

Hello, this is Tom Cookman with a Community Comment.

I have travelled south on Highway 101 several times in the last two months, and I'm really looking forward to the completion of the Richardson's Grove bypass and the Willits bypass. These two stretches really slow down the trip. Willits is a complete nightmare if you get there when traffic is congested - like when the High School gets out. Richardson's Grove is actually quite dangerous because the giant redwood trees are so close to the road. You can even see scars on some of the tree bark from where vehicles have literally scraped them. When these two projects are complete, it will tremendously help our local economy. The drive to Sacramento or San Francisco will be a half hour quicker, and longer freight trucks will be able to make deliveries in Humboldt County. This will reduce the number of trucks that drive our roads, which will help the environment because less diesel fuel will be burned. Another huge benefit will be that with a shorter drive time, we can have fuel delivered to Humboldt County by truckers who can make the trip without having to lay over because of Department of Transportation guidelines on how long a truck driver can work without rest. This will reduce the cost we pay for fuel. We have the highest gas prices in the continental United States, and these two bypasses will change that unfortunate reality. Humboldt County has enough negatives to deter businesses from locating here, and these projects will remove some very large barriers that keep businesses out. There are currently some environmental protestors trying to stop both of these Caltrans projects, and the Environmental Protection Information Center, or EPIC, is in the middle of it. WHY? If Willits is bypassed, a lot of fuel will be saved by vehicles who stay on the highway, instead of going through town in stop-and-go traffic. This fuel savings will

significantly reduce the amount of carbon emissions from every single vehicle that travels on Highway 101. The few redwood trees scheduled to be harvested at Richardson's Grove will be offset by less pollution getting absorbed by the majestic giants because driving through the bypass at 55 miles per hour instead of 35 miles per hour will also significantly reduce the exhaust. The bottom line is that the environment will be better served with these two bypasses, so it is illogical to me as to why organizations like EPIC are fighting them. The worst fuel economy happens when you navigate stop lights or heavy traffic, and it is impossible to get through Willits without experiencing one or the other. I have a computer in my pick-up that tells me what my fuel usage is. Going 55 miles per hour on highway 101, I get around 25 miles per gallon. When I drive through Willits, it is less than 10. The facts clearly confirm that bypassing these two stretches of Highway 101 will help the environment. So once again, I ask why is there so much resistance from the environmental community? The answer has to be that they are isolationists and anti-growth people who are more interested in keeping people out of Humboldt County than they are in protecting the environment. If they were truly concerned with the environment, organizations like EPIC would be endorsing these projects instead of protesting them. The facts are clear: these two projects reduce carbon emissions, improve our local business, and every single driver in Humboldt County will see a savings in lower gas prices. I sure hope that Caltrans is able to proceed full speed ahead on these two bypasses, because both the environment and the economy will benefit. It's a win-win situation, and WE NEED IT!

This has been Tom Cookman with a Community Comment