

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

98.31 Bypass a bygone idea

Editor: Thank goodness that Santa Rosa's Laguna golf course proposal has finally died! And along with it has come a renewed interest in the Laguna (thanks in part to "Laguna In Balance" day) and a new questioning of the appropriateness of certain current blights in the Laguna, such as the Balletto Distribution Center and the drilling by the Sonoma County Water Agency.

The bad news is that now that the golf course idea is dead, proponents of a Llano Road bypass (really a Laguna bypass) are renewing their campaign. And not only a bypass; the letter to your paper from the Sebastopol Area Chamber of Commerce (May 6, 1998) advocates not only a bypass but also an "improved" Occidental Road in the Laguna and the widening to three lanes of Highway 116 from Cotati to Sebastopol. Bring on the traffic to the West County!

A bypass through the Laguna (coyly called the "Llano extension" by some) would not only wreak environmental havoc with the Laguna but also make little traffic sense. The bypass would not be a short one; it would start 4.5 miles south of Sebastopol and bypass all businesses from that point north to Occidental Road. It would create a major new intersection at Highway 12, where east-west Highway 12 traffic would then back up. It would then require plowing a new road north of Highway 12 through the houses and small farms that are there. It would then intersect Occidental Road causing significant congestion, with heavy traffic turning west or south. Ditto the intersection at Highway 116 with traffic turning again. And all of this would be far worse environmentally than a golf course — thousands of cars every day in the Laguna!

More roads don't help traffic problems. Isn't the real traffic problem in Sebastopol created by Highway 12's east-west traffic? The bypass would make that worse.

Let's look for some creative ideas. Mike Reilly has suggested continuing Highway 116 north on Highway 101 to River Road, thus reducing truck traffic through Sebastopol. There are undoubtedly other such good ideas.

The bypass is a very bad idea and, as regards the Laguna, much worse than a golf course.

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