

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

This last Saturday, I had occasion to travel over "Last Chance Grade". For those of you not familiar with the name, this is the section of Highway 101 from Wilson Creek Bridge, just north of the Trees of Mystery, which traverses a grade along the face of a steep cliff northward for several miles. Located on unstable ground, constant slippage of the roadway makes this stretch very hazardous with no detour or alternate route available to reach Crescent City along the coast. Any closure at this time would cause northbound vehicles to use Highways Two Ninety Nine east to either Highways Ninety Six or I-Five, north to Grants Pass, Oregon and then west to Crescent City on Highway One Ninety Nine, a detour of over three hundred miles. With our coastal highway commerce to the north of Eureka, this would not be acceptable. There has been a lot of news coverage about this problem with public meetings scheduled by Cal Trans to address the problem with various proposed alternate routes being looked at. In the meantime, Cal Trans is spending thousands of dollars to keep the present route open while people sit around and talk. You can bet that any proposed route will be met with stiff opposition by the various environmental groups which would be over and above the stifling California State environmental regulations that are presently on the books. Deterioration of the present highway continues and will not waiver because of some ones environmental concerns. We have been lucky that there have not been any recent tragedies connected with this hazardous piece of road. The North Coast highway system is under constant threat from unstable ground that must be crossed with slip outs and sinks scattered up and down the 101 but Last Chance Grade leaves no room for maintenance crews to widen or straighten the road to any degree. Any proposed by-pass will be most expensive, no matter the route taken. If the State of California will spend untold millions for a fast rail project in the Central Valley, no matter what, then I think they can afford a bypass around the Last Chance Grade. We have the Redwood Bypass (which took an act of Congress to construct) and how many years did that take to plan and construct? How many people live in Crescent City and drive to their jobs in the area of the community of Klamath or vice versa? Their livelihoods are threatened daily. U.S. Mail transportation and delivery to points in Del Norte County are also threatened. Let's hope that the politicians involved will put the needs of the general public ahead of some agenda that they might have.

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