

Bixby Bridge No Parking

Preliminary Analysis Report Board Referral No. 2026.08



Presentation Overview

- Background
- Process
- Challenges
- Recommendations/Options

Background

➤ Board Referral No 2026.08

- The purpose of this referral is to implement a 12-month moratorium on parking in the immediate vicinity of Bixby Bridge on Highway 1, in advance of the Memorial Day weekend start of the summer season. This action responds to longstanding and well-documented public safety hazards at this location.
- Data collected during Labor Day weekend in 2022 recorded up to 325 pedestrian highway crossings per hour on the north side of Bixby Bridge. On September 4 of that weekend, vehicle activity peaked at 70 complete stops in the roadway per hour. Additional counts from September and October showed Sunday afternoon averages of 108 pedestrian crossings per hour, 38 complete stops in the travel lane per hour, and 12 vehicles per hour parked over the fog line.

Background

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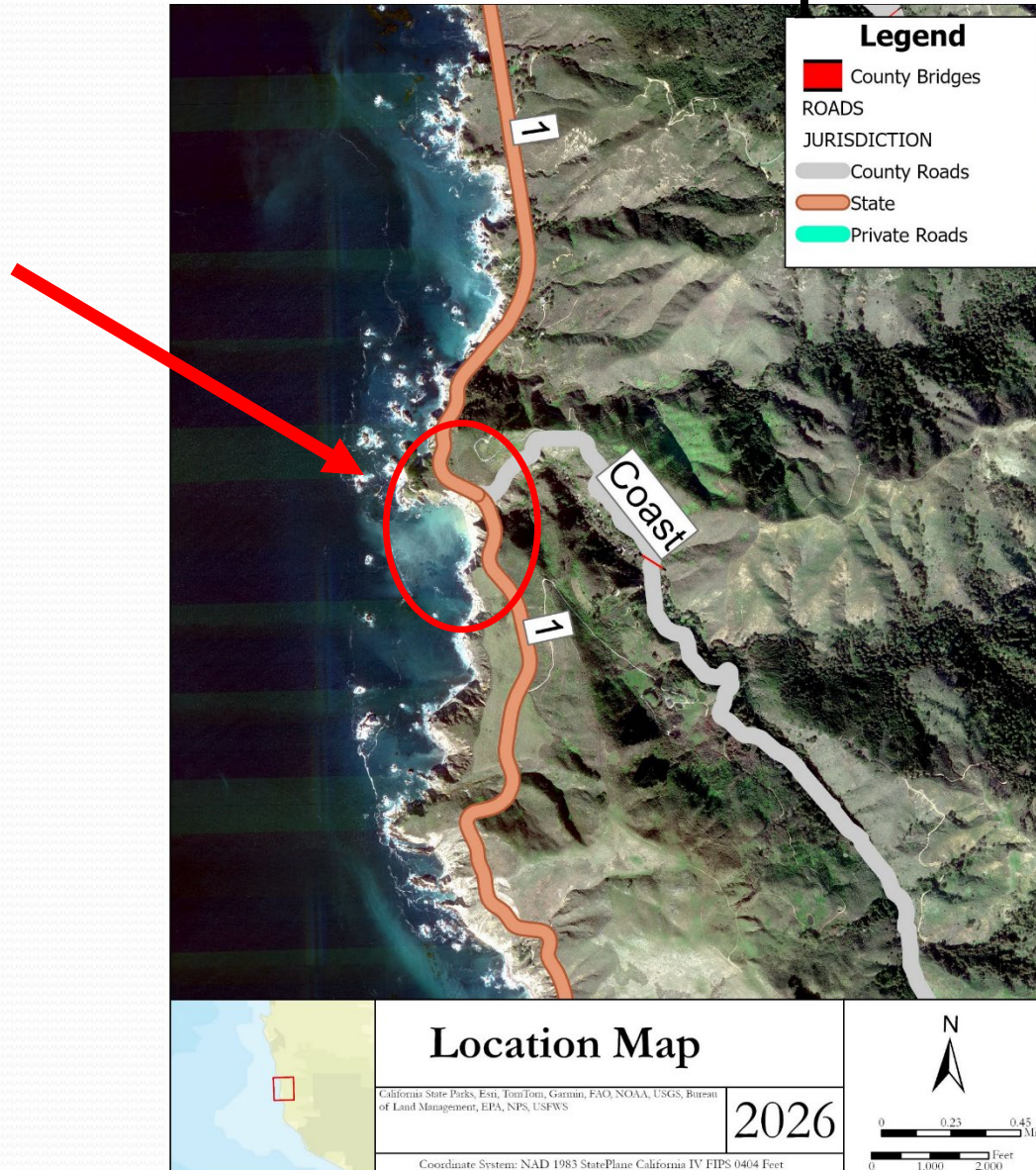
- In spring 2026, traffic congestion at key Big Sur chokepoints – including Bixby Bridge, Point Lobos, and Soberanes – reached unprecedented levels during spring break. These conditions continue to heighten risks to visitor and resident safety, emergency access, and sensitive natural resources.
- In March, Supervisor Daniels met with Coastal Commission staff to explore potential management strategies for Bixby Bridge. While staff provided a follow-up letter on March 20, it did not identify actionable near term solutions or funding strategies to address the immediate hazards expected this summer. Some recommendations also appear to be in tension with elements of Big Sur’s Local Coastal Program, as outlined in the attached summary.

Background

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- Considering ongoing safety concerns and the need for an immediate, practical response, this referral proposes adoption of a temporary No Parking ordinance on Highway 1 near Bixby Bridge, complementing the existing Old Coast Road No Parking restrictions. This measure would provide short-term protection for public safety while allowing for continued coordination with the Coastal Commission on longer-term management approaches.
- Supervisor Daniels remains open to modifying the County's course of action if meaningful and effective enforcement measures are implemented before summer.
- Proposes that County prohibit parking on State Route 1 on both its sides, north and south of Bixby Bridge;
 - Adopt ordinance
 - Place signage

Location Map



Previous Condition (circa Dec 2023/Jan 2024)



Background

- Adoption of an ordinance restricting parking on Highway 1 near Bixby Bridge for 1 year will be considered “development” as defined in the Coastal Act and the LCP.
 - Due to the change to access and the physical improvements for signs.
 - Will trigger the need for the County to act on a Coastal Development Permit (CDP) prior to installing and enforcing no parking restrictions on Highway 1.
 - There are two processes that may be considered when processing a CDP.
- First option: process and approve an Emergency Coastal Development Permit (ECDP).
 - The ECDP would be for a limited term, up to one year.
 - Requirement for a follow-up permit using the regular CDP process.
 - Would need to contain findings that an emergency exists that needs immediate action to mitigate the emergency and that the proposed work is the minimum necessary to address the emergency.

Background

- If the County processes an ECDP, the follow-up permit would involve exploration of options for parking and access long-term.
- If the County approved an ECDP that is limited in term to no more than 1 year and requires a follow-up CDP in the regular process, the County's decision on the ECDP would not be appealable to the Coastal Commission.
- Second option: process a CDP (non-emergency) using the regular permitting process.
 - The CDP would be reviewed by the Monterey County Planning Commission.
 - The Planning Commission decision would be appealable to the Board of Supervisors.
 - County's final action would be appealable by/to the California Coastal Commission (CCC).
- It is County staff opinion, based on conversations with CCC staff, that CCC staff are interested in working with the County on near-term and long-term solutions.

Process

- Prepare the necessary project California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) document
- Acquire State and County permits/approvals.
 - Caltrans Encroachment Permit - May have conditions of approval
 - CCC permit – ECDP or CDP
 - County ordinance for No Parking under CVC 22506
- Implement proposal.
- Commitment to exploring options for parking and access on State Route 1/Bixby Bridge long term (i.e., access plan)

Process (CCC Alternatives)

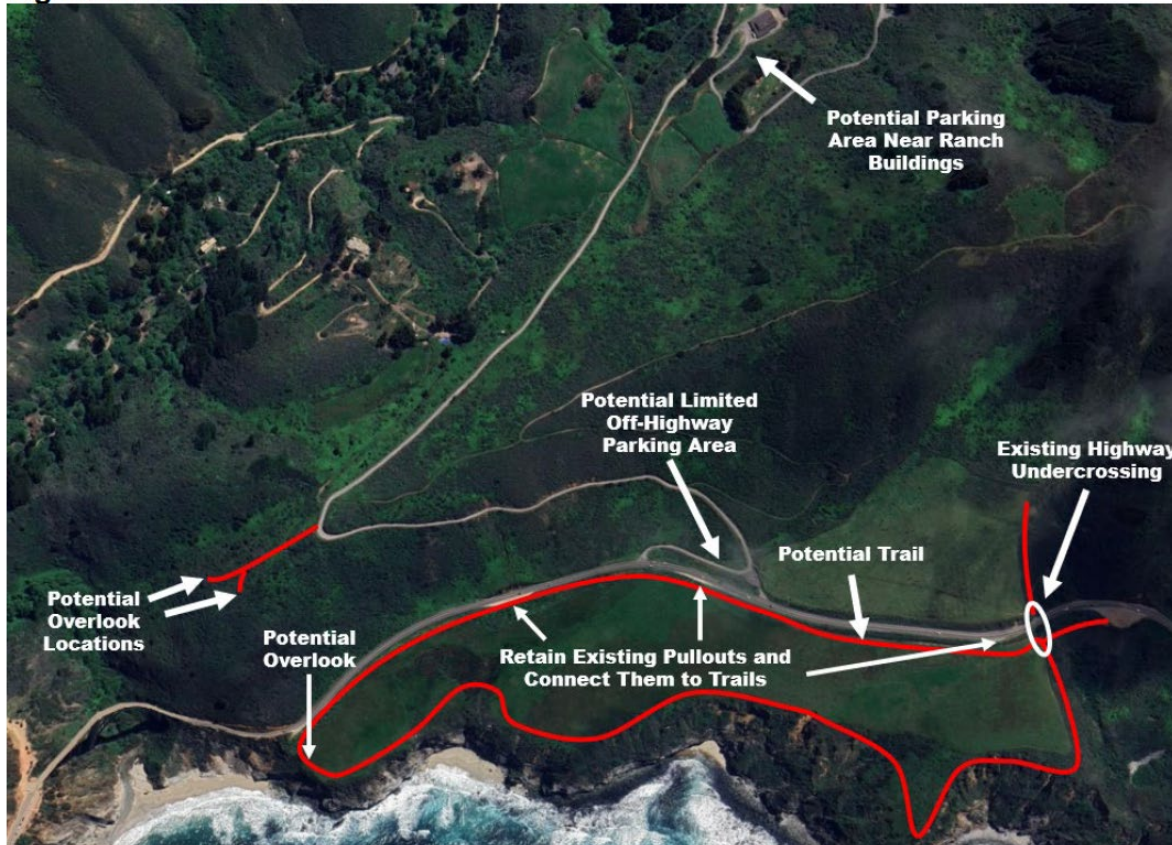
Public Safety and Public Access at Bixby Bridge

Figure 1: North End of Bridge and Old Coast Road



Process (CCC Alternatives)

Figure 2: Brazil Ranch



Process (CCC Alternatives)

Figure 3: Brazil Ranch



Process (CCC Alternatives)

CCC Letter / Citation	Planning Documents / Citation
<p>Enforcement: Stepped-up parking and traffic enforcement needed immediately, ideally a dedicated presence during peak periods. No LUP policy or Coastal Act section cited.</p>	<p>This is a reasonable action consistent with the Land Use Plan.</p> <p>LUP Policy 2.2.4. Basic Objectives and Policies. All proposed uses, whether public or private, must meet the same exacting environmental standards and must not degrade the Big Sur landscape.</p>
<p>Formalize existing parallel parking north of bridge with demarked spaces and barriers. <i>Coastal Act Section 30212.5</i> requires public parking facilities be distributed throughout an area to mitigate overcrowding or overuse of any single area.</p>	<p>LUP Policy 3.2.1 (Key Policy) prohibits all development visible from Highway 1, including public projects. LUP Policy 3.2.3.E requires new parking facilities to be at off-highway locations and states that land acquired for viewshed protection "shall NOT be developed for parking or visitor serving facilities." Formalizing informal parking is still development.</p> <p>CIP Section 20.145.030 adds that "landscaping, berming, or mounding shall not be utilized to screen development which would otherwise be within the critical viewshed," closing off any mitigation argument.</p> <p>BSCAC Design Guidelines further specify that "no parking should be allowed or possible within 10 feet of the edge of traffic lanes."</p>
<p>Diagonal parking at seaward pullout, with a circulation lane behind it. <i>Coastal Act Section 30212.5</i> requires public parking facilities be distributed throughout an area to mitigate overcrowding or overuse of any single area.</p>	<p>LUP Policy 3.2.3.E explicitly states that "the creation of new parking lots between Highway One and the ocean shall be avoided wherever possible." A new diagonal parking configuration with a circulation lane is precisely the type of facility this language prohibits.</p> <p>BSCAC Design Guidelines additionally require that "no parking should be allowed or possible within 10 feet of the edge of traffic lanes," a standard that the proposed seaward pullout configuration would need to satisfy and likely cannot.</p>
<p>Widen highway shoulder / excavate inland slope to create more parking room. No LUP policy or Coastal Act section cited.</p>	<p>LUP Policy 3.2.3.A.4 expressly prohibits grading or excavation that would intrude upon the critical viewshed. Excavating the inland slope for parking is a direct violation of this provision.</p> <p>CIP Section 20.145.030 further states that where a project cannot be redesigned to avoid the critical viewshed, "the site shall be considered environmentally inappropriate for development" — stronger language than the LUP alone.</p>

Process (CCC Alternatives)

<p>Partially pave Old Coast Road, add formalized parking spaces, a vehicular turnaround, and a new inland overlook. No LUP policy or Coastal Act section cited.</p>	<p>LUP Policy 3.2.1 prohibits all development visible from Highway 1.</p> <p>LUP Policy 3.2.3.E prohibits new parking facilities in the viewshed. A constructed overlook is a structure subject to the same prohibition. Old Coast Road is specifically named in LUP Policy 3.2.2.1 as part of the critical viewshed definition, making any new construction there doubly problematic.</p> <p>CIP Section 20.145.030 further prohibits using landscaping, berming, or mounding to screen development that would otherwise be in the viewshed, precluding the kind of design mitigation that might otherwise make an overlook approvable.</p> <p>The BSCAC Design Guidelines describe vista pullouts as places of "quiet and solitude" — a character standard that formalized parking and a vehicular turnaround would not meet.</p>
<p>Pedestrian undercrossing cantilevered from the northern bridge abutment as preferred option. No LUP policy or Coastal Act section cited.</p>	<p>LUP Policy 3.2.3.H provides the only viewshed exception for public access improvements, limited to "minimal public access improvements on the beach along shoreline lateral accessways, such as litter collection facilities and rustic stairways." A cantilevered undercrossing does not qualify under this narrow exception.</p> <p>LUP Policy 6.1.5.E.2 states that viewshed compatibility "may limit the establishment of access improvements."</p> <p>Additionally, Bixby Creek Bridge is a County-designated historical site under CIP Section 20.145.020.TT, meaning any construction attached to or immediately adjacent to the bridge abutment would require a separate historical resource evaluation before any permit could be considered.</p>
<p>Surface crossings, crosswalk, or traffic signals as alternative pedestrian improvements. No LUP policy or Coastal Act section cited.</p>	<p>LUP Policy 3.2.1 applies to structures and improvements visible from Highway 1. Signal infrastructure would be visible from the highway.</p> <p>Any such improvements require a finding under LUP Policy 3.2.3.H that no alternative exists and no significant adverse visual impact will result, a high bar that has not been analyzed.</p>
<p>Brazil Ranch (south of bridge, USFS-owned): Public access improvements including parking and blufftop trails are legally required by a past Coastal Commission Federal Consistency determination and the terms of the Ranch</p>	<p>Legally obligated access improvements must comply with the LUP. LUP Policy 6.1.3 states that preservation of the natural environment is the "highest priority" and that "all future access must be consistent with this objective."</p>

Process (CCC Alternatives)

<p>transfer, yet unbuilt for nearly 20 years. No LUP policy or Coastal Act section cited.</p>	<p>LUP Policy 6.1.5.E.2 requires that parking facilities and access improvements be compatible with "strict viewshed protection." A prior federal consistency determination does not override the certified LUP.</p>
<p>Full parking closure would violate Coastal Act and LCP public access provisions. <i>Coastal Act Section 30210</i> requires "maximum access" for all people. Section 30210 also qualifies this with "consistent with public safety needs and the need to protect public rights...and natural resource areas from overuse," though the CCC does not emphasize this qualification.</p>	<p>LUP Policies 3.2.1 and 6.1.3 make viewshed protection the paramount objective; the LUP does not require that access demand be satisfied through new construction.</p> <p><i>Coastal Act Section 30212</i> expressly allows access requirements to be excepted where access is "inconsistent with...the protection of fragile coastal resources," providing statutory support for limiting parking construction.</p> <p><i>Coastal Act Section 30007.5</i> further provides that where Coastal Act policies conflict, the resolution must be "the most protective of significant coastal resources" — scenic resources and fragile coastal resources are equally legitimate coastal resources under the Act, and public access is not the trump card.</p>
<p>LUP Policy 3.2.2.1 protects views from Bixby Creek turnout, therefore visitor access has significant public value that must be preserved.</p>	<p>LUP Policy 3.2.2.1 defines the critical viewshed to include Bixby Creek Turnout, which activates the prohibition in LUP Policy 3.2.1 against any development visible from that location.</p>
<p>Better to manage access than eliminate it, consistent with Coastal Act and LCP. <i>Coastal Act Section 30214</i> explicitly authorizes managing access by regulating "time, place, and manner," and specifically mentions protecting aesthetic values as a factor in doing so.</p>	<p>"Managed access" does not require or justify new parking infrastructure or overlook construction that the LUP expressly prohibits.</p> <p>Section 30214's authorization to consider aesthetic values in managing access actually supports strict viewshed protection, not construction in the viewshed.</p> <p>Enforcement, shuttle service, and demand management are LUP-consistent tools for managing access without building in the viewshed. <i>Coastal Act Section 30007.5</i> requires that policy conflicts be resolved in the manner "most protective of significant coastal resources" — the certified LUP's viewshed protections must be respected alongside any access obligations.</p>

Process

- Resources Required:
 - Staffing – PWWP, HCD, County Counsel, Monterey County Sheriff's Office (MCSO), and outside departments such as the CHP, Caltrans, CCC, State Parks, and USFS
 - Cost – Further analysis necessary
 - Mitigations in permits
 - Consultants for analyzing long term alternatives
 - CHP dedicated enforcement: 1 officer for 8 hours per day of weekend enforcement per month = approx. \$15.3k, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays
- Schedule
 - Return to Board July 2026, pending direction

Challenges

- Permits
 - State, Local
- Funding source
- Requires enforcement
- CCC – Need to consider long term alternatives

Near Term Alternatives Comparison

	ECDP	CDP	Enforcement Only
Timeline for Implementation	Approx a few months or less	Several months (assuming no appeal)	Within weeks
CDP required	X	X	
Appealable?		X	
Commitment to long range plan afterwards and need to study alternatives	X	X	
Caltrans Encroachment Permit required	X	X	
County adoption of ordinance required	X	X	
Law Enforcement required	X	X	X

- Note: CHP agreement approx. \$15.3k/month

Recommendations / Options

- Continue with Process
 - Provide direction to staff
- Modify Referral/Request
- Rescind Referral/Request

Questions or Comments?

