

LaJolla, California,
February 21, 1929.

Mr. W. C. Crandall,
Financial Agent for Miss Ellen B. Scripps,
P. O. Box 494,
LaJolla, California,

Dear Mr. Crandall:-

Acting on your invitation to look over the existing and proposed road changes in Torrey Pines Park, I spent several hours yesterday with the custodian, Mr. Guy Fleming. Together we went over the ground, maps and papers.

The situation at Torrey Pines is most interesting to me, affording as it does comparisons with national park conditions. There are problems of harmonizing practical needs with ideals of conservation which resemble rather closely our problems in Sequoia National Park and other national parks.

Need of Topographical Maps.

I was much handicapped in a study of the situation by lack of proper topographical maps, both of the whole region between Del Mar and San Diego, and of the central or high scenic area of Torrey Pines Park. Such maps are a necessity for best analysis of such a problem. They should be on a scale of six or twelve inches to the mile for the whole area and a scale of one inch equals one hundred or two hundred inches for the central area.

There is no more urgent need than the provision of adequate topographical maps.

Practical versus Ideal

The practical needs seem to be:

(a) Immediate provision of modern 5% highway to replace existing 9% Torrey Pines Grade.

(b) Provision of adequate public accommodations, such as parking areas, picnic grounds, toilets and rest rooms, hotels or public camps, etc. etc.

This includes a general planning of the scenic Torrey Pines area so as to decide now -- and before values are changed or injured by road construction-- just what parts may best be devoted to such practical uses as the above and others.

The idea of conservation included:

(a) As little damage as possible to national scenery by roads or other development.

(b) Reservation of certain defined areas for botanical and zoological study and from any commercial development.

(c) Careful planning of all necessary roads, trails, bridle paths, footpaths or other development so as to give public use as much of Torrey Pines area as possible and yet conserve its natural and scenic values for all time.

A comparatively brief examination of the problem convinces me that there is a middle way which will reconcile both the practical and ideal objectives.

Highways -- "Speed" and "Scenic"

A clear distinction must be kept between a highway intended chiefly or entirely for speedy travel and the scenic highway on which speed -- and even grades and curves -- should be a secondary consideration. Because of failure to distinguish between these two different types of highways, there have been many blunders made in the past few years. These mistakes have been made by federal, state, county and municipal agencies and have wasted money and have, without necessity, destroyed scenic values. Indeed, the tragedy has often been that it has cost more money to destroy scenery than to preserve it. And I am not speaking now of future values and costs, but rather of cash expenditures.

Of course there is always present the problem of immediate financial considerations and the temptation to let the future generation -- or even the public five years later -- bear the extra expense involved by changes which may become necessary.

With regard to existing poor highways such as the 9% Torrey Pines Grade our national park experience has been that it is practically always inadvisable to attempt to improve such roads to standard highways. It is cheaper and usually less damaging to scenery in the long run to build a new road; but that of course carries the proviso of careful planning.

Proposed Highway Changes in Torrey Pines Park.

The possible changes seem to be:

- A. Improve existing Torrey Pines 9% grade.
- B. Build 6½% "City Survey" grade through scenic area.
- C. Building 6% "Fleming-Cornell" compromise grade through less scenic area.
- D. Build direct 5% "Speed" Highway by Soledad Valley, - Rose Canyon Route.
- E. Build compromise (probably 5%) cut off by Government Canyon and U.S. Agricultural Garden.

Without going into reasons or details, I submit these comments on the above possibilities:

- A No considerable changes should be made on 9% Torrey Pines Grade. It is good enough as a scenic road.
- B The 6½% "City Survey" should not be built.
- C The 6% "Fleming-Cornell" grade should not be built if other route may be found which satisfies immediate travel and financial needs.
- D The 5% Soledad Valley - Rose Canyon Speed Highway will come within a very few years but can scarcely be built in time to satisfy immediate travel and other needs.
- E The 5% (?) Government Canyon Cutoff will probably save much scenery and cash expense in addition to great future scenic values and expense. However, careful and impartial study by a trained location and construction highway engineer are, lacking adequate topographic maps, necessary before intelligent decision may be made.

Summary

If it is possible in any way to save the Tecolote Canyon or central scenic area of the park from further road construction it should be done. Both "B" and "C" routes above destroy great scenic values and construction on those steep slopes will mean heavy cuts and fills with consequent unavoidable erosion and damage.

It looks very much as though route "E" were feasible; will give immediate relief to travel congestion, will save immediate expense by linking up existing LaJolla highway and will avoid all damage to scenery by skirting the foot of the Lower Mesa rather than by cutting through the Tecolote and other charming canyons of the Upper Mesa. By bringing Route "E" into existing highway near Kearney Junction it looks as though every objective, financial and scenic, would be reached.

The impartial opinion of a trained location and construction engineer with a sense of landscape values should be obtained immediately. Such men are hard to find, but lacking adequate topographic maps and detailed study by high class landscape engineer, the opinion of the trained road engineer is necessary.

My interest in this problem has been so awakened that I would like to see Mr. W. M. Austin, Associate Engineer, Bureau of Public Roads, look it over. Mr. Austin has worked with me for some years in Sequoia National Park.

I know that Mr. H. M. Albright, Director of the National Park Service is also much interested in general conservation problems, realizing how they are interlaced whether Federal, state or county, and believe that he would be glad to recommend to the Bureau of Roads that Mr. Austin be sent to Torrey Pines for two or three days. It would be necessary to avoid exciting professional engineering jealousies.

Lacking proper topographic maps, I have sketched on Mr. Fleming's map the proposed Route "E".

It has been a great pleasure to have this opportunity for cursory study of the Torrey Pines situation and may I say that it has been a great pleasure to me to see how earnestly Mr. Fleming and you are studying the problem before making an important decision and what thought you are giving to reconciling the practical and the ideal.

With all appreciation of your attitude and of Mr. and Mrs. Fleming's hospitality at Torrey Pines Park, I am,

Sincerely yours,

John R. White,
Supt. Sequoia National Park.