

Public Comment from Deb Hopkins regarding the possible closure of Court Street

October 7, 2025 Plumas County Board of Supervisor's meeting
Agenda Item 3. C.

PUBLIC WORKS/ROAD - Rob Thorman 1) Update on proposal for Court Street access to and from Main Street (State Route 70); discussion and possible action.

Dear Chair of the Board Supervisor Goss,

Please read this letter during public comment re agenda item 3.C and make it and the attached study part of the record on the Closure of Court Street.

I have two concerns regarding Court Street: public safety and County exposure to liability risks related to negligence. California Government Code 835; a breach of duty by failing to address a known danger is the litigation risk the County will be exposing itself to.

Cal Trans has a lot of protective immunities, the County has some, but the County has been notified once, and now twice by evidence in this study that this intersection is dangerous thereby increasing County exposure to risk of a negligence lawsuit if the Board rules to leave the street open and an incident occurs.

Lawsuits are costly but more importantly, do we really need someone to get hurt or killed to prove the case? I urge you to discuss this with County Council.

It is my understanding that your first notification came in 2024 from County employees; former Supervisor and Transportation Board member Greg Hagwood was outspokenly for closure as was then Principal Transportation Planner, Jim Graham. Both men provided antidotal evidence of numerous near accidents involving the Highway 70 intersection at Court Street. The Transportation Board agendized the request and recommended that Court Street be closed.

Your second notification of this intersection being hazardous comes today. I am surprised that no one previously has brought this federal report to your attention.

I am providing you and the County with the complete in-depth data driven 2021 report “Impact of Intersection Angle on Highway Safety” published by the Federal Highway Administration. I respectfully ask that the Board and relevant County experts review these data before any decision is made. My understanding is that by the standards of the study the Highway 70 – Court Street intersection is dangerous, but I am not the expert. I simply want the Board to be well informed and careful in this decision.

I sent the study to Rob Thorman P.E. Public Works director, and he forwarded it to Cal Trans explaining to me that it is the Highway that is creating the 60-degree angle. It is my understanding that Cal Trans has much more immunity to litigation than a County does. It may not be in Plumas County’s best interest to ‘pass the buck’ to Cal Trans. Furthermore, I am not clear that closing a county owned street that is at a skewed angle to the highway is the responsibility of Cal Trans.

For the public record the “Impact of Intersection Angle on Highway Safety” study states:

“When designing new roadways or retrofitting existing roadways, careful consideration should be given to mitigation measures for skewed intersections. This research sought to obtain quantitative relationships between intersection angle and safety, where intersection crashes define safety. The relationships were used to determine appropriate crash modification factors for reducing or eliminating the skew angle of an intersection.”

“The relationships between intersection angle and safety in the Minnesota and Ohio data were used to determine the critical minimum angle at which safety is substantially diminished (75 degrees, 60 degrees, or other). The study developed new crash modification functions for intersection angles and new considerations for critical minimum angles commonly applied by roadway designers. The results and insights will be useful for highway engineers, safety engineers, and associations and nongovernmental organizations that develop nationally recognized guidelines.”

These are introductory comments to the report that I have included to give you and the public some idea of what it is that I am giving you to review. The study includes data and risk assessments that are specific to rural situations such as ours, and specific to the types of intersections (number of stop signs, stop lights,

etc.) I would like the entire study, see attached file to be added to the public record. It is relatively easy to locate the portion that is relevant to our specific situation.

While I understand that the closure will irritate some people, the traffic study conducted demonstrated that closure of Court Street would not impact the community traffic flow. Our Fire Chief has stated that closer of Court Street is not a safety risk or problem for emergency responders.

What is the risk of harm in closing it other than it being unpopular and irritating some people?

Conversely, please consider what you are risking in leaving it as is: someone being injured or killed. That should be enough to cause the County to act but if it is not then the risk of being charged with negligence and the costs associated with that can be added to the weight of the argument to close the street.

If you do a diligent review of this report, and the record of antidotal notifications of the intersection being hazardous and conclude that it is not a dangerous intersection that exposes the County to liability risks I will be satisfied with a decision to keep the street open. I humbly ask that each of you on the Board do the your homework and act in the very best interest of public safety and your fiscal responsibility to our County.

Lastly, if the street is to be closed it would be fiscally wise that decision to be made very soon to take advantage of using Cal Trans to fund the balance of the work.

Thank you in advance for taking time investigate and contemplate then make this decision in a timely manner.

Deb Hopkins
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