



# County of Monterey

Item No.12

## Board Report

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

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Report

Receive a preliminary response to **Board Referral Number 2026.08** (Daniels) regarding implementing 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.

### RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

- a. Receive a preliminary analysis report in response to **Board Referral No. 2026.08** and:
- b. Direct staff to proceed with completion of its response to the referral based on the proposed project description in this report; or,
- c. Direct that staff:
  - i. Proceed with completion of its response to the referral based on modifications by the Board; or,
  - ii. Return to Board with a more comprehensive analysis of the referral and anticipated effort for completion.
- d. Rescind the referral.
- e. Provide further direction, as appropriate.

### PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS:

On April 23, 2026, Supervisor Daniels submitted a referral (Referral No. 2026.08) requesting staff 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. (**Attachment A**).

### **Background:**

On June 25, 2024, the Board of Supervisors adopted Ordinance No. 5418, an urgency ordinance amending Section 12.28.010 of the Monterey County Code, to prohibit parking at all times on both sides of Coast Road from the centerline of State Highway 1 easterly for a distance of 1,260 feet (Attachment B). The parking restrictions were deemed necessary to address dangerous conditions for pedestrians, motorists and residents due to significant congestion combined with the temporary queuing from the one-way traffic control at Rocky Creek. That urgency ordinance is valid from June 25, 2024 until it is terminated or superseded. Following approval of the urgency ordinance, on July 25, 2024 the County of Monterey Zoning Administrator approved an Emergency Coastal Development Permit (ECDP, PLN240212, Resolution No. 24-026) to allow installation of temporary k-rail barriers and temporary no parking signs along Coast Road in Big Sur, during the time that one-way traffic control is in place near Rocky Creek on Highway 1 (Attachment C).

After approval of the Emergency Permit by the County of Monterey Zoning Administrator, the Department of Public Works, Facilities and Parks (PWFP) installed K-rails and no parking signs at the turnout on Coast Road east of Bixby Bridge. Letters describing the dangerous conditions, and in support of the urgency ordinance and Emergency Permit, were provided by elected officials, representatives from the California Highway Patrol (CHP), California Department of Transportation (CalTrans), and the Big Sur community.

CalTrans has been working on repairs at the Rocky Creek slide on Highway 1 and it is anticipated that the repairs will be completed this summer (2026). Upon completion of repairs and removal of the one-way traffic control on Highway 1 at Rocky Creek, the terms of the Emergency Permit will require that the K-rails and signs on Coast Road be removed.

Caltrans is planning another project in the vicinity. The timeline and scope are still being developed. Staff will continue to be in discussions with Caltrans about this future project.

**Proposed Project Description:**

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.

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 California Coastal Commission (CCC) staff to explore potential management strategies for Bixby Bridge. While staff provided a follow-up letter on March 20 (attached), 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.

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.

*Policy Analysis for continuing parking restrictions on Coast Road*

**Coastal Development Permit - Coast Road:**

The urgency ordinance adopted in 2024, to restrict parking on Coast Road will remain in effect until or unless amended by separate ordinance. The physical barriers (K-rail) and signs installed under the Emergency Coastal Development Permit (ECDP) were approved on a temporary basis. Under the terms of that ECDP, the signs and K-rail would need to be removed once one-way traffic control ends at the Rocky Creek slide. A Coastal Development Permit to extend the approval of the physical improvements beyond the completion of repairs to the Rocky Creek slide would need to be approved by the County to extend the permissions for the K-rail and signage.

**Coastal Development Permit - New No Parking Ordinance and signage on Highway 1:**

Adoption of an ordinance restricting parking on Highway 1 near Bixby Bridge for one 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. This 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, the County could approve an Emergency Coastal Development Permit (ECDP). The ECDP would be for a limited term; up to one year, would include a requirement for a follow-up permit using the regular CDP process, and it 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. 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 a 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. This is the only option that could potentially be completed before Memorial Day.

The second option would be to process a CDP (non-emergency) using the regular permitting process. The CDP would be reviewed by the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission decision would be appealable to the Board of Supervisors, and the 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 short-term solutions like increased enforcement or temporary parking restrictions may pass CCC scrutiny as long as it is a component of a long-term strategy to accommodate visitors to the bridge.

The Housing, Community and Development Department (HCD) staff have reviewed the applicable policies and regulations regarding public access, road capacities, and safety improvements including the California Coastal Act (Coastal Act), the Big Sur Land Use Plan (BSLUP) and Coastal Implementation Plan (CIP) for Big Sur. The Coastal Act is a state law that prioritizes the protection and enhancement of public access to the coast as a top priority. Section 30210 of Article 2 of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act states: *“In carrying out the requirement of Section 4 of Article X of the California Constitution, maximum access, which shall be conspicuously posted, and recreational opportunities shall be provided for all the people consistent with public safety needs and the need to protect public rights, rights of private property owners, and natural resource areas from overuse.”*

*Coastal Act:*

The Coastal Act also requires that local governments prepare a Local Coastal Program (LCP) for those portions of its jurisdiction that lie within the coastal zone boundaries (Chapter 6 of the Coastal Act). Certification of a Local Coastal Program by the California Coastal Commission is a determination that the LCP policies regulating land use and development are consistent with the Coastal Act. The County of Monterey has an adopted LCP pursuant to the Coastal Act. As it relates to this report, the BSLUP and its implementing regulations (CIP) regulate development and changes in use within the Big Sur coastal areas. HCD staff has reviewed the BSLUP and CIP to determine if the extension of the parking prohibition is consistent with the LCP.

Big Sur Land Use Plan (BSLUP) and Coastal Implementation Plan (CIP): The BSLUP acknowledges that safety and overuse are a significant concern in Big Sur and that these factors degrade resources and degrade the recreational enjoyment of the coast. Quotes from the BSLUP

- *“Slow-moving vehicles, numerous access points to the highway from private roads or recreational areas, roadside parking, and unpaved turnouts cause traffic to slow down, effectively reducing the traffic capacity of the highway and limiting access to Big Sur.”*
- *Improvements consistent with the character of the two-lane scenic highway are desirable to increase its safety and traffic capacity.*
- *Because preservation of the land in its natural state is the highest priority, the County's basic policy is that all future access must be subordinate to this objective. Care must be taken that while providing public access, that the beauty of the coast, its tranquility, and the health of its environment, are not marred by public overuse or carelessness.*
- *Visual access should be emphasized throughout Big Sur as an appropriate response to the needs of visitors.*
- *In order to enhance public access to the Big Sur coast and to reduce traffic congestion, an improved level of public bus service is encouraged. Monterey Peninsula Transit, other public 66 carriers, and private and public recreational facilities are requested to participate in reaching this objective.*

*CCC Comments:*

CCC staff have written a letter on the topic of parking at and near Bixby Bridge. The letter is attached to the referral (Exhibit A). In the letter, the Commission staff acknowledge the serious safety and environmental impacts, and they give a preliminary outline of near and long-term suggestions for how to address the impacts. The suggestions start with enforcement, stating:

Ultimately, we believe that enforcement is the best approach to addressing the issue in the shorter term before summer crowds arrive. It is also an important component of any medium or longer-term solutions and strategies, including because any change to access rules and/or amenities will struggle to successfully address the issues without the consistent presence of enforcement, particularly during periods of peak visitor demand.

The letter goes on to state:

In terms of those medium and longer-term solutions, we believe now is the moment to invest the time and effort necessary to identify potential alternatives, to determine which approaches might be worth pursuing, and to work towards their implementation.

Suggestions for enforcement, ideas for parking North of Bixby Bridge, South of Bixby Bridge, and along Coast Road are provided in the CCC staff letter.

It is HCD staff opinion that health and safety combined with ongoing overuse at Bixby Bridge will continue to exist with or without parking restrictions. Based on the CCC staff letter, the overlap with Coast Road parking restrictions, and County HCD staff experience, the CDP might be appealed by the CCC due to impacts on access, unless it is accompanied by a plan that addresses how access will be provided. If the Board desires to proceed with this referral inclusive of developing an access plan in conjunction with a one-year CDP or ECDP, additional time will be needed to explore the options and provide feedback on the costs, resource needs, and feasibility of those options.

**Estimated Project Cost:**

Costs are not fully-determined at this time, but will consist primarily of staff time, and signage material costs, after the regulatory approvals are acquired. To create and bring for adoption the ordinance and enforce the signage, and to process the applicable Caltrans Encroachment Permit and either ECDP or CDP, time impacts associated with this request may include staff time from PWFP, HCD, the Office of the County Counsel, Monterey County Sheriff's Office (MCSO), and outside departments such as the California Highway Patrol (CHP), Caltrans, CCC, State Parks, and the United States Forestry Service (USFS). The range of costs for the options varies, depending on complexity of scope: For temporary signage, costs will depend on the option chosen for permitting, and will likely consist mostly of staff time. For a complicated scope such as the long range options that need to be explored for the ECDP or CDP approach, costs would need to be determined after further review of the CCC letter alternatives. However, staff will need consultants to provide further assessment and preliminary costs for these alternatives. In either ECDP or CDP scenario, or other scenario, enforcement is required by law enforcement partners, who have noted their limited resources. The CHP does have an enforcement agreement process for dedicated officer(s) for enforcement at a specific location; for estimate purposes, it is approximately \$15.3k per month for a dedicated officer on weekends 8 hours per day, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

**Staffing Level Estimate:**

Staffing level estimates are undetermined at this time. Time impacts associated with this request may include staff time from PWFP, HCD, the Office of the County Counsel, MCSO, CHP, Caltrans, CCC, State Parks, and USFS. Staff time is dependent on the complexity of the range of options: for

straightforward matters like temporary signage, it is estimated to be 40 hours of staff time (after acquiring regulatory approvals); for long range plans such as those in the CCC letter, it would need to be determined after further review of the CCC letter alternatives and with consultants. The review time by any applicable state, federal or local permitting/regulatory entities is at their discretion.

As noted in Estimated Project Costs, in either ECDP or CDP scenario, or other scenario, enforcement is required by law enforcement partners, who have noted their limited resources.

This report has been prepared by PWFP and HCD and has been discussed with Caltrans, MCSO, CHP, State Parks, USFS, and the CCC. The CCC would be responsible for certifying any local ordinances or policy revisions adopted by the County to extend parking restrictions on State Route 1 long term. The CCC will also have appeal authority over any Coastal Development Permits approved by the County related to this effort.

**Departmental Challenges:**

Acquiring permits and approvals through State and other agencies will be a challenge. Ongoing enforcement may also be a challenge.

**Proposed Response Date:**

Staff proposes to return to the Board prior to July 1, 2026, dependent on direction.

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS:**

The recommended action supports the Board of Supervisors' Strategic Plan Goals for Well-Being and Quality of Life, and Safe and Resilient Communities.

- Well-Being and Quality of Life
- Sustainable Infrastructure for the Present and Future
- Safe and Resilient Communities
- Diverse and Thriving Economy
- Administrative

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Attachments Attachment A - Board Referral #2026.08