



County of Monterey

Item No.8

Board Report

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

Legistar File Number: RES 23-045

March 21, 2023

Introduced: 3/13/2023

Current Status: Scheduled PM

Version: 1

Matter Type: BoS Resolution

PLN200118 - CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (HWY 156 ROUNDABOUTS)

- a. Consider the environmental effects of the project described in the Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment with Finding of No Significant Impact (FEIR/EA with FONSI) together with NEPA/CEQA Re-Validation Form (aka Addendum) certified by the California Department of Transportation on January 31, 2013 (SCH#1999111063);
- b. Adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations finding that there are benefits of the project (public safety, public access, and relief of congestion) that outweigh significant and unavoidable impacts on the environment (conversion of agricultural land);
- c. Approve a Combined Development Permit consisting of:
 1. A Coastal Development Permit to allow construction of three new roundabouts to replace the existing Highway 156/Castroville Boulevard intersection, including construction of new on and off ramps, a new bridge overpass, reuse of a portion of the current Castroville Boulevard as a mixed use bicycle and pedestrian path, driveway improvements, a new frontage road, the realignment of Castroville Boulevard and replacement along the new or modified sections of Highway 156 and Castroville Boulevard,
 2. A Coastal Development Permit to allow development on slopes exceeding 25%,
 3. A Coastal Development Permit to allow the removal of one native tree and two non-native landmark trees, and
 4. A Coastal Development Permit to allow development within 100 feet of environmentally sensitive habitat areas; and
- d. Adopt a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.

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)

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

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 - 2. A Coastal Development Permit to allow development on slopes exceeding 25%,
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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 (hereafter “Castroville Blvd”) and State Route 156 (hereafter “Hwy 156” or “Highway”) with a new separated grade intersection containing off ramps, roundabouts, frontage roads, bike paths and a roadway 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 adds to traffic congestion in the area.

This project was considered by the Monterey County Planning Commission on June 29, 2022 and the Board of Supervisors on appeal on September 13, 2022. At the time of consideration, the project did not involve amendments to the Local Coastal Plan (LCP) policies and the project was evaluated under the current policies in place. The appeal by The Open Monterey Project alleged that the project was inconsistent with the existing LCP policies and that an LCP amendment is required. The California Coastal Commission staff also suggested the need for amendments to LCP for the project. In consideration of the appeal, the Board of Supervisors adopted a Resolution of Intent to approve the Project subsequent to review and approval of an LCP amendment (Resolution No. 22-474 (**Attachment 6**)).

On December 6, 2022, the Board of Supervisors considered and adopted amendments to the LCP that would allow for the intersection improvements despite impacts to agricultural resources and environmentally sensitive habitat. Amendments included adoption of Resolution No. 22-473 adding Policy 3.1.3.8 to the North County Land Use Plan allowing improvements to Highway 156/Castroville Blvd intersection despite impacts to agricultural and sensitive habitats; and adoption of Ordinance No. 5388 to add subsection 6 to Section 20.144.120.B of the Monterey County Coastal Implementation Plan, Part 2 (Regulations for Development in the North County Land Use Plan Area) to implement Policy 3.1.3.8 and establish criteria for design, review, and mitigation of improvements at the Highway 156/Castroville Blvd intersection.

On December 20, 2022, HCD Planning staff submitted the Local Coastal Program (LCP) amendment to the California Coastal Commission (CCC) for certification. On February 10, 2023, the CCC considered and approved the Monterey County LCP amendment (**Attachment 5**).

In accordance with the Board's action memorialized in Resolution No. 22-474, staff is returning for consideration and approval of the draft resolution, conditions of approval, and project plans (**Attachment 1**). The Board is now asked to consider approving the project considering the LCP amendments that were adopted for the Project.

CEQA

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Caltrans prepared a draft environmental document that was circulated for public comment from June 17, 2009 to August 17, 2009 for the *State Route 156 West Corridor Project*. On January 31, 2013, Caltrans adopted a Finding that the project would have No Significant Adverse Impacts (FONSI) on the environment pursuant to NEPA and a Statement of Overriding Consideration pursuant to CEQA. The Overriding Considerations finding was premised upon the project's permanent conversion of agricultural and residential zoned land to a public highway facility.

In accordance with Title 23 Code of Federal Regulations, part 771 section 771.129, a written evaluation of the validity of a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required if there is a change in scope, setting, effects, mitigation measures, or other requirements. For this purpose, the NEPA/CEQA Re-validation form is used to document the Board's determination of whether: 1) the original Draft EIS remains valid, or 2) additional documentation is needed to keep the document valid, or 3) a supplemental EIS or a new DEIS is required. To capture the reduced scope of work

(only a portion of Phase 1) and in accordance with federal regulations, Caltrans prepared and approved a NEPA/CEQA Re-Validation form on October 8, 2020 (**Attachment 2**). The Caltrans adopted *Offsite Compensatory Mitigation Monitoring Plan* (**Attachment 3**) and *Onsite Wetland Enhancement Plan* (**Attachment 4**) have also been provided for consideration.

As the decision-making body of a Responsible Agency, the Board of Supervisors must certify that it has reviewed and considered the information contained in the EIR (Environmental Impact Report) and Environmental Assessment (EA). Draft CEQA findings have been provided in the resolution included as **Attachment 1**.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15093(b), to approve a project that will have a significant unavoidable impact on the environment, as identified in the EIR, in this case impacts on agricultural resources, specific reasons shall be provided in writing to support the approval despite its significant effects (Statement of Overriding Considerations). The statement of overriding considerations, supported by substantial evidence in the record, is provided in **Attachment 1**, Finding 18. As described in Attachment 1, staff recommends approval of the project including finding that despite the significant impacts to agriculture identified in the EIR, there are benefits to the project that outweigh its environmental effects. In summary, benefits of the project include protection of health and safety by improving an intersection with a high collision rate, and relief of congested traffic conditions, which will benefit the local economy as the Highway 156 corridor provides a primary access point to the Monterey Peninsula from Highway 101.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

California Coastal Commission
Environmental Health Bureau
Public Works, Facilities & Parks
County Counsel's Office
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. Funding for staff time associated with this appeal is included in the FY 22-23 Adopted Budgets.

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

X Administration

 Health & Human Services

X Infrastructure

-X Public Safety

Prepared by: Anna Quenga, AICP, Principal Planner

Craig Spencer, HCD Chief of Planning

Approved by: Erik Lundquist, AICP, HCD Director *EL*

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

Attachment 1 - Draft Resolution

- Conditions of Approval
- Project Plans

Attachment 2 - [NEPA/CEQA Re-Validation Form](#)

<https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/home/showpublisheddocument/112817>>*

- Exhibit 1 - [FEIR/EIS](#)
<https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/home/showpublisheddocument/112362/637898678199070000>>*
- Exhibit 2 - [NES](#)
<https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/home/showpublisheddocument/112360/637898667672230000>>*

Attachment 3 - [Caltrans adopted Offsite Compensatory Mitigation and Monitoring Plan](#)

<https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/home/showpublisheddocument/112821>>*

Attachment 4 - [Caltrans adopted Onsite Wetland Enhancement Plan](#)

<https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/home/showpublisheddocument/112819>>*

Attachment 5 - California Coastal Commission LCP Amendment Adoption Letter and Staff Report

Attachment 6 - Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 22-474

Attachments which include an asterisk (*) may also be found at:

<https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/departments-a-h/housing-community-development/planning-services/current-planning/general-info/current-major-projects>>

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); LandWatch (Executive Director); Project File PLN200118.