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Safe parking a concern at Bixby Bridge



People cross Highway 1 to their cars parked on Coast Road near Highway 1 and Bixby Creek Bridge on Wednesday. Monterey County supervisors have recently voted to make this area a no-parking zone citing complaints from residents on Coast Road. Vern Fisher - Monterey Herald

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POSTED: 10/21/15, 6:50 PM PDT

UPDATED: ON 10/21/2015

1 COMMENT

Big Sur Coast >> The view overlooking Bixby Creek Bridge is as iconic as they come, but right now the parking is a disaster waiting to happen, say residents and county officials.

Citing safety concerns, the Board of Supervisors voted Tuesday to limit parking near the bridge.

Coming from Monterey, the turnoff just before the bridge is often jammed with cars. Drivers often opt to park on the opposite shoulder and up unpaved Coast Road.

A new ordinance prohibits parking on the northbound shoulder of Highway 1 and along the rocky mountain wall side of Coast Road. Parallel parking is still allowed on the south side of Coast Road.

The wide-mouthed road may seem appealing, but parking there is dangerous, said Supervisor Dave Potter. Visitors often park haphazardly, making it difficult for residents and emergency vehicles to get through.

“People are pulling into Old Coast Road and not realizing that anybody lives up there,” he said.

The road narrows quickly, and abuts a steep ravine. When it’s especially jammed, cars sometimes have to back out onto Highway 1. Residents and supervisors worry that someone will get hit by oncoming traffic, or back over the cliff.

Bill Nye, 68, has lived on Old Coast Road, about a mile from the highway, for 33 years. He headed the effort to limit parking because “parking gets so goofy some cars have to back out onto the highway to allow other cars to get out. That’s very dangerous,” he said. “I live on this road and every time I try to go to town or come back it’s a real problem.”

Potter described Nye as “instrumental in meeting with supervisors and staff.” Other people had raised



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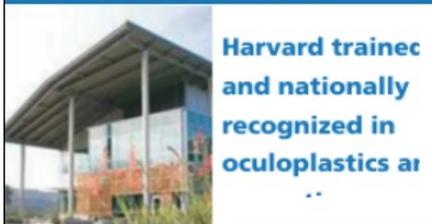
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the issue previously, and there was “nobody in disagreement” about the ordinance at Tuesday’s meeting, Potter added.

Jesse Warr, owner of “A Friend in Town Personalized Tour Operator,” leads minivan tours through Big Sur out of the Bay Area. He thinks the new ordinance is “like saying you can only take pictures of the Golden Gate from Alcatraz.”

Bixby Bridge is one of the most desirable places to stop and take a photograph, but without clearly designated parking areas, Warr thinks the public will ignore parking restrictions. “People will say, ‘oh, what the heck, let’s pull over here and take a picture,’ ” he said.

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Warr worries that new parking restrictions are “a question of inconvenience” to Old Coast Road residents. “I don’t like an idea that would deny people the opportunity to stop and see the bridge.”

Nye doesn’t deny that the parking is an inconvenience. “It just gets worse and worse every year,” he said. “Park where you can. If you can’t park, keep going, is my feeling.”

Enforcement will begin with changes in signage, said Potter. “If people continue to ignore the signage then we’ll have to do some enforcement,” he said. It will take at least 30 days for any new restrictions to take effect.

Increasing fines is a next step, followed by physical barriers. “We’re thinking about placing some rocks there to impede people from parking,” Potter added. But “maybe if they get a \$99 parking ticket they might wake up.”

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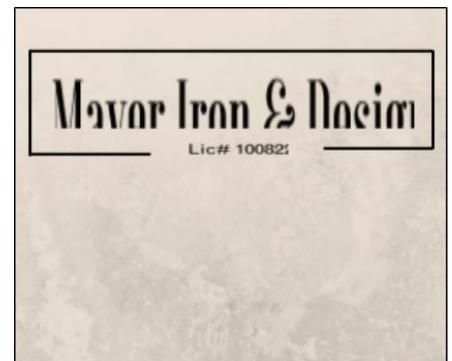
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