

## **Answers to Questions: Hugh McIsaac**

### **The Highway**

1. Do you support plans to widen Highway One between Santa Cruz and Watsonville? What effect do you think widening the Highway would have on the social and physical geography of the county?

I have serious concerns about widening Hwy 1 for the following reasons: 1. Without an overall plan regarding Hwy 17 and the whole corridor, widening Hwy 1 will just enlarge the “parking lot” during peak hours. It would encourage further development downstream in Watsonville, Seaside and in other undeveloped sections of the South County. It is the wrong solution to a big problem. Besides, why should scarce local dollars be used for what is essentially a State function? My experience in local government tells me we need to work with the Cal Trans and the relevant state agencies to develop a comprehensive plan for the new 21<sup>st</sup> Century realities we face. Widening the Hwy is not one of those solutions.

2. If you don't think widening the Highway is a good idea, what are some of your strategies for stopping it, given that it is currently the Regional Transportation Commission's top priority?

We need to understand the motivation and reasons why the Commission thinks it is a good idea. What are the assumptions? Who benefits? As a trained mediator, we need to listen to how they see the problem, develop criteria for making effective decisions, explore options for mutual gain, help them see other, better alternatives based upon the criteria and begin a process of dialogue and understanding. Every way of seeing something is a thousand ways of not seeing it. Demonizing the proponents of widening is not a good strategy.

3. How would you answer those who believe that widening the highway would solve problems with congestion?

Listening to them is the first step. Testing their assumptions is the second step. Asking who benefits is the third step. The next step is to explore alternatives to any legitimate needs they may propose such as emergency vehicles, runs to the store, school, etc. Again, these individuals are locked into a 20<sup>th</sup> Century view of the world centered on the use and misuse of hydrocarbons as a source of fuel. The key to changing their mindset is to deal with their underlying assumptions and help them realize the new realities we face.

4. What do you think about the current plan to build auxiliary lanes on the Highway from Morrissey to Soquel? If you disagree with the plan, how can we stop it?

If the auxiliary lanes do not entail actually widening the freeway, it might be worth considering. However, it still does little to solve the overall problem and the need to find alternative means of transportation.

### **The Rail Line**

1. Do you support buying the Union Pacific Rail Corridor from Davenport to Watsonville? Why or why not?

Yes. 1. The price is right and the opportunity to acquire this land will probably not come up again. 2. The corridor could provide an alternative transportation route for many options for mass transit. The Max line in Portland, Oregon might serve as a model.

2. Do you support a trail along the rail corridor from Davenport to Watsonville. If so, what is your plan for its completion? How long will it take?

Yes. In Manzanita, Oregon we were in the process of developing a biking-walking trail from Manzanita along the coast, around the Nehalem Estuary through the town of Nehalem to Wheeler across the Nehalem River. This trail is to be co-ordinated with a State sponsored water trail for kayaks and canoes around the Nehalem Estuary. The goal was to promote alternative means of transportation and to further develop the eco-tourism attraction of this pristine area and gem of nature. It was a great project and has community buy-in thanks to the care and time spent involving the public.

3. Should we run a passenger train along the corridor? If so, tell us what the service might be like in 10 years. What would you do to get it on track?

It is worth considering (See #1, above). The rail line might be an elevated line so that rail traffic does not compete with the biking or walking trail. What is required is an overall plan with a great deal of community input, concept models, and review of similar projects in other jurisdictions. Such a project needs time to develop and perfect.

### **Bicycling and Walking**

1. What will you do to make bicycling and walking more pleasant, safer, and more socially accepted in Santa Cruz County? How about walking?

Develop safe and convenient cross town corridors for biking and walking based upon substantial community involvement and input.

2. What are some of the most important infrastructure projects needed to reach the above goals? What are some smaller ones that you feel could really make an improvement?

These goals need to be developed by the community, not imposed from above. If it has not already been done, the County should form a taskforce to explore these options, conduct public hearings, review other community plans-projects and propose practical solutions to include concepts, timelines, cost analysis and means of financing.

3. How do you get around? What form(s) of transportation do you use on a regular basis? How will you get to work if elected?

- We drive a prius. If elected, I could walk to work or ride a bike.

Specific Questions for Supervisorial Candidates by District:

San Lorenzo Valley:

A report on how to ride to and within the San Lorenzo Valley was recently produced with a long list of specific recommendations. How will you enact some of these recommendations? Which ones? When?

Aptos:

A bicycle pedestrian bridge over the freeway at Mar Vista has been funded but design and planning has been preliminarily tied to the EIR for the HOV project. We think that this unnecessary connection could delay or even prevent the bridge from going in. Do you agree? If so, how can we start planning and designing the bridge on its own?

### **Buses and Bureaucracy**

1. What is your opinion regarding the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (the RTC)- its function, and/or its compilation? If you would prefer a different structure, how would you change it?

I do not know enough about the current commission to make an informed judgment. I would be very interested in your assessment.

2. What about the Metro Board? Is it well constructed? Does it function well? Does it need to be reformed? If so, how?

I do not know enough about the current board to make an informed judgment. I would be very interested in your assessment.

3. If elected, how will you work to support mass transit in Santa Cruz County?

The first step is to educate the public to the need. Much of this “education” (reality therapy) is already taking place every time owners of gas guzzling hummers or SUVs roll in a gas station to fill their tanks. Building on this new level of consciousness, we need to develop well thought-out, comprehensive mass transit plans with a lot of community input and buy-in. Perhaps we need to form a new commission charged with this responsibility along the lines of the Human Relations or Planning Commissions.

## **Two for the Road**

1. What strategies would you advocate for reducing the need for, and the use of, the private single-occupant automobile as the dominant means of travel in Santa Cruz County?

First, we need to promote rapid transit options along the Hwy 1 corridor. Acquiring the RR right of way from Watsonville to Davenport might be used for such a purpose, or an elevated rail along the center of Hwy 1 might be another option. Connecting the line with an improved Hwy 17 mass transit corridor would reduce the need to use cars for out of community travel.

The Max line in Portland, OR and in other communities has been a great success. Denmark and Toronto, Canada are other examples of effective systems.

2. Do you agree with the idea that peaking oil supply will cause a dramatic increase in oil/gas prices over the next several decades? If so, what would you do as Supervisor to prepare Santa Cruz County for these changes?

Anyone who has read James Kunstler’s “The Long Emergency: Surviving the end of oil, climate change and other converging catastrophes of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” should believe we are in for some very dramatic environmental changes and changes in life style. The time is now, if not long past, to begin planning for these potential changes. Central towns and local businesses will become centers of commerce again. Long commutes in gas driven cars will be a thing of the past. We will see a return of mass transit, use of bicycles and alternative energy source driven modes of transportation.

Mass transit and development of solar, wind and wave energy will become essential solutions. The Board of Supervisors needs to take a proactive role, along with all levels of government, to begin planning and implementing measures to successfully navigate these changes. In the past, the Board of Supervisors has seemed to function like clams at the bottom of the sea, waiting for the food to arrive. We need a much more proactive Board that will mobilize community awareness and involve the citizenry in becoming conscious of these changes and advocating effective policies to meet them. This consciousness needs to be fostered through community meetings, neighborhood associations, and other means of raising awareness of the impending crises and possible solutions. This impending crisis may also provide the opportunity for the region to develop a whole new Green industry providing jobs and careers for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.