

March 6, 2020

The Honorable Bill Monning
17th Senate District
State Capitol, Room 4040
Sacramento, CA 95814

Via email to: Trevor.Taylor@sen.ca.gov

**Subject: Senate Bill 1231 (Monning) – SUPPORT State Route 156 West Corridor Project:
Legislation that Improves Safety and Protects the Santa Cruz Long-Toed Salamander**

Dear Senator Monning:

Monterey County strongly supports Senate Bill 1231, which will enable the construction of critical safety improvements on the State Route (SR) 156 West corridor in Monterey County and mitigate impacts and expand habitat for the Santa Cruz Long-Toed Salamander.

The SR 156/Castroville Blvd Interchange is the first segment of the overall SR 156 West Corridor project. This segment will build a new interchange at Castroville Boulevard and SR 156, with connections to Blackie Road to improve access for commercial traffic. The SR 156 West Corridor project will provide a range of safety benefits for the region by:

- Relieving traffic congestion for 32,000 vehicles every weekday (and even more on event weekends) on a high traffic accident corridor;
- Diverting truck traffic away from Merritt Street (SR 183) in Castroville, away from the top collision location in Monterey County; and
- Improving bicycle and pedestrian access and supporting active transportation to the nearby high school.

State funding dedicated to the project is at risk due to the fully protected species in the project area. The Santa Cruz Long-Toed Salamander has a very restricted range in southern Santa Cruz and northern Monterey counties and primarily occupies ephemeral wetlands and adjacent uplands. This legislation will enable Caltrans to improve the habitat for the species in an area superior to their current limited habitat in the Moro Cojo Slough. This is a win-win solution for transportation safety and for the species.

An additional benefit of the SR 156 project is that it facilitates the construction of affordable housing. CHISPA (Community Housing Improvement Systems and Planning Association, Inc.) is the largest private, nonprofit housing developer based in Monterey County. They have plans for

approximately 170 new affordable and workforce housing units at this intersection, once the roadway improvements are constructed.

We strongly support SB 1231 to advance the State Route 156 West Corridor project and protect the Santa Cruz Long-Toed Salamander. Thank you for your authorship and for your support for improving safety in Monterey County.

Sincerely,

Chris Lopez
Chair

cc: Hon. Anna Caballero, 12th Senate District
Hon. Robert Rivas, 30th Assembly District
Hon. Mark Stone, 29th Assembly District
Debra L. Hale, TAMC