



County of Monterey

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

Board Report

File #: ORD 24-019, **Version:** 1

Introduce, waive reading, and adopt an urgency ordinance amending Section 12.28.010 of the Monterey County Code to prohibit parking at all times on Coast Road on both sides from the centerline of State Highway 1 easterly for a distance of 1260 feet, in the unincorporated area of Monterey County (4/5 vote required).

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) action: find that the adoption of the urgency ordinance is categorically exempt under CEQA pursuant to sections 15301(c) and 15308 of the CEQA Guidelines because the action will involve negligible changes to the existing County regulations that govern the existing County highways and streets, and the action is for the protection of the environment.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

- a. Find that the adoption of the urgency ordinance is categorically exempt under CEQA pursuant to sections 15301(c) and 15308 of the CEQA Guidelines because the action will involve negligible changes to the existing County regulations that govern the existing County highways and streets, and the action is for the protection of the environment; and
- b. Introduce, waive reading, and adopt an urgency ordinance amending Section 12.28.010 of the Monterey County Code to prohibit parking at all times on Coast Road on both sides from the centerline of State Highway 1 easterly for a distance of 1260 feet, in the unincorporated area of Monterey County (4/5 vote required).

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

In response to community concerns, District 5 prepared Board Referral No. 2023.22 seeking to identify solutions to respond to the immediate public peace, health and safety concerns at the Bixby Bridge in Big Sur due to increased levels of visitation resulting in traffic congestion, parking issues, blocked residential access, blocked emergency vehicle access, and unsafe illegal pedestrian crossings across State Highway 1 (Highway 1).

On January 23, 2024, Public Works, Facilities and Parks (PWFP) provided the Board of Supervisors a preliminary analysis report in response to said Board referral. PWFP staff analysis acknowledged the safety issues. Over the past decade, Bixby Bridge has become a destination for millions of Big Sur visitors each year. Unfortunately, due to a lack of proper infrastructure, parking regulations, enforcement personnel, and geographic space, the area has become an unsafe bottleneck with visitors stopping and parking directly on Highway 1, barricading access points, and illegally crossing the Highway in order to take photos of the iconic Bridge. On the north side of the Bridge, Highway 1 intersects with the County of Monterey's Coast Road (AKA: Old Coast Road), a residential access point and emergency alternative to Highway 1, which has been severely impacted by the increased levels of visitation.

This is after staff responded to Board Referral No. 2021.29, which concluded that roadside camping along State Highway 1 in this area has created a consistent and increasing public health and safety concern for the community, particularly regarding campfires, disturbed habitat, littering, and the potential for forest fires. These risks are heightened in times of drought and due to increased traveling with Covid-19 pandemic restrictions being lifted.

Subsequently, County staff met with federal and state elected officials, law enforcement partners, Caltrans,

California Coastal Commission staff (CCC), Big Sur Byway Organization (BSBO), California State Parks (State Parks), and See Monterey (formerly the Monterey County Convention and Visitors Bureau). Many proposed ideas and concerns were shared among the group. One of the proposed options was a parking prohibition along Coast Road.

On March 30, 2024, staff was informed that Caltrans' Highway 1 experienced a highway slip-out near Rocky Creek (AKA: Rocky Creek slip-out). The road was impassable for a brief period of time, until Caltrans was able to make a determination that the Highway was stable to serve as a one-lane, one-way alternating direction highway, with convoys two times per day. Caltrans began temporary repairs on the Highway, and officially reopened the Highway on May 17, 2024. Because the repairs were temporary, the Highway reopened as a one-lane, one-way alternating direction highway controlled by a temporary traffic signal (i.e., the traffic signal alternates northbound traffic with southbound traffic, with a five-minute green time). During the 2024 Memorial Day Weekend, reports from the public stated that vehicles were once again parked in both the shoulders of Highway 1 and the facility's travel lanes, and similarly were parked in the dirt shoulders and dirt travel lanes of Coast Road. In addition, parked vehicles and stopped traffic blocked the intersection of Coast Road and Highway 1, which could impede first responders' access and blocked residents from their only access point. There are reports from residents that the temporary traffic signal has made conditions worse than before.

Caltrans is working on a long-term, permanent repair for the Rocky Creek slip-out repair location, whose scope is to restore the Highway to two lanes (one lane each direction), as it was prior to the slip-out. However, the timeframe for this permanent repair is anticipated to take several months until completion. Due to this recent new driver experience, staff recommends the Board adopt an urgency ordinance that would prohibit parking on Coast Road. If approved by the Board, staff will revisit the parking prohibition once the temporary traffic signal on Highway 1 is removed. The imposition of a parking prohibition on this portion of Coast Road is for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health and safety of County residents and visitors. As stated above, the current backup from the temporary traffic signal is exacerbating blockage of the intersection and road for emergency responders and the public who live on Coast Road. This could lead to serious danger to the community.

The urgency ordinance would become effective immediately after Board adoption but would not become operative until after a Coastal Development Permit is issued and the appropriate signage is placed.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

As reported on January 23, 2024, staff has been working with federal and state elected officials, law enforcement partners, Caltrans, Coastal Commission staff (CCC), BSBO, California State Parks (State Parks), and See Monterey (formerly the Monterey County Convention and Visitors Bureau). For this urgency ordinance, PWF staff have also been working with Housing Community Development (HCD), Office of the County Counsel, Coastal Commission staff, and others. The Office of the County Counsel has approved the urgency ordinance as to legal form.

FINANCING:

Staff recommends appropriate signage if this urgency ordinance is adopted. These traffic control devices will be funded by the Road Fund. The cost to install the necessary signage is estimated at \$6,000. Sufficient funds are available in the pending Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-25 Recommended Budget for the Road Fund 002, Appropriation Unit PFP004 to finance this work.

CEQA:

The adoption of the urgency ordinance is categorically exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act

(CEQA) pursuant to sections 15301(c) and 15308 of the CEQA Guidelines because the action will involve negligible changes to the existing County regulations that govern the existing County highways and streets, and the action is for the protection of the environment.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

The recommended action supports the Board of Supervisors' Strategic Initiatives for Administration and Public Safety. These services will enhance our Transportation needs and improve the quality of life for County residents.

☐ Economic Development
☒ Administration
☐ Health & Human Services
☐ Infrastructure
☒ Public Safety

Prepared by: Randell Ishii, MS, PE, TE, PTOE, Director of Public Works, Facilities and Parks

Reviewed and Approved by: Randell Ishii, MS, PE, TE, PTOE, Director of Public Works, Facilities and Parks

The following attachments are on file with Clerk of the Board:

Attachment A - Board Referral No. 2023.22

Attachment B - Draft Ordinance

Attachment C - Location Map