

# Midcoast Community Council

*An elected Advisory Council to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors*

*representing Montara, Moss Beach, El Granada, Princeton, and Miramar*

PO Box 248, Moss Beach, CA 94038-0248 | [midcoastcommunitycouncil.org](http://midcoastcommunitycouncil.org)

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August 25, 2022

Via Email – [john.seal@dot.ca.gov](mailto:john.seal@dot.ca.gov)

Caltrans, District 4

Office of Environmental Analysis

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SUBJECT: MCC Comments on the Draft Initial Study with Proposed Negative Declaration for the State Route 1 Multi-Asset Roadway Rehabilitation Project (EA 04-0Q130)

To Whom It May Concern,

The San Mateo Midcoast Community Council appreciates the opportunity to comment on the State Route 1 Multi-Asset Roadway Rehabilitation Project [EA 04-0Q130 / Project ID 04-1800-0053] Draft Initial Study with Proposed Negative Declaration (Draft IS/ND). The MCC recognizes that this project has been conducted with considerable attention to gathering public comment with several special sessions. The final public presentation had publicity issues which have been addressed with extended comment deadlines.

We believe this initial Draft IS/ND is, in some instances, too general to allow a complete Negative Declaration Review, as noted below. We expect that continued, active communication between Caltrans and all the partners will continue to address the concerns listed below, both for this project and for subsequent efforts – such as Complete Streets – which we list below.

Note that this project is in the coastal zone and would be governed in part by the County's Local Coastal Program (LCP) and will require a Coastal Development Permit (CDP) or exemption from CDP requirements and will be appealable to the California Coastal Commission (CCC). It is with that sensitivity that we offer the following comments.

## **1. Roadway Rehabilitation, (Section 1.4.2)**

The need for rehabilitation of the physical roadway is fully necessary and supported. Bicycle and pedestrian safety have received full recognition as important for this project. While SR-1 is a two lane road with many sections that have additional elements, it would be helpful at the start to identify the lane width as 12 feet and the shoulder width as four feet as a standard. From this starting point, the presence of additional lanes, medians, parking on shoulders, and implementation of formal bicycle lanes can be identified as add-ons to width.

1. For each segment of SR-1, will Caltrans provide for review a diagram for the proposed layout of lines, shoulders, street parking, bicycle lanes, etc?
2. Any concrete work needs to be colored to match the surrounding environment.

Specific roadway segments will be discussed in the *Complete Streets* section, below.

## **2. Guardrail Replacement, (Section 1.4.3)**

Figure 1-2 depicts approximately 20 guardrail locations in the project, in approximately 5 miles of roadway.

### **A. Adverse Impact on Aesthetics**

The proposed Midwest guardrails increase an urban/industrial look and feel to what should be a rural/coastal scenic corridor. Similar guardrails recently installed in Pacifica on SR-1 at the new overpass have significant concrete paving for several feet of shoulder and are demonstrably Urban in character, which is inappropriate for the Midcoast scenic corridor. With concrete borders, new guardrails will further undermine the aesthetic feel. The Draft IS/ND mentions guardrail 'crash cushions' without providing photos and specifications. On urban highways, these cushions are large and unsightly.

1. Please provide pictures and specifications for the guardrail cushions intended so we can assess the aesthetic impact.
2. Instead of crash cushions, will Caltrans bend the end rails into the ground to minimize the size and aesthetic detriment caused by the rail ends?
3. Will Caltrans commit to a non-concrete installation around the guardrails, allowing for a better blend with the natural environment?

### **B. Needs assessment**

Section 1.4.3 states that "All guardrails on SR-1 in project area would be removed and replaced ...". However, nowhere is there an assessment on the condition of the existing guardrails, many or most of which may be in sufficiently good condition, (albeit not up to current standards), to be effective for decades to come.

1. For each guardrail, please provide a detailed assessment of existing structural condition and expected efficacy over the long term.

## **3. Conduits, and Traffic Operation System Elements Installation, (Section 1.4.6)**

Caltrans Project 2K880 (State Route 1 Traffic Operational Systems Improvements Project), aka TOSI, was presented in public meetings in 2020, and its IS/NegDec was published in 2021. The project addressed all of SR-1 in the City of Half Moon Bay, the Midcoast, and into southern Pacifica. In response to public concerns about the VMS element, the Multi-Asset project eliminated VMS as a project element. Separately, a presentation on the SR-1 Smart Corridor plan was provided. An Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) project is not due to be completed until 2023. So the transition from TOSI to ITS is not ready for public review. Connect the Coastside identified the need for data monitoring of traffic movement. Embedded sensors in the roadway can provide this capability.

County Planning has expressed a need for traffic flow information regarding several intersections in this project area. We would prefer Caltrans prioritize installation of inductive loop traffic sensors in the near term to expedite improved traffic planning, which might then affect further implementation of this project.

1. Given that a comprehensive plan for ITS is not yet published for our region, can the technology elements in this Multi-Asset project – other than the embedded, inductive sensors – be deferred until the ITS is ready for public review?
2. In addition to the stated purposes for the CCTV systems, will these systems be equipped to participate in the Amber Alert program, (i.e., reading license plates)?
3. Explain the purpose and need for directional and dome cameras. It is not sufficient to assert that these project elements are needed simply because they don't currently exist in the proposed project area. The MCC recommends the removal of the traffic cameras from the Draft IS/ND. Prioritize installation of inductive loop sensors at Capistrano, Coronado, Frenchman's Creek, and SR-92 as the public (*City of Half Moon Bay and communities of the Midcoast*) has already expressed concerns and objections to cameras during the 2021 public sessions for the proposed Multi-Asset project (Caltrans Project 2K880 State Route 1 Traffic Operational Systems Improvements Project Negative Declaration) where VMS were then eliminated.
4. Explain why embedded roadway sensors (Traffic Monitoring System inductive loop detectors) cannot fulfill the purpose and need to collect data on traffic since their purpose is to detect motor vehicles as they drive over the detectors' wire loops.

#### **4. Drainage Inlet, Culvert, and Dike Replacement, (Section 1.4.7)**

SR-1 Medio Creek culvert has been used as a safe pedestrian method to cross under SR-1 for decades. This is a highly valued asset to the families in our community. We want to be sure that any repairs to this culvert will not prevent or reduce its continued use by the community for this purpose.

SR-1 at Surfer's Beach already experiences minor flooding at King Tides, with several feet of sea level rise possible by 2050. Furthermore, Atmospheric River-based storms in the last 4 years have resulted in local daily rainfalls of 6, 7, and now 8 inches of rain in a single storm, overwhelming sewers in Pacifica and Half Moon Bay.<sup>1</sup> It appears that Caltrans' assessments of SLR risks are lower than other expert sources. We encourage a reassessment of Climate Change-related risks based on the most recent science and local data, given that this project will be several years in implementation and closer to 2050.

1. What is the peak storm rainfall level for which the culverts and drainage systems in this project are designed? We strongly suggest that those design criteria exceed our recent storm realities, which have become almost annual.

#### **5. Complete Streets, (Section 1.4.9)**

In formulating this comment letter, we find that, in the area of Complete Streets, we have identified several concerns that need to be addressed by the Multi-Asset project (as enumerated below), along with other Caltrans projects and locally sponsored projects, (e.g., Multi-Modal Trail Phase 2 project that extends trail

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<sup>1</sup> The natural disaster risks to Moss Beach are documented in this MWSD analysis intended for FEMA:

[https://mwsd.montara.org/assets/docs/board/collateral/243/New\\_Business\\_2.pdf](https://mwsd.montara.org/assets/docs/board/collateral/243/New_Business_2.pdf)

They include tsunami, earthquake faults, and flooding risk (Picture 7 and text page 8)

from Coronado to Capistrano). We request that the County work formally with an MCC committee to provide a continuing interface with the various Caltrans transportation projects and issues listed below.

**A. The Multi-Modal (Parallel Trail) Phase 2 (Coronado to Capistrano)**

In MCC meetings discussing this area of SR-1, GCSO has indicated they are on a path to have two firm projects which should be ready to bring to the public within two years. A related factor is planning for Phase 2 of the Multi-Modal Trail. There is ample room on the eastern edge of ROW for this trail, which would provide a straightforward option for the trail. It is appropriate for Caltrans to also make this land available.

**B. SR-1 roadway that crosses Medio Creek – (see #4 above)**

There are future needs in this area which can be better assessed when current projects: (Multi-Modal Parallel Trail, Removal of Detour, and Culvert Repair) and plans are finished or better understood.

**C. A third crosswalk at Coronado & SR-1**

We believe an additional crosswalk is not needed and would further aggravate congestion in this area. Based on our empirical observations of traffic flow at this intersection, particularly during morning rush hour, we recommend additional study before proposing an additional crosswalk at this intersection.

**The following items relate to SR-1 in the vicinity of Surfers beach:**

**D. The mid-block crossing at Surfer’s Beach should be mentioned in this section 1.4.9.**

We suggest that consistency be adhered to in design of mid-block crossings.

**E. Parking on the east side of SR-1 between Coronado and Capistrano**

This on-shoulder parking serves both public access to Surfer’s Beach and patron access to Sam’s Restaurant. There is no room for pedestrians to safely leave their cars, and bicycles are often forced into the street due to the parked cars. We believe these risks and others need to be addressed in this project.

**F. Coastal erosion**

We observe coastal erosion from the impact of the harbor jetty sand level and wave deflection that requires periodic armoring maintenance just to sustain the current road.

1. Does Caltrans have a periodic maintenance strategy for protecting the California Coastal Trail and SR-1?

**6. Unaddressed Public Safety Risks**

- A. There are eucalyptus and other tall trees adjacent to SR-1, for example, at Frenchman's Creek and Medio Creek, which can fall and block emergency responders and evacuation routes in the event of earthquakes, wildfires, or tsunamis. These trees are particularly vulnerable because of their shallow root systems and flammability. We appreciate that Caltrans has undertaken some clearing at these locations, presumably due to CSR Ticket numbers 851069 and 851071, but trees on property outside of the Caltrans right of way remain a threat to public safety and transportation because their height (~100') is sufficient to block the adjacent SR-1 if and when they fall.

B. Broadly speaking, there are major disaster risks both to this roadway and to the USE of this roadway for evacuation FROM disasters. Those risks include wildfire, tsunami, flooding, and sea level rise. Some local knowledge on those risks are contained in the Montara Water And Sanitary District paper prepared for FEMA and referenced in footnote 1 above. Comprehensive consideration of those risks and the effect on SR-1 for this and other projects should be discussed between stakeholders in subsequent venues.

1. What steps will Caltrans take to remove the blockage threats posed by tall trees adjacent to SR-1 on this project's stretch of roadway, e.g., by collaboration with the County and/or adjacent property owners?

## 7. Conclusion

In summary, there are many necessary and useful aspects to the proposed project. The MCC looks forward to working with Caltrans in understanding and adapting these plans to meet community needs.

Sincerely,

MIDCOAST COMMUNITY COUNCIL

s/Claire Toutant, Chair

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