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Board of Supervisors
800 S. Victoria Ave.
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SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR NEW STATE LEGISLATION MAKING ADVISORY TRUCK LENGTH LIMIT MANDATORY ON THE MARICOPA HIGHWAY (SR33).

RECOMMENDATION:

Support new State legislation to make mandatory the current advisory truck length limit of 30 feet on the Maricopa Highway (SR 33) from the City of Ojai to the Santa Barbara County line.

DISCUSSION:

State Highway 33 between the City of Ojai and Santa Barbara County is a mountainous roadway named the Maricopa Highway. Completed in 1933, the highway leaves the Ojai Valley at an elevation of 800 feet and climbs to the Pine Mountain summit at 5,200 feet before descending steeply to the Cuyama valley at 3,100 feet.

At the request of the Ventura County Board of Supervisors, the Maricopa Highway was designated as a State Scenic Highway. It was later added to the National Scenic Byway program and named the Jacinto Reyes Scenic Byway. This narrow mountainous highway follows Matilija and Sespe Creeks in parts, and passes through many bridges, tunnels, switchbacks, and scenic vistas along its way. The highway is popular for scenic drives, bicycle rides, and as the primary gateway to the Los Padres National Forest, which adjoins the highway.

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) classifies all State Highways with respect to the applicability of federal and state mandatory and advisory truck size and weight limitations. That system of highway classification and applicable truck size and weight limits can be found on the Caltrans website: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/trucks/routes/truck-routes.htm>

Within that system of classification and limitation are truck length limits expressed as "Kingpin to Rear Axle" (KPR) length limits. Some state highways have mandatory truck length limits established by the State, for example Highway 1 between Point Mugu and Santa Monica,

while other highways have posted "advisory" length limits. The advisory limits reflect the State's competing mandates to both assure highway safety and facilitate commerce.

According to Caltrans: "A truck with a KPRA longer than that posted may not be able to stay in its lane." The Maricopa Highway is designated with an advisory KPRA of 30 feet; while legally, trucks with a KPRA of 40 feet – 25% longer than advised, may, and do, use this narrow and tortuous highway. Double trailer trucks using the highway are even longer. Photos are attached depicting truck accidents on Maricopa Highway.

Compounding the basic fact that large trucks do not fit on this narrow road with many short-radius turns is the fact that heavily laden mining trucks use the steep highway, sometimes in wet or snowy conditions. The recent tragic truck accident on Highway 154 in Santa Barbara and last year on Highway 2 in Glendale underscore the risk of brake failure when descending long and steep mountain highways with heavy loads. The State legislature subsequently enacted a Highway 2 truck ban (AB 1931).

The Maricopa Highway is a narrow high-mountain road, built in 1933 to accommodate the vehicles of that era. Shoulders are often non-existent, bridges and tunnels very narrow, curve radii are short, and visibility is often limited around the many switchback turns. In order to assure the safety of highway users and occupants of adjoining properties, the recommended action is to support new State legislation to make mandatory the existing advisory KPRA length of 30 feet. Please join me in supporting this common sense public safety measure.

Cordially,



Steve Bennett
Supervisor, First District

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