



## MEMORANDUM

**TO: CITY COUNCIL**

**FROM: WHITNEY MCDONALD, CITY MANAGER**

**SUBJECT: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION  
AGENDA ITEM 10.A. – JANUARY 26, 2021 CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
CONSIDERATION OF A PROJECT STATUS UPDATE, AND  
ADOPTION OF THE INITIAL STUDY/MITIGATED NEGATIVE  
DECLARATION, AND AUTHORIZATION TO PREPARE AND ISSUE  
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR DESIGN OF THE BRISCO-  
HALCYON ROAD INTERCHANGE MODIFICATIONS PROJECT**

**DATE: JANUARY 26, 2021**

Attached is correspondence received for the above referenced item.

cc: City Attorney  
City Clerk  
City Website (or public review binder)



**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** Agenda item 10 a Jan. 26, 2021  
**Date:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 11:32:48 AM

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Mayor Russom and City Council members,

I realize this item is to discuss the 25 percent cost increase to the Brisco Road interchange project and options to recommend reductions to this increase. However, I thought this would be a good opportunity to reconsider the project altogether.

I keep hearing the City must move forward or it will lose the \$6.6 million in SLOCOG funding. So, I ask this question, should the loss of \$6.6 million justify placing the City and residents in further financial peril?

Take a look at the sales tax fund balance set aside for the Brisco project. Given the increased economic hardships of 2020, the reductions in sales tax revenue and TOT, wouldn't these "Brisco funds" be better utilized for other City priorities? As an example, used for sustainable water resources like Central Coast Blue?

Isn't a secure and sustainable water source more vital to a community than the inconvenience of a traffic jam?

What about using these "Brisco funds" for other mandated City services like police, fire and infrastructure maintenance? I recall that infrastructure maintenance was so dire a consideration for a sales tax increase was discussed for the 2020 ballot.

There are no guarantees costs will not continue to increase. So, is it really prudent to spend limited staff resources and time, more money on consultant fees, etc., to open new/continued discussions with Caltrans, especially given the potential of rising costs in the future?

Given these considerations, does anyone have the courage to step up and pull the plug on this project? Go back to Option 4 (take no action), based on the fact that the costs of this project are now too prohibited to proceed.

Respectfully,

Barbara Harmon

Arroyo Grande

**COMMENTS REGARDING THE JANUARY 26, 2021 CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 10A - Consideration Of A Project Status Update, And Adoption Of The Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration, And Authorization To Prepare And Issue Request For Proposals For Design Of The Brisco-Halcyon Road Interchange Modifications Project**

We have previously provided comments regarding the Brisco Interchange Project. We are still strongly opposed to Alternative 4C and opposed to the recommendation contained in the January 26, 2021 agenda item to “Adopt a Resolution adopting the MND and authorizing the issuance of a Request for Proposals for the design of the Project” for many reasons.

**FISCAL CONCERNS AND PUBLIC INPUT**

Prior to the City’s 2019 decision to move forward with Alternative 4C, a poll was conducted online (I don’t remember if it was the City or CalTrans consultant or ?). I read 98 pages of comments that were made public on the internet, and a significant majority of comments expressed overwhelming opposition to Alternative 4C for several reasons. The reasons included the significantly higher cost of Alternative 4C vs. other alternatives (most notably Alternative 1). Alternative 1 would have been much cheaper yet still meet the intended goal, been more fiscally prudent, safer for students at St. Patricks school, and would have less impact on residents in the area, particularly those on Grace Lane and Rodeo Drive.

The budgetary concerns the City had previously identified resulted in positions being eliminated, and eliminating public access to the City Hall on Fridays due to staffing issues (the Friday closures continue today. Other fiscal concerns identified by the City included lack of funding to meet: its policing needs, the CalPERS obligations, costs associated with the 5 Cities Fire Authority/reinstituting the City Fire Department; and its obligation to keep sidewalks in good repair (despite potential legal costs from even one trip-and-fall lawsuit).

It is unclear how the City’s financial situation has improved to such a degree that would allow the City to move forward with Alternative 4C, especially in light of both the revenue and cost impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on City, County, State and Federal Governments over the past year.

If the Mayor and City Council decides to move ahead with the recommended actions in item 10A (in spite of a majority of residents supporting “no build” or Alternative 1, and the public’s strong concerns regarding the fiscal irresponsibility of Alternative 4C), following are some suggestions for changes that need to be included in the scope of Alternative 4C:

- Eliminate from the scope of work the realignment of the intersection of Grace Lane and Rodeo. This would save a considerable amount of money and also reduce the tendency of motorists on Grace Lane to drive at speeds well in excess of the limit 35 MPH speed limit on our residential street (something they’re already doing now, even with a stop sign at that intersection).
- Include installation of speed bumps on Grace Lane like those on Rodeo and include the cost for those speed bumps in the project.

## **OTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS**

- A few years ago, we identified a concern about the traffic study on which the options for the Brisco Project were based and brought it to the City’s attention. That traffic study was conducted before Grace Lane even existed. Thus, the study did not accurately reflect current traffic patterns, volume of traffic or travel times on both Grace Lane and Rodeo Drive. The traffic study could not have anticipated the volume of cars and the speeds at which motorists now travel on Grace Lane.
- Our current circumstances (related to COVID) suggest the City should review or postpone implementing past decisions about proceeding with the Brisco Project. Traffic patterns currently are in flux, with many people working from home instead of going into an office or clinic. Would it not make more sense to hold off on the Brisco Project until COVID is behind us, and there is a more up-to-date indication of how many people will continue to work for home?
- It seems there is now hope that a federal infrastructure bill will be providing funding to states/counties/cities during this year or next. It would be fiscally prudent to hold off on finalizing decisions or moving

forward with the Brisco Project until a decision on the federal infrastructure bill is made, and the Federal Government provides information on the distribution of that funding.

I know that many of you were not on the City Council and may not have previous comments we have provided. Let me know if you would like us to provide them to you.

January 24, 2021

Subject: Decision on Brisco Project

Dear City Council Members,

I was just notified via email of your upcoming Zoom meeting regarding the Branch and Rodeo to renamed Grace Lane roundabout project. In hopes that you will indeed read the letters coming in I hope you will note that I am totally **opposed** to the idea. I believe if you lived in this neighborhood you would be inclined to feel exactly the same way that I do. Naturally most of you don't so it has absolutely no impact on you.

- #1 Where is the money going to come from to support such a project.
- #2 We are living quite nicely without having a roundabout in our own backyard.
- #3 The least evasive and most reasonable proposal would be Alternative #1 or of course a "no build".
- #4 I am urging that Storton, Barneich and George reconsider their YES votes and say "NO".

Thanking you in advance for your consideration and long thought out process to do the right thing for our community. I totally dislike roundabouts and I feel they are not safe. St. Patrick's school is in must to close of proximity.

Sincerely,

*Patricia Madden*

Patricia Madden  
[REDACTED] Rodeo Drive  
Arroyo Grande, CA 93420  
[REDACTED]

**From:** [Caren Ray Russom](#)  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** Fw: question on 10a.  
**Date:** Monday, January 25, 2021 4:59:08 PM

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Yours in service,  
Caren

## Caren Ray Russom

### Mayor, City of Arroyo Grande

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Tel: 805-473-5400 | [www.arroyogrande.org](http://www.arroyogrande.org)

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**From:** James Guthrie [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, January 25, 2021 2:07 PM  
**To:** Whitney McDonald  
**Cc:** Caren Ray Russom; Kristen Barneich; Keith Storton; Jimmy Paulding; Lan George  
**Subject:** question on 10a.

Mayor, Council Members and City Manager McDonald :

I have a couple of questions on 10a.

I am having some difficulty assessing the cost of the current plan vs the 2018 approval. For example, the sound walls are identified on page 3 of the report as costing 1 million but are identified as 3 million in table 3 on page 9. This would be a 200% increase for this component while the entire project cost only increased 30% . I also thought that both the Grande Ave align and the sound walls were both deferred in the 2018 decision.

**Could we get a table like table 3 on page 9 of the staff report that compares the component costs of the project as approved in 2018 and the current proposal?**

As a side comment the cost savings from the Rodeo/Grace lane at 2 million seems excessive considering the Grande Ave ramps realign is 1. 6 million, one million for the park and ride seems high as well.

**While I doubt it is possible is there any chance that we could reverse the 2018 decision, and proceed with Alt. 1A?**

I plan to have some additional comments later but wanted to communicate these questions today.

Thanks

Jim Guthrie

[REDACTED] Starlight Ln





**From:** [Caren Ray Russom](#)  
**To:** [James Guthrie](#)  
**Cc:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Comments on 10a  
**Date:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 12:15:13 PM

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Hello Jim-

Thank you for this cogent and concise input. I hope you will participate tonight. I know you know the history of this project so your opinion is important for others to hear who are not reading your full letter. Here's the link:

- <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89129208197>; Webinar ID: 891 2920 8197
- Or Telephone Attendee: 1-669-900-6833; 1-346-248-7799; 1-253-215-8782; Press \* 9 to "raise hand" for public comment

Yours in service,  
Caren

**Caren Ray Russom**

**Mayor, City of Arroyo Grande**

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**From:** James Guthrie [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 12:12 PM  
**To:** Caren Ray Russom; Kristen Barneich; Jimmy Paulding; Keith Storton; Lan George  
**Cc:** Whitney McDonald  
**Subject:** Comments on 10a

Mayor, Council Members:

I know from personal experience how difficult it is to reverse a previous decision (Rooster Creek/ City Hall). I realize your decision is more complicated and on a larger scale but is fundamentally the same "what is best for the city based on the current information".

Since you made that decision the city's financial future is less certain. We will come through this better than most cities but still weaker for the foreseeable future. We also have near term significant and unavoidable liabilities, pensions and the Traffic Way Bridge replacement to name just a couple.

The ROI on this investment is weaker as well. Even before the pandemic we saw several big business closures in this area (Pier 1 and Chili's ) and will almost certainly will see more in the future. If we are lucky, we may get a couple of additional hotels, but they will not be dependent on the completion of this project (the north bound OFF-RAMP yes but not the traffic circle).

The communities' perspective has changed as well. In the survey produced for the Sales Tax measure last year 9.4% of the respondents identified street maintenance as their primary concern while only 4.1% identified the Brisco interchange, less than the 4.5% who identified increased fees and taxes. Brisco was a high-profile issue in 2006 but today we are more concerned about maintaining the infrastructure we have than adding more.

The decision is complicated by the 2 million in "sunk" costs and the 6.6 million in funding from SLO-COG. If you are certain the 17 million is a good investment than move forward otherwise, we should cut our loses (and SLO-COG's as well) and end this here. The SLO-COG funding is more complicated the 6.6 million will be reallocated to other communities\* and the perception of our ability to execute a major project will be diminished. Since we financed this project on our own dime, our long-term position for future funding will not be significantly affected. We will move back in the que but if we have a regional project in the future with, we will get the same consideration as every other community.

Whatever your decision thanks for your work and consideration.

Jim Guthrie

■ Starlight Ln

\*Unfortunately, it will probably just get "parked" in some project that is currently under funded just like ours, and if it is in the South County like the improvements on 227 might be just valuable to the residents of AG who commute to SLO.