

**Monterey County Board of Supervisors
Referral Submittal Form**

Referral No. 2026.08
Assignment Date: 04/28/26
(Completed by CAO's Office)

SUBMITTAL - Completed by referring Board office and returned to CAO no later than noon on Thursday prior to Board meeting:

Date: April 22, 2026	Submitted By: Supervisor Kate Daniels	District #: 5
Referral Title: 12-Month Moratorium on Parking at Bixby Bridge		
Referral Purpose: 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 Coastal Commission 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.		
Brief Referral Description (attach additional sheet as required):		
Requesting the installation of temporary No Parking signs on State Route One (SR-1) on the northern and southern end of the Bixby Creek Bridge. The project involves the installation of "No Parking Any Time" signage on the east and west side of SR-1 on the northern and southern end Bixby Bridge where traffic and pedestrian congestion is occurring. The signs would be spaced within appropriate, enforceable distances. This would involve the adoption of an ordinance by the Board of Supervisors for the installation of temporary "No Parking Any Time" signs at an appropriate distance before and after the bridge.		
Classification - Implication		Mode of Response
☐ Ministerial / Minor		☐ Memo ☐ Board Report ☐ Presentation

☒ Land Use Policy ☐ Social Policy ☐ Budget Policy ☐ Other: _____	Requested Response Timeline ☐ 2 weeks ☒ 1 month ☐ 6 weeks ☐ Status reports until completed ☐ Other: _____ ☐ Specific Date: _____
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ASSIGNMENT – Provided by CAO at Board Meeting. Copied to Board Offices and Department Head(s) Completed by CAO’s Office:

Department(s): Public Works, Facilities, and Parks and County Counsel	Referral Lead: Randy Ishii and Susan Blich	Board Date: 04/28/26
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REASSIGNMENT – Provided by CAO. Copied to Board Offices and Department Head(s). Completed by CAO’s Office:

Department(s):	Referral Lead:	Date:
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ANALYSIS - Completed by Department and copied to Board Offices and CAO:

Department analysis of resources required/impact on existing department priorities to complete referral:	
Analysis Completed By: _____ Date: _____	Department’s Recommended Response Timeline ☐ By requested date ☐ 2 weeks ☐ 1 month ☐ 6 weeks ☐ 6 months ☐ 1 year ☐ Other/Specific Date: _____

REFERRAL RESPONSE/COMPLETION - Provided by Department to Board Offices and CAO:

Referral Response Date:	Board Item No.:	Referrals List Deletion:
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Note: Please cc Claudia Escalante and Karina Bokanovich on all CAO correspondence relating to referrals.

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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**March 20, 2026**

Supervisor Kate Daniels
1200 Aguajito Road, Suite 1
Monterey, CA 93940
Sent electronically to: District5@countyofmonterey.gov

Subject: Addressing Public Safety and Public Access at Bixby Bridge

Dear Supervisor Daniels,

Thank you for convening the meeting amongst the various regulatory and public safety agencies on March 5th to discuss ongoing public safety and public access issues at Bixby Bridge along the Big Sur coast. That meeting helped to serve as a forum to identify some potential shorter and longer term solutions to address traffic, safety, and public access concerns at this iconic visitor destination. Specifically, and as we discussed, during peak visitation times we have collectively seen unsafe traffic and parking behavior (e.g., stopping on the highway to wait for a parking spot, parking on and over the highway fog line, parking in a way that blocks access to and impedes entry/exit to Old Coast Road, etc.), unsafe pedestrian behavior (e.g., crossing the highway on foot, climbing on the edge of unstable bluffs, etc.), as well as other concerning conduct (e.g., trampling of vegetation, littering, etc.). These are all real and serious problems, to be sure. But it is also important to acknowledge from where they come; they are the byproduct of the public's extraordinary interest in seeing and experiencing Bixby Bridge. When coupled with a lack of capacity and enforcement to safely accommodate this demand, the types of problems identified are not unexpected. We believe it is important that solutions to these sorts of problems be grounded in those realities, including, at its core, the reality that visitors are not going to stop trying to visit the bridge, and solutions need to keep this in mind. To that end, this letter begins to outline some potential preliminary ideas for how these issues might be able to begin to be addressed, both in the shorter and longer term, with the goal of continuing the discussion that was started at the March 5th meeting.

Enforcement Needs

In the short term, it appears clear that the first, least controversial, and perhaps most important approach to addressing these ongoing access management issues is enforcement (i.e., ensuring people are not parking in areas closed off to parking or in unsafe areas, keeping traffic – particularly emergency vehicles – moving, stopping traffic to allow for safe pedestrian crossing, etc.). This is not a new idea, but we wanted to emphasize its importance; few solutions to issues this controversial are as seemingly universally agreed upon as stepped up enforcement that promotes acceptable behaviors, and that eliminates those that are not. Indeed, this concept was highlighted by discussions at the February BSMAAC, where a consensus around the need for more

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enforcement appeared to be forming. Enforcement also has the benefit of being effective immediately without any permitting requirements. As was discussed during the March 5th meeting, while a peace officer dedicated to the site during peak periods would be welcome, the role could also be shared and/or filled with a non-officer so as to ensure consistent and uninterrupted service.¹ 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.

Opportunities North of the Bridge

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. To that end, we have begun to look at potential parking and access improvements along the highway on the north end of the bridge and along Old Coast Road (which we view as more medium term), and at Brazil Ranch on the south end of the bridge (which we view as more longer term), as potential ways to improve safety and help alleviate visitor pressures overall.² To be clear, our intent is that only safe parking spaces be used, that only safe pedestrian access is identified, and that unsafe areas be put off-limits to parking and pedestrian access. We recognize that additional time is needed to further flesh out the feasibility and appropriateness of these concepts, including the need for community participation in the planning process, and that any approach will require funding, but we also feel the acute need – as we know you do – to implement solutions as soon as possible. Thus, we are committed to continuing engaged and meaningful discussions and we hope that the ideas below can help to more fully initiate and jump-start that process. We are also not wed or confined to solely these ideas and are fully open to other ideas that might also make sense to explore. In all cases, we want to make clear that we are a ready partner to help the County in all such future planning efforts.

Perhaps the most obvious opportunity area is in the highway shoulder north of the bridge, where there is currently already parallel parking.³ One option would be to formalize this parking (e.g., with specified demarked spaces), and to more formally identify unsafe parking and close it (e.g., with barriers). It also appears that there is space available to slightly widen the shoulder in some locations to ensure safe parking

¹ Officers have mentioned that even when they do spend time at the bridge, they are spread thin and therefore often have to leave to respond to calls. One idea to address this problem, which we support, is providing for non-officers to assist with traffic, parking, and circulation enforcement, where they would coordinate with law enforcement, and might be able to allow law enforcement time and space to prioritize and respond to emergencies and other needs rather than staying at the bridge all day.

² We also continue to believe that remote parking served by shuttle service to high visitation points in Big Sur could be an important complement to any sort of solution, and encourage it to continue to be amongst the potential solutions discussed, even while acknowledging its potential logistical and funding constraints.

³ See Figure 1, below, that includes various ideas for improvements along the highway and Old Coast Road on the north end of Bixby Bridge.

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for formal spaces. Another option in this area is to create formalized diagonal parking at the large pullout on the seaward side of the highway. This could include a ‘parking lane’ of sorts, running behind the diagonal parking, enabling cars to pull out of the main travel lane prior to parking, and giving cars backing out of parking spots the room they need without backing into the highway.⁴ It appears that adequate paved space already exists in this area for options like that, and implementation may be as simple as reconfiguring a section of guardrail and installing pavement striping. It may also be beneficial to couple these kinds of improvements with a formalized lateral path along the highway (e.g., on the seaward side of parking areas) that is connected to highway crossing(s) to better manage pedestrian activity. In addition, while likely more difficult, it may be that portions of the slope on the inland side of the road could be at least partially excavated and space created to make all of these options more doable.

As for Old Coast Road, upon the upcoming expiration of the County’s emergency permit that temporarily closed it to parking, one option would be to modify the road as possible to increase usable space, then partially pave it (i.e., the first few hundred yards, not the entire road), and then add formalized spaces, a vehicular turnaround, and pedestrian areas where they can safely be accommodated. A paved entrance to Old Coast Road would also provide the opportunity to replace the cones that currently delineate an entrance and exit to the road with striping and/or permanent delineators more consistent with Big Sur aesthetics. Finally, some form of formalized overlook that provides a view of the backside of the bridge could be created, as that has become one of the prime vantages for visitors, and it may help alleviate some pressure from the seaward overlook area if visitors can park and view the bridge all from the inland side.

Any configuration of pedestrian access at the north end of the bridge would benefit significantly from more formalized pedestrian access areas (e.g., more clearly defining where pedestrians are and are not allowed through things like symbolic fencing, pavement stencils, surfacing material changes, low-profile signage, etc.). In particular, adding a way for pedestrians to cross the highway more safely would have significant benefits. We believe an undercrossing cantilevered from the northern abutment of the bridge⁵ would – if feasible – probably be the best option. Surface level crossings and related measures (e.g., a crosswalk, pedestrian crossing lights, even full blown traffic signals) are also worth considering, although the trade off may be that such measures might be inconvenient for drivers (albeit probably not more inconvenient than current conditions, where pedestrian cross the highway at all points, as opposed to being funneled to identified crossing points).

Overall, we realize that some of the ideas for the north end of the bridge outlined above come with serious tradeoffs and some will be, upon further consideration, inappropriate and/or infeasible. The reality of this highly popular and highly constrained site is that any solution will involve tradeoffs, so it is worth at least considering a wide range of ideas, even those with complex or controversial tradeoffs. Our goal in presenting these ideas is to start a focused planning discussion and process that results in collective decisions

⁴ Such a configuration is currently effectively employed in a narrow area along Highway 1 at Bonny Doon Beach in Santa Cruz County.

⁵ For example, such an undercrossing is currently in place on the north end of the Golden Gate Bridge.

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for how to move forward. We also want to make clear that we do not have preconceived notions about one outcome or the other per se, more so that we believe the evaluative exercise is key, where a goal in our view needs to be identifying ways in which we can provide as much safe access as possible.

Opportunities South of the Bridge

With respect to Brazil Ranch, this area may have the potential to help provide alternative means of access that could take pressure off the northern side of the bridge. Brazil Ranch is the property located just south of the bridge, and it is owned by the U.S. Forest Service. As part of a past Coastal Commission Federal Consistency determination for Brazil Ranch, the Commission required various public access improvements at the Ranch, including public parking and trail access on the inland side of the highway, and a blufftop trail seaward of the highway. Similar requirements were also part of the agreement that transferred the Ranch to the Forest Service in the first place. While these improvements were agreed to by the Forest Service and are legally binding, they have to date not been completed, and the Forest Service has been out of compliance on this point for nearly 20 years. We hope to work with the Forest Service to develop and implement this required public access plan and believe that it represents an opportunity for the public to experience Bixby Bridge in a new way. To be clear, the question at hand is not whether access at Brazil Ranch is appropriate – it is legally required by the Commission and the terms under which the Ranch was transferred to the Forest Service in the first place – rather, the question is how to design this access in a manner that can also help address ongoing issues at Bixby Bridge.

Three core issue areas govern whether and how access at Brazil Ranch could provide a safe and effective public access alternative for Bixby Bridge: 1) how to provide locations where the public can get desirable views of Bixby Bridge; 2) how to provide safe and visually unobtrusive parking, trails, and overlooks; and 3) how to encourage the Forest Service to be a champion for a project of this sort, including in terms of potential funding streams. We acknowledge that each of these issues poses a challenge at this location, and we further acknowledge that tradeoffs exist with all potential parking/access options. We have begun exploring potential locations for various components in the preliminary graphics attached to this letter (see Figures 2 and 3 below). The graphics identify several potential alternative parking locations: at existing and/or reconfigured highway pullouts, at the entrance to the Ranch access road, and out of the viewshed by the existing Ranch buildings. Potential new blufftop trails are also shown, which could help provide alternative sightseeing opportunities for Bixby Bridge and the coastline between it and Hurricane Point. Similarly, a new trail and overlook inland of Highway 1 at the Ranch could provide alternative backside bridge views for those who park at the inland Ranch area, although the siting of those overlooks may pose a challenge due to viewshed and private property constraints.

In any case, please understand that these are simply our attempt to outline some ideas for discussion; they are the starting point of a process, not the finished product. We acknowledge that these improvements, were they to be implemented, would alter some views in this important space, and that is something that would require not only a willingness to accept some access-related development in the viewshed, but also extremely thoughtful and sensitive design. Our hope is that these ideas spark a

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discussion and collaboration on how to design access at Brazil Ranch, and how such access could provide an alternative means to accommodate public demand for Bixby Bridge visitation.

Commitment to Collaborative Planning

Finally, just to be as clear and transparent as possible, our goal in writing this letter and laying out the ideas discussed above, is to start digging into the substance of the type of collaborative planning process that we believe to be necessary at Bixby Bridge. This bridge is an architecturally beautiful, historically significant, preeminent icon of the California coast. It is a place many visitors want to see, and a destination around which some visitors plan their trips to Monterey and the central coast. For all of these reasons, the ability for visitors to stop and view the bridge, the canyon it traverses, and the dramatic coastline it parallels, holds enormous value. This public access value is protected by both the Big Sur LUP and the Coastal Act. Indeed, the LUP specifically protects views from Bixby Creek turnout⁶ to ensure that visitors who stop to view the area can do so without those views being impacted by inappropriate and visually intrusive development.

As discussed above, the current lack of formalized access and enforcement, paired with the intense demand to visit this location, poses public safety and other risks that must be addressed. At the same time, given the extraordinary access value of this location, we are concerned that the closure of all parking near the bridge – even for a temporary period – would be too blunt of a response and would result in significant adverse impacts to public coastal access, raising conformance problems with LCP and Coastal Act public access provisions. We are also concerned that a full parking closure would not successfully address the ongoing safety issues, and would likely come with unintended consequences. Specifically, and because demand to stop and view the bridge is so acute, particularly in peak periods, people would still find ways (whether legal and safe or not) to access the area, including stopping in highway travel lanes and parking elsewhere along the highway and walking significant distances along the unprotected highway shoulder and over the narrow bridge. Similar circumstances currently pose serious safety issues at Point Lobos (for which similar collaborative planning processes are underway). We therefore believe, consistent with the Coastal Act and LCP requirements on this issue, that the better solution is to better manage access rather than seek to eliminate it.

We understand that many of the ideas discussed in this letter will take time and collaborative effort to discuss, debate, tweak as necessary, and ideally to implement, and all of the ideas discussed will require funding. We hope you will consider us a ready and willing partner ready to rise to and contend with the challenges here. We also recognize that there are likely to be competing ideas, and we welcome thoughtful examination of other options as well, just as we want others to thoughtfully look at the ideas presented above. It is going to take that kind of open and transparent process and commitment, with interested parties seeking common goals, for this to work.

⁶ See Big Sur LUP Policy 3.2.2.1 (Critical Viewshed Definition).

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In closing, we want to thank you for your continuing commitment to tackling this important issue in a collaborative way. We recognize the difficult choices and sometimes competing objectives at Bixby Bridge, and we remain fully committed to helping be a solutions-oriented teammate here. Of course, and as you are well aware, this will take similar commitments – including a commitment to approach issues and potential solutions with an open and inquisitive mind – by other key partners, including Caltrans, the Forest Service, and the Big Sur community, and we look forward to that dialogue.

Sincerely,



Breylen Ammen
Coastal Planner
Central Coast District Office
California Coastal Commission

cc: Scott Smith, Caltrans
Fin Eifert, U.S. Forest Service
Randell Ishii, Monterey County Public Works
Craig Spencer, Monterey County Housing and Community Development

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Figure 1: North End of Bridge and Old Coast Road



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Figure 2: Brazil Ranch

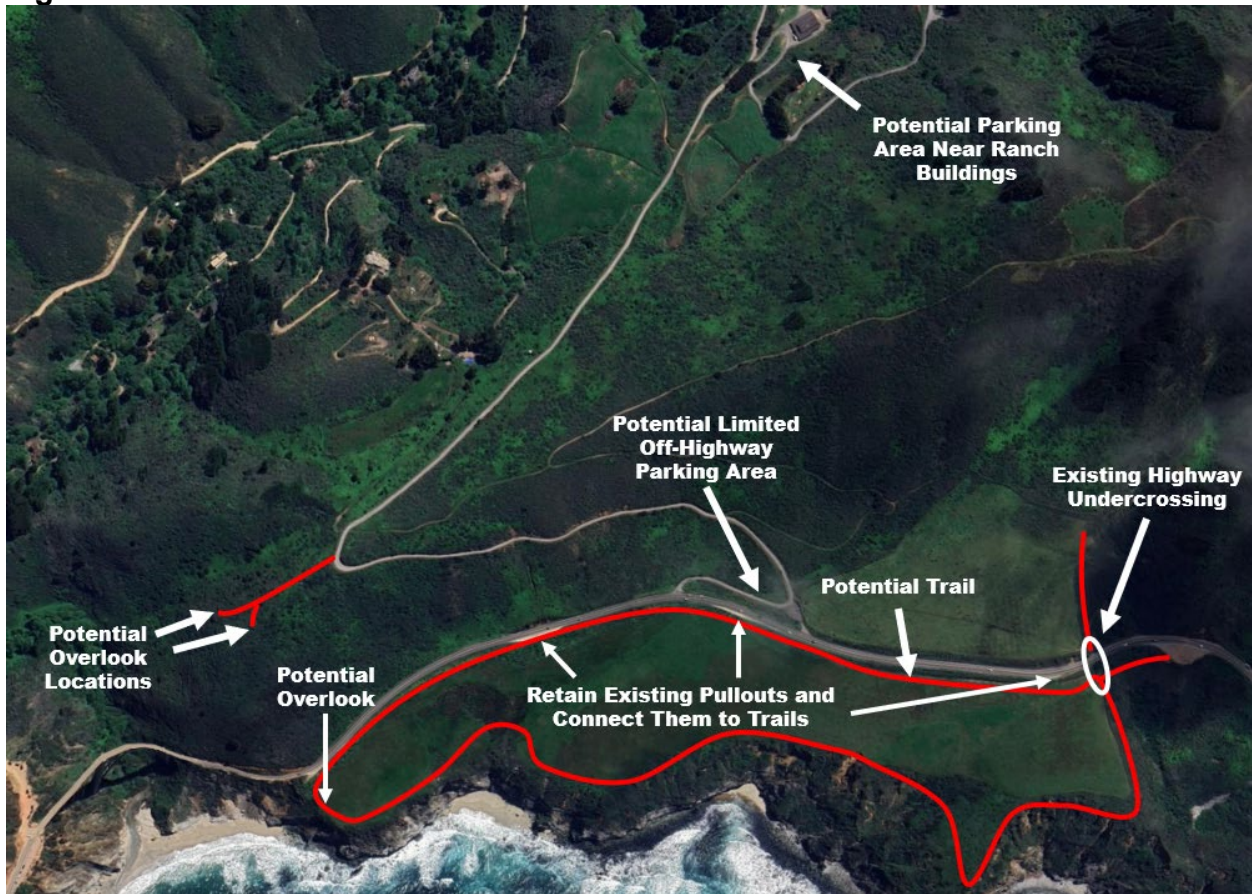


Figure 3: Brazil Ranch



Bixby Bridge: CCC Letter

California Coastal Commission letter dated March 20, 2026 | Analysis based on the Big Sur Land Use Plan and California Coastal Act

CCC Letter / Citation	Planning Documents / Citation
Enforcement: Stepped-up parking and traffic enforcement needed immediately, ideally a dedicated presence during peak periods. No LUP policy or Coastal Act section cited.	This is a reasonable action consistent with the Land Use Plan. 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.
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.	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. 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. BSCAC Design Guidelines further specify that "no parking should be allowed or possible within 10 feet of the edge of traffic lanes."
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.	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. 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.
Widen highway shoulder / excavate inland slope to create more parking room. No LUP policy or Coastal Act section cited.	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. 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.

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.	LUP Policy 3.2.1 prohibits all development visible from Highway 1. 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. 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. 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.
Pedestrian undercrossing cantilevered from the northern bridge abutment as preferred option. No LUP policy or Coastal Act section cited.	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. LUP Policy 6.1.5.E.2 states that viewshed compatibility "may limit the establishment of access improvements." 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.
Surface crossings, crosswalk, or traffic signals as alternative pedestrian improvements. No LUP policy or Coastal Act section cited.	LUP Policy 3.2.1 applies to structures and improvements visible from Highway 1. Signal infrastructure would be visible from the highway. 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.
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	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."

transfer, yet unbuilt for nearly 20 years. No LUP policy or Coastal Act section cited.	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.
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.	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. <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. <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.
LUP Policy 3.2.2.1 protects views from Bixby Creek turnout, therefore visitor access has significant public value that must be preserved.	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.
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.	"Managed access" does not require or justify new parking infrastructure or overlook construction that the LUP expressly prohibits. Section 30214's authorization to consider aesthetic values in managing access actually supports strict viewshed protection, not construction in the viewshed. 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.