

March 11, 1929.

The City Planning Commission and  
Board of Park Commissioners.

San Diego, Calif.

Dear Sirs:-

I beg to submit you a preliminary report on the general questions involved in the improvement of highway facilities in the neighborhood of Torrey Pines Park. The problem is a complex one and requires for its best solution open-mindedness and a willingness to consider impartially various factors, the relative importance of which it is difficult to establish clearly. I was gratified to have an opportunity to attend the meeting at which the members of a number of city commissions were present and to hear a discussion of the whole subject from a variety of viewpoints. Later I was invited to make first-hand observation on the ground and review the several proposals now under consideration.

My study of the problem has been necessarily limited and there may be some factors with which I am not

fully acquainted. Therefore any report that I may make now must be tentative in character and subject to revision on receipt of fuller information.

It is always difficult to make recommendation concerning city planning traffic and park projects without proper surveys and reliable data based upon topographical information, traffic counts, cost of alternative proposals and a vivid picture of the effect of what would happen if certain plans were carried into effect.

The principal issues, it seems to me, are three:

1. Traffic requirements.
2. The protection of the Torrey Pines Park.
3. The cost and merits of alternative highway schemes.

All are agreed that the present highway facilities in the area under discussion are inadequate and unsatisfactory in character. Safety and convenience call imperatively for some early action. The present Torrey Pines road through the area described is unsafe and unsatisfactory. Yet without making any really radical changes in its location, alignment and grade, it

could be critically improved. Just what these changes would be depends upon a more detailed study on the ground, based upon accurate surveys and estimates of cost. But even a superficial study of the existing local conditions convinces one that it would be both easy and inexpensive to make minor changes in location, width and grade of the present Torrey Pines Road that would vastly improve its character. In fact, it might be enough to meet all immediate requirements. At any rate, it is the first logical step and should be taken promptly because it is desirable from every point of view. In my mind, whatever else is done, this Torrey Pines Road, revised and improved, should be retained. It has a natural and logical location connecting the Torrey Pines Slough with the Torrey Pines Mesa. The plan submitted shows the relative ease with which the worst turns and grades of the Torrey Pines Road could be improved. It could also be readily widened at the same time.

I understand that one of the proposals under consideration is a detour or by-pass immediately to the east of

the Torrey Pines Lodge, extending for a length of approximately a mile, beginning to the north of the Torrey Pines Reservoir and connecting with the lower grade. I have examined with care the location of this proposed road and firmly believe it undesirable. First, because it is not a natural or good road location. It would plunge recklessly through one of the most broken pieces of topography that I have seen in that neighborhood. The profiles which are here submitted show that it would require a cut of forty feet or more along the center line of the road and on the upper side as high in some places as seventy or seventy-five feet. The cost of construction and maintenance would undoubtedly be heavy and the result, merely as a road, highly unsatisfactory. There would be no good views and one wonders what the merits would be. Merely as a road problem, without considering other factors, the results would not justify the choice of this location.

The second objection to this proposed road location is its effect upon the Torrey Pines Park. This can be visualized

somewhat by an examination of the airplane and other views submitted, but to be fully appreciated it must be observed on the ground. It is not necessary here to praise this unique park nor to point out its peculiar interest, value, beauty and charm. There is no other park like it and in high recreation value Torrey Pines Park stands preeminent. Its integrity is watched zealously by every citizen and no one would willingly harm or deface it. Yet here appears to be a proposal which would scar it forever -- a slash through its very heart which would leave Torrey Pines Park impaired permanently. If there is any good alternative this should not be done. The arguments could be set forth at length. The Torrey Pines Park is now fortunately so well known, not only in San Diego and its environs, but throughout the land, that more need not be said in defence of its preservation.

We return, therefore, to an endorsement of the existing Torrey Pines Road as the first logical step in bettering traffic conditions in this area. That may possibly be enough to meet present requirements. It will not, however, be enough for

the future and now is the time to study the whole situation and provide a more adequate and more permanent remedy and to see that any immediate proposal is a part of a future general program and policy.

My study of this area on maps and on the ground convinces me that the future -- indeed, the immediate future -- will require the services of two roads in this region and not one, no matter how generously it may be handled. In addition to the present Torrey Pines Road straightened, widened and improved, there is need for a separate major highway, carefully located and designed with special regard to the service of thru traffic and, more particularly, trucks and stages. This differentiation of traffic would in itself be of the greatest aid and I am confident would be welcomed by all. The best location for this major highway is in the Soledad Valley to the east of the present Torrey Pines Road. There are two or three alternative routes as shown on the map submitted, the relative merits of which could only be revealed by additional study based upon more

complete surveys and a consideration of differences in cost and ease of construction. Also the effect upon drainage and other closely related matters. Several things are clear, however. There is happily a good location for a major highway in the area suggested. The separation of different classes of traffic would be a great gain to all. The enlarged facilities which this new highway would provide will, under any circumstances, be required in the near future. Finally, a road in one of the proposed locations in Soledad Valley would in no way injure the Torrey Pines Park nor the views of the surrounding landscape. This action would represent a farsighted public policy and the new road could be incorporated properly into the major highway system of the whole region. A recommendation in general harmony with this proposal has already been submitted by the City Planning Commission. The details of this new highway could readily be worked out by the proper city, county and state authorities in consultation with the various city commissions concerned in the best possible solution of this problem. The relation and connection

of this road to the now existing or proposed roads offer no difficulties that cannot readily be met.

My recommendations therefore are:


1. Gather together at once as much survey material and traffic data as possible, on which to base an immediate plan and policy. Observe especially the local conditions revealed by the airplane and other views because these local conditions are of the utmost importance.
2. Re-locate and re-design the present Torrey Pines Road along the general line referred to in this statement, making only such minor changes as are necessary for greater safety and convenience.
3. Study of the whole area covered by Soledad Valley, Rose Canyon and Government Canyon, with a view to a more permanent solution of the principal traffic approaches to San Diego from the north. The issues involved in the approaches to San Diego from the north are large and far reaching and are worthy of the best attention of the public officials entrusted



with their settlement.

It should be added that this statement is necessarily tentative in character. It is made at this time to meet the requirements of early action and is presented frankly for open minded consideration and discussion.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Nolen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that loops back under the name.

John Nolen,  
City Planning Consultant.



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CITY PARK



Scale 1" = 100'  
 Survey L-29  
 JC

