



February 17, 2017

Tom Hudson, Director Land Use Services
385 N. Arrowhead Ave., 1st Floor
San Bernardino, CA 92415-0187
tom.hudson@lus.sbcounty.gov

Dear Mr. Hudson,

The Morongo Basin Conservation Association (MBCA) joins the coalition of organizations in support of designating Highway 247 / Old Woman's Springs Road a California Scenic Highway.

During the County workshops, Scenic 247 was discussed and endorsed as a collectively held "value" worthy of protection in the HVCC Community Plan. The residents of Morongo Basin and Homestead Valley, along with the recent explosion of visiting tourists will celebrate and cherish the protections the Scenic Highway status would bring to these fragile iconic landscapes.

The Scenic 247 Campaign has demonstrated the strongly held desire of citizens, businesses, Chambers of Commerce, cultural and conservation organizations from Bartow to Yucca Valley to protect the area's scenic resources that draw eco-tourism to our area. All recognize that this "disadvantaged" rural area has a significant advantage: miles of undeveloped open desert, with a historic highway linking world-famous mountain and desert destinations and Route 66. The economic benefits of Scenic Highway designation are clearly apparent. (See www.scenichighway247.com.)

The MBCA applauds your efforts in January 2015 to update the San Bernardino County Development Code to maintain consistency with the State of California Scenic Highway Program Guidelines. As you know, Highway 247 already has a local scenic route designation in the County General Plan.

Your early support of the Scenic Highway 247 campaign was very encouraging. This effort also received support from Ray Desselle, Caltrans Landscape Architect. Supervisor James Ramos and his field representatives have actively supported the Scenic 247 campaign, as have both Municipal Advisory Councils. State Senator Jean Fuller's Field Representative, Jim Schooler has worked to coordinate County and State efforts to achieve State Scenic Highway status for 247.

Last October, Terri Rahhal, Planning Director LUS wrote Betty Munson: "Please be assured that County staff has not forgotten community sentiments about maintaining scenic qualities in this area, and seeking designation of Hwy 247 as a California Scenic Highway." Ms. Rahhal continued that it was her understanding that Caltrans had reviewed the County's scenic route development standards and found them to be consistent with the Scenic Highway program guidelines, subject to joint review and concurrence on a corridor-specific study, specifying key scenic resources and the boundaries of the scenic resources management area.

Why is it after the County and the State Senator's stated support for this campaign that 247 has yet to be designated a California Scenic Highway? After more than seven years of active citizen campaigning and County efforts, it is time for action!

We look forward to hearing from you with an update on the status of this initiative. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration to designate 247 a California Scenic Highway.

Sincerely,

Sarah Kennington, President
Morongo Basin Conservation Association

Cc: James Ramos; Robert Lovingood; Terri Rahhal; John Oquendo; Betty Munson; Chrystale Sonick; Mark Lundquist; Roger Peterson; Chuck Bell