

February 3, 2017

Humboldt County Association of Governments:

I served on a school board and have participated in local government most of my life, so when a citizen complains, "Why don't they *just...*", I reply it's not that simple. That it's unfortunately not how it works in the real world. However, when someone asks why those in charge don't at least try solving the problem at hand, then I have to agree.

With that same sense of civic responsibility, I approached Marcella Clem last summer regarding safety on 101 between Eureka and Arcata. Many of my associates and friends would no longer drive it at rush hour. I observed about 30% of drivers don't turn on headlights and about 30% travel closer to 60 mph. After speaking with Marcella, I contacted CHP and Caltrans at local and state levels, and I sat with Frank Wilson and his wife looking at photos of her near-death 2016 collision at the Indianola crossing. At that point, I considered proposing a potentially life-saving article to the Journal exploring how our community might approach the projected four-year wait until the overpass and related changes are complete.

The article simmered on the back burner, along with other articles that need to be written, until last week. On January 24, at rush hour, heading north on 101, going 50 miles an hour with my lights on, I felt an enormous impact right behind my head. Another driver, southbound and turning east into Bayside cutoff, said he did not see me and broadsided my van. I spun around twice and ended up facing traffic in the fast lane. Fortunately, the engine was still running, so I scrambled off the highway avoiding a pile up.

My van was totaled and I'm just now realizing what a split-second close call it was. A few days later, my doctor told me her car was totaled, rear-ended, on the Corridor. Then, that same day, chatting with a local nurseryman, he told me his Corridor wreck made a Journal cover. His truck was broadsided like mine, but flipped over three times before landing upside down.

Without doubt, the Corridor as it exists continues to save lives along what was once called Blood Alley. That stands without argument. However, having lived here most of my life, I have witnessed the increase in traffic, especially at rush hour, and have clocked the increase in average speed. I hear what concerned people are saying about it. Also, the Corridor is fifteen years old and their psychological effectiveness is often pegged at three to four years maximum. Consequently, our community would do well to sit down together to create and carry out interim measures to mitigate this dangerous situation.

I suggest forming an HCAOG task force to address temporary safety measures on the Corridor. This would allow local agencies to work together with the TAC, elected officials, stakeholders and the general public. Four years is too long a wait to do anything less.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

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