

As an avid cyclist myself, I am sensitive to the concerns expressed after the recently completed chip seal project on the astounding 25-mile stretch of Highway 1 north of Cambria in San Luis Obispo County. I know that a great many of you are also concerned, and I assure you that Caltrans is steadfast in its efforts to keep the highway open, safe and serviceable for all highway users in light of many challenges.

Widely used around the nation, a chip seal is considered to be a ((very)) cost-effective preventive maintenance strategy to ((extend the life of pavement and)) avoid costly reconstruction. And yet, while the recent work on Highway 1 will do its job and extend the useable life of the roadway, many cyclists have told us that it has degraded their riding experience on this stretch of scenic highway. Right now, we have an opportunity to work together towards improvement.

Many suggestions have already come forward on how to improve the surface for cyclists without conducting new research. While some of these could certainly improve conditions for cyclists, they also could have negative impacts for other road users or be achieved at a disproportionately high cost. Caltrans is committed to taking a course of action that would address the concerns of cyclists without impacting other users and be a prudent use of public funds.

In an effort to make immediate improvements, we have fixed potholes and stepped up the sweeping of loose pebbles. We are measuring one day's collection against the next to determine if the amount of loose material on the roadway is diminishing. And, to help identify more steps we can take now and in the future, we've teamed with researchers at the UC Davis Pavement Research Center (UCPRC). Team members from UCPRC will be visiting the location this month. Both of these actions show our commitment to finding a solution in both near and long term.

We have not created a specific deadline for our solution because that may yield what other recent artificial deadlines have yielded: polarization, blaming and a hardening of positions. The Central Coast community can and will do better than that. Let's avoid interminable delay just as we would refrain from grasping at the quickest solution to come along.

Again, Caltrans is committed to working with the local cycling community in this effort and providing new information as it becomes available. We ask for your patience ((and good faith)) in working together to better serve all highway users and to be good stewards of the taxpayers' investment in our statewide transportation system.

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