

DISCUSSION:

The existing Nacimiento Lake Drive Bridge over the San Antonio River provides access to the San Antonio Reservoir recreation area and surrounding community in South County near the town of Bradley. The bridge was constructed in 1921 and is a single lane structure that is approximately 294 feet in length and 20 feet in width. The bridge is a four span structure and the bridge type is known as a “Steel Pratt Through Truss.” The existing bridge is listed on the Monterey County Register of Historic Resources. The new bridge will be constructed approximately 130 feet downstream of the existing bridge. It will be 267 feet long with two spans, and will have two, 12 foot-wide travel lanes and 4 foot-wide shoulders.

Nacimiento Lake Drive Bridge meets the definition of a historic resource under CEQA because it is listed on the “Monterey County Register of Historic Resources.” However, the bridge is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and/or the California Register of Historic Resources. Since the recommended project will demolish the existing bridge, thereby resulting in the consumption of a non renewable resource (a historic bridge), the Resolution incorporates a “Statement of Overriding Considerations.”

A Notice of Preparation of a Focused EIR was filed with the County Recorder’s Office on October 5, 2011. A “Notice of Availability” of the Draft EIR was issued on November 8, 2013. The Draft EIR was circulated from November 8, 2013 to January 17, 2014. One comment letter dated January 17, 2014, was received from the Historic Resources Review Board (HRRB) stating their opposition to the removal of the existing bridge and their recommendation that Alternative 3.3 “Bridge Retrofit Alternative” listed in the Draft EIR be adopted.

Staff carefully considered saving the structure via retrofit, however, due to the high cost of maintenance, limited emergency vehicle access, weight restrictions for fire-fighting equipment and non-seismic deficiencies that would remain; the “Preferred Alternative” was determined to have a higher public benefit. In making this determination, the following factors and public benefits were considered:

1. In the retrofit alternative, the existing one-lane bridge would remain and the 15 M.P.H. speed limit will remain in place. The ninety degree substandard curve on Nacimiento Lake Drive at the northern end of the bridge would also remain in place.
2. In the retrofit alternative, new structural columns on both sides of the bridge at each pier locations and abutments would be required and would visually dominate the bridge structure.
3. Numerous non-seismic deficiencies of the bridge would remain such as the existing steel deck, stringers and beams would remain deteriorated from corrosion, and the 93-year-old timber piles will continue to experience cracks and decay from water damage and scour.
4. The paint on the existing bridge contains 14.9% lead, where lead levels greater than 0.5% are considered a health hazard.
5. The adverse impact to the local historic resource has been mitigated to the greatest extent possible. This substantial adverse impact can be reduced, although not eliminated, by project design features and/or mitigations stated in the EIR such as:

- Archival level of photo documentation in accordance with the standards of the Historic American Engineering Record.
 - Installation of a historic bridge marker or commemorative plaque at the site of the replacement bridge. Design of this feature will be coordinated with the Monterey County Historic Resource Review Board.
 - Include as part of the project, concrete bridge railing reminiscent of the existing bridge.
6. The existing bridge does not meet current design and seismic safety standards. Implementation of this project would result in the benefit of providing a replacement bridge built to current State structural and seismic standards.
 7. The proposed bridge would improve traffic safety by providing two lanes of traffic versus the existing one-lane bridge, allowing vehicles to cross the bridge simultaneously in both directions and eliminating the need for vehicles to wait and yield to oncoming traffic.
 8. The proposed bridge includes 4-foot shoulders that would result in improved safety for pedestrians and bicyclists.
 9. The proposed project would benefit public services by allowing simultaneous access in both directions for emergency vehicles, which could not occur with the existing one-lane bridge.
 10. The proposed bridge would be rated for heavier loads and safely accommodate all emergency vehicles, fire-fighting equipment, and trucks requiring overweight permits for up to the state's maximum allowable permit load limits.

The proposed bridge would benefit the County, specifically local community by providing a replacement bridge with a design life of 50 years or more that is anticipated to require less maintenance, and cost less to maintain than the existing 93-year-old bridge.

The Statement of Overriding Consideration indicates that the project impact to local historic resources has eliminated or substantially lessened all significant effects on the environment where feasible, and finds that the remaining significant and unavoidable impacts of the Project are acceptable in light of the economic, legal, environmental, social, technological or other considerations and other benefits of the project and because these benefits of the Project outweigh the significant and adverse impacts of the Project.

The Draft EIR was circulated to affected public agencies and interested parties for a 70 day review period from November 8, 2013 to January 17, 2014. The period for review of the Draft EIR was extended beyond the mandated 45 day review period to allow the Monterey County Historical Resources Review Board and other interested parties additional time to prepare comments. On January 9, 2014, the Project and the Draft EIR were presented to the Monterey County Historical Resources Review Board. All comments and responses are included in the Final Environmental Impact Report.