



Monterey County Planning Commission

Item No.4

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

Agenda Item No. 4

March 09, 2022

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PLN210039 - STATE OF CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (CASTRO CANYON BRIDGE)

Public hearing to consider safety upgrades to the existing Castro Canyon bridge railing, replacement and installation of new guardrails and crash cushions, improvement to existing culvert and drainage inlet, and addition of new 20 linear foot retaining wall. The project includes development within the Critical Viewshed, on slopes exceeding 30%, and within 100 feet of environmentally sensitive habitat.

Project Location: State Route 1 (Highway 1), Post Mile 43.12, Castro Canyon Bridge (Br. No. 44-0035, between Post-Mile Markers 43.05 - 43.25), Big Sur (No Assessor's Parcel Number Big Sur (No Assessor's Parcel Number), Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan, Coastal Zone.

Proposed CEQA Action: Find that project categorically exempt pursuant to Section 15303 of the CEQA Guidelines.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Planning Commission:

- a. Find that the project qualifies as a Class 3 categorical exemption pursuant to Section 15303 of the CEQA Guidelines, and there are no exceptions pursuant to Section 15300.2; and
- b. Approve a Combined Development Permit consisting of:
 - 1) Coastal Development Permit and Design Approval to allow improvements to the Castro Canyon Bridge, including bridge rail upgrades & placement of a new retaining wall;
 - 2) Coastal Development Permit to allow development within the Big Sur Critical viewshed;
 - 3) Coastal Development Permit to allow development on slopes exceeding 30%; and
 - 4) Coastal Development Permit to allow development within 100 feet of environmentally sensitive habitat.

A draft resolution, including findings and evidence, is attached for consideration (**Exhibit A**). Staff recommends approval subject to three conditions.

PROJECT INFORMATION:

Property Owner: State of California Department of Transportation (CalTrans)

Agent: State of California Department of Transportation

APN: No APN assigned, State of California DOT right-of-way

Zoning: Unclassified

Project Area Size: Approximately 0.25 miles

Flagged and Staked: Not applicable.

SUMMARY:

This project involves improvements to the Castro Canyon Bridge on State Route 1 (Highway 1), roughly five miles south of the Big Sur community near Deetjens Inn in Big Sur. The extent of project activities would occur between Post Miles 43.0 and 43.25. The proposed construction would be located entirely within the Caltrans right-of-way and consists entirely of safety upgrades to an existing highway. The purpose of this project is to bring the existing bridge guardrails and crash cushions up to current crash safety standards. The existing Castro Canyon Bridge is a 239-foot, five-span steel girder bridge that has timber rails and wooden beam approach rails. The existing bridge rails, approach rails, guardrails, and crash cushions do not meet the Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware (MASH) safety standards for crashworthiness.

The project proposes restriping, the replacement and installation of new bridge and approach rails on the Castro Canyon bridge, upgrade of guardrails to the north and south of the bridge, and placement of crash cushions. The project also includes upgrading of two drains and the construction of a retaining wall. The existing down drains have shown signs of corrosion and deformation and the new retaining wall is proposed to prevent upslope debris from entering the bridge structure. This proposed guardrail replacement is compliant with current design and safety standards per American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) requirements. The existing bridge length would remain the same.

CalTrans has studied the adequacy of existing bridge rails along the Highway 1 corridor in Big Sur and has found that many of the bridge rails need upgrading/replacement to meet current safety standards. CalTrans has prepared an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) associated with replacement of bridge rails on six historic concrete bridges in Big Sur. The Castro Canyon bridge is not included in that EIR because Castro Canyon bridge is not a historic structure. It was built more recently and using a different method of construction.

DISCUSSION:

A detailed discussion is provided in **Exhibit A**.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

The project is categorically exempt from environmental review pursuant to Section 15303 of the CEQA Guidelines. This exemption applies to utilities and street improvements such as water main, sewage, electrical, gas, and other utility extensions including street improvements. This project includes the underground placement of utilities, the construction of retaining wall to protect from slope movement, and street improvements consisting of the bridge safety improvements to that section, Post Mile markers 43.0 - 43.25 of Highway 1. The proposed project involves safety improvements that would upgrade the highway facility and protect its users, preventing future car collisions at this location. Caltrans, as Lead Agency, applied the Class 3 categorical exemption to the project (Exhibit D). The County, serving as a responsible agency, in its independent judgment has also determined that the project is categorically exempt and is consistent with this exemption. None of the exceptions under CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply to this project.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The following agencies have reviewed the project, have comments, and/or have recommended conditions:

Environmental Health Bureau
HCD-Engineering Services
HCD-Environmental Services
Carmel Protection Fire Association

Prepared by: Sandra Villatoro, Assistant Planner
Reviewed by: Anna Quenga, AICP, Principal Planner
Approved by: Craig Spencer, HCD Chief of Planning

The following attachments are on file with the HCD:

Exhibit A - Discussion
Exhibit B - Draft Resolution, including:

- Attachment 1: Conditions of Approval
- Attachment 2: Project Plans
- Attachment 3: Visual Simulation

Exhibit C - Caltrans CEQA Determination, April 29, 2020
Exhibit D - Vicinity Map
Exhibit E - Big Sur LUAC minutes

cc: Front Counter Copy; California Coastal Commission; Erik V. Lundquist, HCD Director; Anna Quenga, AICP, Principal Planner; Craig Spencer, Chief of Planning; Sandra Villatoro, Project Planner; Development Services, Facilities, and Parks; Environmental Health Bureau; Environmental Services; Fire Protection District; California Department of Transportation, Owner; The Open Monterey Project (Molly Erickson); LandWatch (Executive Director); Project File PLN210039