

scott d palamar

To: Inyo County Supervisors (read in public comments period on November 8)

Honorable Supervisors:

I am Scott Palamar, a homeowner in Cartago, and a significant property owner in Cartago and Olancha. I am speaking to you today about CalTrans' proposed plan for the Olancha/Cartago 4-Lane project.

Of the options established, researched, and presented by CalTrans, Inyo County government and affected residents chose a version of Alternative 1, a widening that follows the existing highway alignment.

CalTrans' report of August 2010 cast the Alternatives in such a way that none particularly stood out as an obvious choice, but many viewed Alternative 1 as having the fewest unknowns that could negatively affect the community and environment, especially if the widening through developed areas was constrained to undivided highway. Both the Inyo County Board of Supervisors and Local Transportation Commission voted for Alternative 1, and the County's own General Plan designates bypasses of communities within Owens Valley as a critical issue to be avoided, which only Alternative 1 respects.

After years of consideration and over **5 million tax dollars spent**, District 9 CalTrans staff announced they had recommended bypass Alternative 3 to their Director, despite the community's vote, and without offering the reasoning that led them to this conclusion. Needless to say, many people were greatly shocked and dismayed by the recommendation.

Then, on June 29th, it was announced in a press release that District 9 Director Tom Hallenbeck had rejected his staff's recommendation, and instead constructed an altogether new approach, characterized as a combination of Alternatives 3 and 4, but without addressing any new implications of such a notion.

Project Manager Cedrik Zemitis was asked if this approach would be put back out for local public and government input and review, and he stated "there will be no additional public hearing or comment period since the preferred alternative has been chosen."

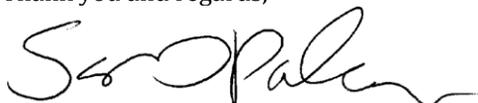
Since that time, Inyo community and government dissent has been growing. It is difficult to comprehend the logic of CalTrans decision, and have they offered no details of the many implication of their plan, such as the re-designation of 'old' Highway 395 as new extensions to Highway 190, or how the substantial truck traffic in and out of the Crystal Geyser plant would access the new bypass. **It is also difficult to understand how creating a new \$120 million 4-lane highway with 100 foot median while leaving the existing road in place can be of no greater environmental impact than simply widening-in-place, or how surrounding Olancha with two major highways will not negatively impact the community's safety, quality-of-life, and property values.**

Scientists, when confronted with multiple viable solutions, routinely employ the principle of Occam's razor, the rule of simplicity, which states that the simplest answer with the fewest assumptions is usually the best. Other than the "No Build" option, which is gaining new popularity in light of CalTrans' questionable process, Alternative 1 makes the fewest assumptions. There is already a highway in place that can simply be widened, renewing the community infrastructure along its path.

I am here to ask if you are in agreement with CalTrans' preferred alternative, and if not, will you then withdraw your support for the Olancha/Cartago 4-Lane as currently being pursued by CalTrans, until the project is put back out for consideration and response by the affected public and government.

For your review, I submit to you a letter I sent to CalTrans in August, which details many of the concerns and questions I have about their preferred alternative. Additionally, other interested residents are here today to second my request and offer their own supporting documents.

Thank you and regards,



Scott Palamar