

Exhibit A

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EXHIBIT A DETAILED DISCUSSION

Safety improvements to the Castro Canyon bridge are proposed by CalTrans in order for bridge rails, approach rails, guardrails, and crash cushions to meet the Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware (MASH) safety standards for crashworthiness and to be compliant with current design and safety standards per American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) requirements.

The proposed length of the bridge would remain the same. However, the existing bridge overhang would be extended to accommodate a wider bridge rail and bicycle railing installed on top. This railing would be comprised of concrete post and beam rail (“Type 85” bridge rail) with tubular metal lower rails that are taller and wider than existing rail. Rails will be spaced to provide safety as well a result in a more see-through visual effect.

Proposed drainage improvements consist of replacing two 9-inch-diameter culvert down-drains with 24-inch-diameter down-drains. The proposed retaining wall would be approximately 20 feet long and would be constructed adjacent to the southern abutment of the bridge (east footing). The retaining wall will be built to prevent upslope debris from resting directly on the bridge structure. The existing overhead utility lines would be relocated underground within the project area.

As discussed below, the proposed improvements would be located within the Caltrans right-of-way, would not adversely impact the surrounding brush and/or slopes, and is found consistent with applicable policies and regulations. The project would also preserve utility and highway access to the Big Sur community and improve travel safety for existing vehicles. The proposed project would improve overall safety along this highway facility without significant impacts on the visual experience.

Land Use

This project represents an improvement to Highway 1 in Big Sur. Highway 1 in Big Sur is an All American Scenic Road and is subject to specific policies in the Land Use Plan. Additionally, CalTrans has prepared a “Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan” that contains guidance on Highway and infrastructure improvements in Big Sur. The Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan (LUP) promotes improvements for public safety and traffic capacity. LUP Policy 4.1.2.1 states that “[I]mprovements to Highway 1 shall be undertaken in order to increase its service capacity and safety, consistent with its retention as a scenic two-lane road.” Consistent with this policy, the purpose of this project is to improve the safety and maintain the roadway to provide continued use of the highway for access to the Big Sur community. The design of the bridge rail will include concrete posts with redwood tone railing and crash cushions.

Big Sur Critical Viewshed

The project site is located within the Critical Viewshed of Big Sur which would be subject to LUP Critical Viewshed Key Policy 3.2.1, which prohibits development visible from Highway 1 and major public viewing areas. However, Policy 3.2.5.C.1, allows an exception to the for safety improvements of a public highway facility provided they are consistent with Sections 4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.1.3 of the LUP. Consistent with the objective of these sections, the project would maintain and enhance the highway's aesthetic beauty and protect its primary function as a recreational route. The Project Planner reviewed the *Visual Impact Assessment* (File No. LIB210200) and the project Visual Simulations (Exhibit B, Attachment 3) and found that the project design is complementary to the rural setting and character of Big Sur and would not have a significant effect on the views of the surround scenic vista and landscape. Castro Canyon bridge is located in an area with dense vegetation and much of the visual context includes the redwood trees surrounding the bridge and highway. Also, the historic Deetjens's Inn is located adjacent to the bridge and includes rustic wood cabin style architecture. The bridge upgrade project would replace the existing white wooden post bridge rail with an aesthetically treated, open-style rails. Specifically, the improvements include a concrete base that is a light tan color and metal railings (approach rails, guardrails, end treatments), and crash cushions that are a dark brown color. The purpose is to have a simple design intended to blend in with the rural background.

As proposed, the project would improve the crash worthiness of highway facility to bring the bridge up to AASHTO safety standards. Further, construction of the additional retaining wall would prevent debris that is upslope from falling onto the bridge.

Design Review and Land Use Advisory Committee Review

The Exceptions to Critical Viewshed in LUP Policy 3.2.5.C.1 notes that signs, guardrails, and restrooms shall be of a design complementary to the rural setting and character of Big Sur, with preference for natural materials. The project as proposed includes a simple design intended to blend with the rural background. The proposed project was brought before the Big Sur Land Use Advisory Committee (LUAC) on September 28, 2021 and October 26, 2021. On October 26, 2021 LUAC voted, 5-0, to support the project with the following recommendations: 1) change the speed limit from 55 to 45 miles per hour at the bridge and immediate vicinity near Deetjen's Inn to conform to speed limits typical in the "commercial corridor," 2) decrease the length of crash cushions at the end of the bridge to allow vehicles that enter and leave Deetjen's Inn more room to maneuver and access the bridge, therefore making it more safe; and 3) use of a natural concrete design that blends in the surroundings instead of the faux multi-color stone as initially proposed by applicant. Please refer to **Exhibit E** for the Big Sur LUAC minutes for details.

The revised plans with revised crash cushions are the minimum size allowable for the intended safety function. Caltrans conducted studies into speed zones in the area and found that a reduction in the speed limit was not warranted. The color scheme of the rails and beams were updated to a design that better blends in with the rustic and rural environment when compared to the originally proposed multi tonal rock design scheme. The newly proposed color design consists of a simpler design consisting of a light beige concrete base and dark brown rails (approach rail, guardrails, bridge rail), end treatments, and crash cushions as shown in Exhibit B, Attachment 3).

Development on Slopes of Excess of 30%

The project involves development on slopes exceeding 30 percent which requires a Coastal Development Permit pursuant to Monterey County Code (MCC), Section 20.64.230. Findings to approve this development must demonstrate that there is no feasible alternative which would allow development to occur on slopes of less than 30%; or that the proposed development better achieves the goals, policies and objectives of the Monterey County Local Coastal Program than other development alternatives. In this case there is no feasible alternative as this project involves improvements to an existing bridge. The entire immediate area of the project exceeds 30 percent slope. As discussed above, improvements are necessary to meet design and safety standards which would improve the highway facility and prevent incidents at this location. Construction of the retaining wall east of the southern bridge abutment would prevent upslope debris from entering and resting on the bridge structure. Rockslope protection would also be added to the existing outlet of the southwest drain which would also improve drainage.

Development within 100 feet of Environmentally Sensitive Habitat

The project applicant, Caltrans Department of Transportation, prepared a Natural Environment Study (NESMI), for the project dated December 2019 ((File No. LIB210162). The NESMI biological report identified the potential for several environmentally sensitive habitats to occur near the project area and that suitable conditions for California red-legged frog and the Western pond turtle are present. The report found that it is unlikely that any frogs would be found in the actual project footprint; however, there may be the potential for minor direct and indirect impacts to the California red-legged frog and the Western pond turtle because of the existence of suitable habitat nearby. As proposed, grading, staging areas, and other improvements would be confined within the right-of-way. In order to ensure the area of disturbance is confined, the biological report recommends installation of protective fencing, re-seeding disturbed ground with native seed mix, and stockpiling and replacement of any woody debris found onsite. Erosion control measures and other best management practices would be in place during construction to avoid indirect impacts on nearby habitat. In addition, Caltrans anticipates that the proposed project would be covered under the Programmatic Biological Opinion for Projects Funded or Approved under the FHWA's Federal Aid Program for incidental take. As such, measures contained in the Programmatic Biological Opinion would apply to the project. A condition of approval has been incorporated which requires the applicant to file a Notice of Report stating that all development shall be done in accordance with the NESMI biological report.

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