaches.

Further, the County believes in maintaining and enhancing a partnership with Caltrans in conducting studies and roadway improvements projects within County boundaries. To that end, we would like to assist Caltrans with such efforts by providing input and information at project or study onset to help make these endeavors more amenable to all parties involved.

Thank you for your consideration and please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or need to continue a dialogue on this subject.

Sincerely,

Brian K. Veerkamp, Chair  
El Dorado County Board of Supervisors