

The Reactor

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Sliding for a century? The Devil you say

I shudder to think about how much ink and sweat I've put into the Devil's Slide problem. As I started the job of indexing 20 years of Reactors recently, I was appalled at the number of times I've had to write about the Devil's Slide.

"Devil's Slide Bypass Battle: Long but Worth Winning" was the headline over the Reactor column of July 24, 1985. I went on to say "First things first. It is the road over the mountain that's important.... The campaign needs to be invigorated. The public relations for the bypass needs to be well-organized, imaginative, continual and persistent. We need a bypass... Soon!"

I thoroughly agree with myself, but the truth is, very little has changed in the past 10 years. We still need a bypass. It's still being blockaded by a hardworking, dedicated group of Sierra Clubbers who continue to try to convince the rest of us that Caltrans is engaged in a conspiracy, and is respon-

sible for not trying harder to repair the old road. I don't know what to think of the latest twist, except that a single bore tunnel longer than the Caldecott through the East Bay hills is scary, to say the least.

One tunnel is probably insufficient and unsafe. Two bores are probably the minimum we would need, and the cost would be driven much higher than the old bypass plan. However, we at least would have a bypass. We don't necessarily need "the" bypass, but we desperately need "a" bypass.

Review with me some headlines from the Tribune these past 35 years.

July 14, 1960, Devil's Slide F'way Plans Shown to City; Oct. 13, 1964, Plans Pushed For Devil's Slide Bypass; March 3, 1965, Devil's Slide Blockade; We're Caught in Middle; May 11, 1966, Ray of Hope for Devil's Slide Repairs Soon; March 15, 1967, Road Closes 7 p.m. Nightly; A Desperate New Effort To Save Highway

No. 1; Dec. 27, 1967, One Shake Could Send Devil's Slide Into Sea; April 2, 1969, Devil's Slide Route Gets Another Boost; Oct. 14, 1970, Slide Closing For 12 Days; Jan. 19, 1972, Sierra Club Opposes Devil's Slide Bypass; Oct. 15, 1972, Court Decision Halts Devil's Slide By-Pass; Environmentalists Win; March 6, 1974 Storm Closes Devil's Slide; April 10, 1974, Can Devil's Slide Last For Nine More Years?

July 6, 1977, Immediate Action Asked On Devil's Slide Bypass; July 27, 1977, Pacifica's 'Tourist Trap' as Devil's Slide Closes; March 9, 1983, Major Devil's Slide Slip Closes Highway One; April 6, 1983, Coastsiders Plead for Highway Repair Funds.

There's no need to add more headlines from the past 12 years. Repetition would be boring. The problems with the Devil's Slide aren't new. The road was closed for a total of 218 days from 1937 to 1951. There were 22 closures between 1973 and 1983. In 1980 there were 238 days of closure. In 1982-83 the road was closed for three months. It's now been closed since Jan. 22.

The Devil's Slide was named as such on U.S. Geological Maps in 1892. It was named before the railroad, before all the coastal subdivisions, before any of the highways. It's overdue to be bypassed. Thirty five years is too long.