



County of Monterey

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

Board Report

File #: 22-953, Version: 1

Continued from September 13, 2022 - Public Hearing to consider an appeal by The Open Monterey Project from the June 29, 2022 Planning Commission decision approving a Combined Development Permit for the Highway 156 and Castroville Boulevard Interchange Safety Improvement project, including development on slopes exceeding 25%, within 100 feet of environmentally sensitive habitat areas, and the removal of one Coast Live Oak tree.

Project Location: State Route 156 between Castroville Boulevard (postmile R1.40) and the Moro Cojo Slough Bridge (postmile 1.60), North County Land Use Plan, Coastal Zone (Assessor's Parcel Numbers: 133-081-007-000, 133-073-002-000, 133-073-005-000, 133-073-008-000, 133-073-034-000, 133-073-009-000, 133-073-001-000, 133-073-004-000, 133-073-007-000, 133-072-031-000, 133-073-006-000, 133-073-003-000, 133-072-014-000, 133-072-006-000, 133-071-013-000, 133-071-012-000, 133-071-021-000, 133-071-010-000, 133-071-011-000, and 133-071-008-000)

Proposed CEQA action: Consider a CEQA/NEPA Revalidation Form together Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (FEIR/EIS) previously certified by the California Department of Transportation for the State Route 156 West Corridor Project on January 31, 2013 (SCH#1999111063).

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors refer the project back to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation including a proposed amendment to the North County Coastal Implementation Plan.

PROJECT INFORMATION:

Property Owner/Agent: California Department of Transportation

APN: 133-071-010-000, 133-071-011-000, 133-071-012-000, 133-071-013-000, 133-071-021-000, 133-072-034-000, 133-073-001-000, 133-073-002-000, 133-073-003-000, 133-073-004-000, 133-073-005-000, 133-073-006-000, 133-073-007-000, 133-073-008-000, 133-073-009-000 and 133-081-007-000

Parcel Size: 43 acres for all parcels

Zoning: Coastal Agricultural Preserve (CAP), Resource Conservation (RC), High Density Residential (HDR), and Coastal General Commercial (CGC)

Plan Area: North County Land Use Plan

Flagged and Staked: No

SUMMARY:

The California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHA), in cooperation with the Transportation Agency of Monterey County (TAMC), proposes to replace the existing at grade signalized intersection of Castroville Boulevard State Route 156 West (hereafter "Hwy 156" or "highway") with a new separated grade intersection containing off ramps, roundabouts, and road relocation. Hwy 156 is the primary means of access to and from Highway 101 and the Monterey Peninsula. It is a heavily travelled highway providing regional access for transport of goods, tourists, and local traffic. Additionally, Castroville Blvd near Hwy 156 provides access to North Monterey County High School as well as agricultural and residential lands north of Hwy 156. At the current intersection, Hwy 156 east bound is one lane and west bound is two lanes. The at-grade intersection is controlled by a traffic signal which has been found to be a

condition that has resulted in a higher-than-average rate of collisions and also adds to traffic congestion in the area.

On June 29, 2022, the Planning Commission approved the interchange improvement project. The Planning Commission's decision to approve the project was appealed by The Open Monterey Project (appellant). A hearing on the appeal of the Planning Commission's approval was scheduled for consideration by the Board of Supervisors on September 13, 2022. Prior to that hearing, CalTrans, requested that the hearing be postponed while they considered pursuing an amendment to the Local Coastal Program (LCP) for Monterey County. Amendments to the LCP would be specifically for the North County Land Use Plan (LUP) and North County Coastal Implementation Plan (CIP) components of the LCP. An LCP was not included in the Planning Commission decision on the project but the LCP amendment is recommended by Coastal Commission staff and the appellant. Prior to the September 13, 2022 hearing, the appellant, agreed to continue the hearing on the appeal to October 11, 2022. The Board approved a continuance from September 13, 2022 to October 11, 2022.

Before the October 11, 2022 Board hearing, CalTrans requested that the County include an LCP amendment with the project. Staff supports this request as this course of action will resolve one of the appeal contentions and it avoids the probability of an appeal by the Coastal Commission.

Staff has met with Caltrans and California Coastal Commission staff to review LCP amendment language and agricultural land mitigation requirements. We are optimistic that mutually agreeable policy language can be agreed upon in the near future. Changes to the LUP and CIP are legislative actions that require review and recommendation by the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission reviewed and approved the project without the LCP amendment so the project must return to the Planning Commission for a review and recommendation before the matter returns to the Board of Supervisors for action.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

- California Coastal Commission
- Environmental Health Bureau
- Public Works, Facilities & Parks
- HCD-Engineering Services
- HCD-Environmental Services
- North County Fire Protection District
- North County Land Use Advisory Committee
- Castroville Land Use Advisory Committee
- California Department of Transportation, District 5

FINANCING:

No fees have been collected for this permit or for the LCP amendment. Permit fees have been waived by HCD based on the Board adopted fee waiver policy because CalTrans is a government agency and the project is intended to address a public safety need. The Board appeal fee is \$3,000. However, projects in the coastal zone are not charged an appeal fee. If the County were to charge a fee, then the project could be appealed directly to the Coastal Commission rather than going to the Board first. Funding for staff time associated with this appeal is included in the FY 21-22 Adopted Budget for HCD-Planning.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

This action represents effective and timely response to our HCD customers. Processing this application in accordance with all applicable policies and regulations also provides the County accountability for proper management of our land resources.

Check the related Board of Supervisors Strategic Initiatives:

Economic Development

Administration

Health & Human Services

Infrastructure

Public Safety

Prepared by: Craig Spencer, HCD Chief of Planning

Approved by: Erik Lundquist, AICP, HCD Director

cc: Front Counter Copy; California Coastal Commission; Erik Lundquist, HCD Director; Craig Spencer, HCD Chief of Planning; Fionna Jensen, Associate Planner; Anna Quenga, AICP, Principal Planner; Randell Ishii, MS, PE, TE, PTOE, Director of Public Works, Facilities & Parks; Mitch Dallas, Caltrans, Applicant/Owner; Michael Lew, PE, Caltrans, Project Manager; North County School District; Transportation Agency of Monterey County (TAMC); The Open Monterey Project (Molly Erickson), Appellant; LandWatch (Executive Director); Project File PLN200118.