

Environmental group sues Caltrans over Niles Canyon project

Silicon Valley / San Jose Business Journal

June 8, 2011

[The Alameda Creek Alliance](#) said Tuesday it filed a lawsuit in Alameda Superior Court against the [California Department of Transportation](#), challenging an environmental review for the first phase of an \$80 million Niles Canyon highway widening project.

“Caltrans is trying to ram this ill-conceived project through with complete disregard for public input and over the continued objections of conservation groups, elected officials, and community groups from Niles and Sunol,” said **Jeff Miller**, director of the Alameda Creek Alliance. “The highway widening would degrade important habitat for fish and wildlife, jeopardize a decade of steelhead trout restoration efforts in Alameda Creek, and ruin the natural beauty of Niles Canyon. We insist on a thorough environmental review and reevaluation of whether this type of highway widening project with drastic impacts is even necessary.”

The lawsuit alleges violations of the California Environmental Quality Act. The environmental group said Caltrans cut nearly 100 native trees in the canyon this spring in preparation for the project, and another about 500 trees would be cut in the middle of the canyon.

"Fremont joined conservation and community groups in calling for a halt to the project and reevaluation of the need for road widening when a truck ban is in place," the group said.

Nearly 400 residents showed up to oppose the project at meetings with Caltrans this spring and community groups held several protests against the tree cutting. Save Niles Canyon, Save Our Sunol, Friends of Coyote Hills, Southern Alameda County Sierra Club, East Bay Chapter of the California Native Plant Society and Tri-City Ecology Center are also opposing the project.

The three phases of the project would widen much of Niles Canyon Road between Fremont and Interstate 680 to provide 12-foot lanes, a 2-foot median, and up to 8-foot shoulders.

[Click here](#) for a link to the lawsuit.