

Cascade Caverns, Inc.
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November 10, 2017

Mr. Richard De La Cruz, PE (Richard.DeLaCruz@txdot.gov)
TxDOT SAN ANTONIO DISTRICT
4615 NW Loop 410
San Antonio, TX 78229-5126

RE: Kendall Gateway Study

Dear Mr. De La Cruz:

I didn't make it to the Open House on November 8th but have been reviewing the relevant maps on your website, especially the "Southeast (Panel 4 of 4)" which includes my historically significant and environmentally sensitive business, Cascade Caverns. Please know that I am extremely alarmed for the following reasons which don't seem to be factored into TxDOT planning:

- 1) There is a second cavern system on the Cascade property that runs right under the "SE Inner Concept" green line which is loaded with state and federally recognized endangered species (Cascade Salamander, Golden-cheeked Warbler, etc.). This cavern system was surveyed in 1972 and is an extensive set of caves that are similar in size to the caverns we currently open to the public. We are currently in the process of re-surveying this second cavern system since it was never fully surveyed in 1972 (see attached map and description);
- 2) A sinkhole at the controversial South Glen subdivision reportedly swallowed up two enormous earth mover machines earlier this year leading to the abandonment of 2-4 acres within the subdivision by the developer;
- 3) A road through the back of the Cascade property -- if it is even structurally possible over an extensive cavern system -- would require a 10-foot wall almost one mile long to keep out noise, trespassers and vandals;
- 4) The area beneath the green "300 foot" wide line is a flood absorption, detention and retention zone for the rest of the property due to natural and human-augmented flooding (Boerne-Kendall has no substantive drainage code or storm water infrastructure; see Public Works Director Mike Mann's presentation to the City Council on 10/24/2017);
- 5) Cascade Caverns is the primary recharge zone in the neighborhood. Road runoff from accidents and spills would potentially contaminate the Edwards Aquifer beneath;
- 6) Cascade Caverns is one of just seven Texas show caves;
- 7) Cascade Caverns is the oldest tourist attraction in Boerne;
- 8) Cascade Caverns is the second highest ranked (#2 out of 34) Boerne tourist attraction on TripAdvisor;
- 9) Cascade Caverns is the oldest Texas show cave attraction (since 1875);
- 10) Cascade Caverns is a Texas Historical Site (Texas Historical Commission);
- 11) Cascade Caverns has been nominated by Senator Campbell for the Texas Treasure Business Award (Texas Historical Commission);
- 12) Cascade Caverns is pursuing a National Historical Landmark (NHL), National Natural Landmark (NNL) and National Register (NRHP) status with the U.S. National Park Service;

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- 13) Cascade Caverns has been a U.S. Fish & Wildlife "Cooperator Partner." The FWS plans to evaluate the Cascade Caverns Salamander in FY2021;
- 14) The GBRA water pipeline from Canyon Lake passes by our southern boundary and already gave our property line "a haircut" in 1996;
- 15) TxDOT Planners not being aware of Chapter 201 of Texas Natural Resource Code that protects caverns.

I can see the logic of connecting to the Esperanza subdivision but channeling that traffic ultimately onto Cascade Caverns Road at South Glen is insane, even if you widen that road. Already, Cascade Caverns Road between South Glen and IH-10 is dense with businesses, schools and subdivisions that create stop-and-go conditions between 7-9 AM and 4-6 PM. When one also considers the 1-2 feet of flooding at the intersection of Cascade Caverns Road and Old San Antonio Road during heavy rains, you are looking at major mayhem (the culvert under Interstate Highway 10 fed by the Regent Park subdivision runoff creates a violent moat around the Fairfield Inn that is uncontainable which ends up flooding the road). We are right in the middle of "Flash Flood Alley," the apt nickname hydrologists have given The Texas Hill Country.

Unfortunately, The City of Boerne isn't following its Master Plan as we've seen at 17 Herff Road, Esperanza, etcetera. There has been too much overstepping of plan constraints and not enough consideration of long term effects. Out-of-state developers (South Glen, etc.) are enriched while long time, local residents are left "holding the bag." The drainage situation around here is a time bomb and so is the dangerous dependency on Canyon Lake water. As usual, local politicians are more interested in expanding the tax base instead of maintaining quality of life, inspired architecture, historic preservation, green spaces and natural beauty.

Hopefully, TxDOT can provide a measure of sensibility to this "Gateway" project that has been missing at the local level in recent years. A road through the back of our property would be environmentally irreversible and financially devastating not just for the business/property but for the residents of Boerne-Kendall and the State of Texas who have enjoyed this natural marvel for decades.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lance B. Kyle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Lance B. Kyle
President
Cascade Caverns, Inc.

P.S. There would be no Cascade Caverns Road without Cascade Caverns.

CC: James Bass, Executive Director, TxDOT (james.bass@txdot.gov);
Jonathan Bean, Director of Transportation, Planning & Development
(jonathan.bean@txdot.gov).

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