Transportation Infrastructure in the San Jacinto Valley

By Chris Hofeditz

My testimony today concerns Hemet and its nearby cities as a Community of Interest based on transportation infrastructure.

I live in Riverside County in a west central area commonly known as the San Jacinto Valley. It is bounded on the east by the San Jacinto Mountains, the south by Diamond Valley Reservoir, the west by Nuevo Hills, and the north by Angelus Forrest and Lambs Canyon. The two principal cities in this area are Hemet and San Jacinto.

We share a rather isolated environment. Being a small set of small towns, we must travel to all parts of the area, somewhat regularly, to access services such as general shopping, government services, and repair services. The services, roads and environment are common features that are shared by the 160K local residents. Since we are surrounded by mountains, our climate is also evenly experienced by our residents.

In our valley, there is a deficit of regional transportation facilities directly serving the city and integrating Hemet and San Jacinto with the greater Riverside County area. Some proposals to improve the transportation infrastructure of our area are:

1) Realignment of State Route 79 to the west side of the valley. This will connect I10 with I215 and I15 and will relieve congestion in through the city of Hemet.

There is a shortcut that many auto travelers take between Beaumont on I10 and is about 10-15 miles north of San Jacinto and Temecula on I15 which is about 10-15 miles south of Hemet. It is composed of a portion of State Highway 79, Sanderson Avenue, Domenigoni Parkway east or Winchester Avenue South. Sanderson runs down the west side of San Jacinto and Hemet with traffic lights. Many drivers use this route through our city rather than travel I60 through Moreno Valley to I215 South which is the longer path. This through traffic adds a great deal of congestion and smog to the surface streets of Hemet. East Hemet is 27th in the state for the worst air quality.

A solution has been proposed to create a highway that extends from Domenigoni, in the south, to State Highway 79 in the north, that would circumvent the need to drive through an already busy street in Hemet. I would like to offer public comment about the location of this new road. However, because this valley is an area divided up between 3 Assembly Districts and two Senate Districts I feel that my opinion might be diluted if I were to comment during sessions allowing public comment.

As an example, a median was recently completed that extends down Florida Avenue which is the main business district of Hemet. The median replaced a two-way turning lane that gave access to the hundreds of small and large businesses along this route. The new median limited the places where turning is possible to far fewer than is needed. It is now necessary to drive a ¼ to ½ a mile farther in order to turn around and drive back to business entry ways. I witnessed public comment given by directly impacted business owners to the city council that had no effect on changing the layout of the median.

2) The Mid-County Parkway (MCP) is a proposed 16-mile transportation corridor that will relieve traffic congestion for east-west travel in western Riverside County between the San Jacinto Valley and Perris.

While not directly within City limits, the MCP will provide critical east-west circulation capacity and serves as an integral link to SR 79, Sanderson Avenue, and Ramona Expressway. The construction of the MCP will also serve to off-load some of the existing congestion on Florida Avenue
(Hwy 74), which is the primary east-west corridor in Hemet. (From the Hemet General Plan https://www.hemetca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4520/4_Circulation_web-4-11-2017)

3) A future Metrolink spur is currently planned that will connect the San Jacinto Valley to Perris. The Hemet City’s General Plan shows two Metrolink stations, one for the future West Hemet Business Park/Mixed use area and one in downtown Hemet.

Future Metrolink Stations Currently, the RCTC owns the right-of-way along the railroad spur coming into Hemet from Perris and Riverside for a future Metrolink route. The City’s General Plan shows two Metrolink stations, one for the future West Hemet Business Park/Mixed Use area and one in downtown Hemet. The City has recognized the critical role Metrolink plays for the region and has incorporated numerous goals and policies throughout the General Plan encouraging development of the stations and development of transit-oriented design near the future stations. The city of Hemet will need to aggressively pursue funding for these facilities in conjunction with RCTC, recognizing that funding resources will become increasingly competitive in the future. (From the Hemet General Plan; https://www.hemetca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4520/4_Circulation_web-4-11-2017)

4) The Hemet-Ryan Airport has been scheduled for upgrade and possibly expansion.

The Hemet-Ryan Airport has provided aviation services for over half a century. As aviation needs change, however, so will the need for improvements to Hemet-Ryan Airport. The existing Hemet-Ryan Airport Master Plan adopted in 2004 is currently being updated and a proposed new plan is anticipated to be adopted by the County of Riverside in 2012. The new Master Plan does not propose a specific runway extension at this time, although alternatives for expansion to either the east, west, or both are presented. As is the case in many cities where expansion of airports is contemplated, the obligation to protect residents from airport expansion issues, such as noise, must be factored into the discussion. The city of Hemet has traditionally supported the Hemet-Ryan Airport and this General Plan provides goals and policies continuing that support, but tempered with the realization that airport expansions are a complex and dynamic issue and that airport expansion should not be detrimental to the existing community and the necessary provision of surrounding circulation and infrastructure systems.
(From the Hemet General Plan; https://www.hemetca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4520/4_Circulation_web-4-11-2017)

We would like to stop being associated with a major part of San Diego County. We would like to stop be associated with the heavily populated cities of Corona, Riverside, and Moreno Valley.

Association with Beaumont, Banning, Canyon lakes, Perris, Sun City, Winchester, Menifee would be cities that might have a shared outlook with the San Jacinto Valley.

Our valley is trisected by 3 assembly districts and bisected by 2 senate districts. I feel this dilutes our opinion when it comes to public input for community planning, governmental resources, and business development. Since the major portion of the projects listed above will occur in our valley, being a part of 1 assembly district and 1 state senate district will provide cohesive local development and greater self-determination for our Community of Interest. What our future holds for this community should not be governed by highly populated areas that are miles and miles away.
Thank You. Chris Hofeditz