

Illegal Toll Road Sought in South Orange County

Plan rejected by state and feds in 2008 is proposed again

(October 13, 2011) – Today, the Transportation Corridor Agency (TCA) Board voted to move forward in building an initial 4-mile stretch of a proposed 16-mile toll road in south Orange County.

Following is a statement from Elizabeth Goldstein, president of the California State Parks Foundation, speaking on behalf of the Save San Onofre coalition:

“This is a road to nowhere. Building this 4-mile segment is an irresponsible and fiscally unsound attempt by the TCA to pressure federal and state officials to ultimately approve a route that would destroy San Onofre State Beach and that has already been forcefully rejected. Even the Bush administration, under pressure from all the lobbyists money can buy, refused to endorse the toll road through San Onofre.

“It is now time for the Transportation Corridor Agency to stop spending scarce resources on lobbyists and lawyers, and begin to focus on sustainable solutions that improve regional transportation choices and will alleviate traffic today, not years down the road.

“This transportation project continues the TCA tradition of wasting millions of dollars annually for projects that can’t and won’t be built without devastating impacts to communities and the environment and no positive effect on congestion relief. Spending a billion dollars for an unneeded transportation project is immoral, especially in light of economic conditions facing our state today.”

Background:

San Onofre is the fifth-most visited park in California, attracting nearly 2.5 million visitors every year. The park is home to 11 threatened or endangered species and contains significant portions of San Mateo Creek, one of the last unspoiled watersheds in California. According to California State Parks, the toll road will close 60 percent of the park and cause damage to the remaining land.

In September 2008, the Department of Commerce held a public hearing in Del Mar Fairgrounds in San Diego County, which more than 6,000 people attended with hundreds of people providing testimony to save the state beach. A previous California Coastal Commission hearing attracted 3,500 attendees, the largest number in the history of the Commission.

In December 2008, the Secretary of Commerce upheld objections by the California Coastal Commission over TCA plans to build a six-lane, 16-mile highway through one of the most ecologically diverse state beaches in California’s state parks system. Today, TCA begins the process anew to build the toll road.

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The Save San Onofre Coalition is a diverse coalition of individuals and groups that includes four former state parks commissioners, local, regional, state and national environmental organizations, cities, counties and elected officials statewide. For more information about the Save San Onofre Coalition.