

From: Rob Waring
Sent: Wednesday, August 17, 2022 12:20 PM
To: Joel Slavit <jslavit@smcgov.org>
Subject: Ban Chip Sealing

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Dear BPAC,
I am not able to attend the meeting on August 18, so I am sending in this request:

San Mateo County is planning to render nearly every county road used by bicyclists west of the Santa Cruz Mountains unusable for the last four months of 2022. They plan to [chip seal these roads](#), that is coat the road surface with emulsion oil and then add a layer of millions of tiny stones. (More than five billion stones for the whole project.) Signs at the entrances to these roads warning cyclists not to enter will stay in place for several months after. Some of these signs have already been erected in anticipation of the project.



California has adopted public policy encouraging people to use green transportation. When San Mateo County effectively closes down a huge portion of County roads to cyclists, that sends a message: "You are not welcome here, and you don't matter."

On August 29, the county will start chip sealing [Tunitas Creek Road](#), [Higgins Canyon Road](#), [Purissima Creek Road](#), [Verde Road](#), [Lobitos Creek Road](#), [Stage Road](#), [Old La Honda Road](#), [Page Mill Road](#), [Alpine Road](#) and others. The only access to the coast will be on State Highways 84 and 92, roads where in many places there are no shoulders and motorists careen

by at speeds of 60 mph, placing cyclists in mortal peril. (Months ago, I asked CalTrans to trim vegetation and remove debris from the shoulders of Highways 1 and 84, but nothing has been done.)

I am not aware of any previous time when the County chip sealed nearly every County road west of Skyline in the same one month, or even one year period. The County says that its inability to find a contractor last year is the reason for this *Everything Everywhere All at Once* approach. However, that does not excuse the apparent failure in planning to reach out to the affected stakeholders for input, given the monumental impact this project will have on road safety and access to critical infrastructure for several months.

Chip seal lasts only half as long as asphalt, but costs about a third as much. This means that paving a road properly costs about 50% more than chip seal. A road that has been chip sealed is dangerous for cycling for months after, because many of the tiny stones will not adhere to the road — making the road like ball bearings on glass — whereas a road that has been paved can be safely used immediately after. In addition, cyclists and motorists will be removing chip seal and stones from their bicycles and vehicles for many months after. During the lifespan of a paved road, the period of danger for cyclists and the proliferation of loose stones happens at least twice with a chip sealed road. Frequent sweeping of the road can reduce the loose stones, but at an additional cost. As compared to the lifespan of a paved road, users of a chip sealed road experience twice as much time on a deteriorated surface, owing to its two end of life periods.

A compromise between chip seal and asphalt would be either [Cape Seal](#) or [Microsurfacing](#), which involve putting a coating on the road about a week after the chip seal. The resulting road surface is much smoother and longer lasting, and relatively free of loose stones. The cost is about double that of chip seal alone. A survey of road resurfacing methods by the Minnesota Dept. of Transportation found that in several states Cape Seal has lower long term cost than chip seal, because it provides triple the longevity. ([See, for example, p. 32](#)) In other areas of San Mateo County where residents' satisfaction with the condition of their roads apparently matters more, [the County is applying coatings such as Cape Seal or Microsurfacing](#).

We live in the wealthiest county per capita in the richest state in America. The state, which if a nation would have the fifth largest economy in the world, is currently awash in cash, with its largest budget surplus in history. [Our one year surplus is more than the entire two year state budget for Texas](#). There has also been a huge increase in gasoline tax revenues intended for road maintenance. Why then are we using a method to maintain our roads that is so “penny wise and pound foolish?” In tiny Switzerland, subject to punishing snow and ice, “[even the smallest farm road is as smooth as an airport runway](#).” Putting our supposed protection of rights and privileges to shame, the Swiss believe that rural residents and cyclists have the same rights to safety and comfort as city dwellers and motorists. In San Mateo County, why must popular cycling routes be inaccessible and dangerous for months because of chip sealing? Why are cyclists, who are the vast majority of users of these roads to be mutilated, second class citizens?

Please BPAC, I request that you ask the [County Board of Supervisors](#) to:

- Rescind this declaration of war against cyclists at least until there has been a public hearing on the matter and consideration of alternatives, and
- Prohibit the use of chip sealing alone, without a second coating, on any county road that is not a dead-end.

If communication with the BOS is not possible because of your meeting rules, please put this issue on your next meeting agenda and take action.

Thank you,
Rob Waring