

Appendix L
Notice of Preparation

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: Interested Parties

From: California Dept. of Transportation,
Central Region

2015 East Shields, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726-5428

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report

Reference: California Code of Regulations, Title 14, (CEQA Guidelines) Sections 15082(a), 15103, 15375.

Project Title: Highway 1 HOV Lane Widening Project

Project Location: Highway 1 (designated State Route 1) in Santa Cruz County for a distance of approximately 8.25 miles between Larkin Valley/San Andreas Roads at the south and Morrissey Boulevard at the north

Project Description: • Widen the existing four-lane highway to a six-lane facility by adding one northbound and one southbound HOV lane

This is to inform you that the California Department of Transportation will be the Lead Agency in cooperation with the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC)¹ in preparing an environmental impact report for the project described below. Your participation as a Responsible Agency is requested in the preparation and review of this document.

We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project. A combined CEQA EIR and NEPA Environmental Assessment is being prepared. This Notice of Preparation package is being transmitted also to federal agencies to solicit their comments regarding the scope of the NEPA document.

A more detailed project description, location map, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials.

A copy of the Initial Study is not attached.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

Please direct your response to:

James M. Tkach
Acting Sr. Environmental Planner
Caltrans, Central Region
50 Higuera Street
San Luis Obispo, 93401
Telephone: 805 549-3196

Please supply us with the name for a contact person in your agency.

Date March 25, 2004

Signature
Title

Roberta Lynn
Sr. Environmental Planner

¹ The Highway 1 HOV Lane Widening Project will be transferred to the Highway 1 Construction Authority, a Joint Powers Agency that will assume full responsibility for project development and implementation in Fiscal Year 04-05.

Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report Highway 1 HOV Lane Widening Project

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC) is working in cooperation with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the Lead Agency, to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Highway 1 High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lane Widening Project. This Notice of Preparation requests comments from responsible and trustee agencies regarding the significant environmental issues, reasonable alternatives, and reasonable mitigation measures that need to be discussed in the Draft EIR to address each agency's concerns. An Initial Study has not been prepared for this project and is, therefore, not attached to this Notice of Preparation.

Background

Highway 1 (designated State Route or SR 1) serves as the primary route connecting communities in the southern and central areas of Santa Cruz County. Highway 1 links Watsonville, Aptos, Santa Cruz and University of California at Santa Cruz and is the southern terminus for State Routes 9 and 17, both of which bring heavy tourist traffic to coastal destinations in Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties. The population of Santa Cruz County has doubled in the past 30 years. During this time, no capacity enhancements have been constructed within the project limits, and in recent decades, this segment of Highway 1 has become heavily congested during morning and evening commute times. The 2001 Regional Transportation Plan identifies widening Highway 1 between Aptos and Santa Cruz as the highest priority project in Santa Cruz County. The first phase of improvements to Highway 1 is the 1/17 Merge Lanes Project with construction anticipated in Summer 2005 under Caltrans direction.

Project Description

The project extends along Highway 1 in Santa Cruz County a distance of approximately 8.25 miles; the project limits are from 0.4 kilometers (0.2 miles) south of San Andreas/Larkin Valley Roads on the south to 0.3 kilometers (0.2 miles) north of Morrissey Boulevard on the north. The project location and vicinity are shown on Attachments 1 and 2, respectively. In addition to the two interchanges at the project limits, there are interchanges at Soquel Avenue, 41st Avenue, Bay Avenue/Porter Street, Park Avenue, State Park Drive, Rio Del Mar Boulevard, and Freedom Boulevard (nine interchanges total). The following improvements are proposed within the project limits:

- Widen the existing four-lane highway to a six-lane facility to accommodate one northbound and one southbound HOV lane,
- Provide 3 new pedestrian/bicycle over-crossings,
- Provide ramp metering,
- Provide Traffic Operations System (TOS) equipment,
- Modify interchanges to improve merging opportunities and ramp geometrics as follows:
 - Lengthen acceleration/deceleration lanes,
 - Improve sight distances,
 - Replace the railroad overpass structures and widen the current roadway bridges to accommodate highway widening.

Most of the proposed widening would be constructed in the median under Alternative 2B. At locations where the median width is insufficient, the required widening would be at the outside shoulder. Where frontage roads are adjacent to Highway 1, sound walls on safety-shaped barriers would be constructed to separate the two facilities and minimize right-of-way acquisition.

Concrete barriers would separate the northbound and southbound lanes, while striping would separate HOV from mixed-flow lanes.

Project Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Highway 1 HOV Lane Widening Project is to reduce congestion, encourage carpooling and use of alternative transportation modes as means to increase transportation system capacity, and improve safety. Meeting these project purposes would also address the following related needs:

- Improve operations – peak period congestion currently extends up to eight hours on weekdays,
- Reduce delay for commuters, commerce, and emergency vehicles,
- Provide incentives to increase transit use and ridesharing,
- Reduce congestion-related accidents, and
- Reduce “cut-through” traffic on local streets.

Alternatives Under Consideration

In addition to the No-Build Alternative (Alternative 1), two Build Alternatives (Alternatives 2A and 2B) are under consideration. Alternative 2A would provide a standard median width of 6.6 meters (21.6 feet). Alternative 2B would provide a reduced median width of 1.8 meters (5.9 feet), which would accommodate 0.6-meter (2-foot) inside shoulders and the concrete median barrier.

Anticipated Benefits and Environmental Effects

Widening the highway to accommodate HOV lanes would encourage the use of carpools and express buses. Because HOV facilities transport more riders in fewer vehicles, congestion and delay during peak travel periods would be reduced. The project is expected also to reduce congestion and improve operations on local arterials that currently carry “cut-through” traffic diverted from congested highway conditions. Reduced congestion and improved operations along Highway 1 are anticipated to increase safety and reduce congestion-related accidents.

Widening the highway may affect wetlands and waterways within the project limits as well as special-status plant species and habitat for special-status wildlife species, potentially including California red-legged frog, tidewater goby, and steelhead. HOV lane widening will be designed to avoid the Valencia lagoon, which is a known breeding location for Santa Cruz long-toed salamander, and its associated upland habitat, insofar as possible. The project will be designed to accommodate upland drainage improvements to facilitate long-term maintenance requirements of the Valencia channel.

Historic resources adjacent to Highway 1 are listed in the California Inventory of Historic Places and/or the City of Santa Cruz Historic Building Survey; such resources may be protected under Section 4(f) of the DOT Act. Archaeological sites are likely on or adjacent to the project area. Some areas within the project limits indicate high sensitivity for the discovery of paleontological resources. Widening the highway may increase noise levels at residences and other sensitive receptors and is expected to introduce changes to the visual character of the corridor. Mitigation is anticipated to address noise, visual, cultural, biological, and paleontological impacts.

Public Meeting

Agency and public meetings will be held to announce the initiation of studies and solicit input regarding potentially significant environmental issues, reasonable alternatives, and mitigation measures. The South Corridor Public Information Meeting will be held on April 26, 2004, at Sea

Cliff Inn located at 7500 Old Dominion Circle, in Aptos. This meeting will be open from 3:00 to 4:30 PM for agencies and 6:00 to 8:30 PM for the general public. The North Corridor Public Information Meeting will be held on April 29, 2004 in the Live Oak Community Room at Simpkins Family Swim Center located at 979 17th Avenue, Santa Cruz. This meeting will be open to the general public from 6:00 to 8:30 PM. The format for the public meetings offers an open house and map viewing from 6:00 until 7:00 PM, with a formal presentation followed by a question and answer period from 7:00 until 8:30 PM.

The purpose of these meetings is to provide responsible and Trustee Agency staff and the public an opportunity to comment on project alternatives, impacts, and issues to be considered as part of the project studies. Presentations will describe the project alternatives, environmental review process, project schedule, and project cost and funding. Graphics will be presented to assist the public in visualizing the proposed limits of project construction. Opportunities will be offered for comments to be provided either orally or in writing, and future opportunities for public involvement will be outlined. Agency representatives, interested organizations, and the general public are invited to attend.

**Document Details Report
State Clearinghouse Data Base**

SCH# 2004032147
Project Title Highway 1 HOV Lane Widening Project
Lead Agency Caltrans #5

Type NOP Notice of Preparation
Description Widen the existing four-lane highway to a six-lane facility by adding one northbound and one southbound HOV lane on Highway 1 in Santa Cruz County for a distance of approximately 8.25 miles between Larkin Valley/San Andreas Roads at the south and Morrissey Boulevard at the North.

Lead Agency Contact

Name James Tkach
Agency Department of Transportation, District 5
Phone 805-549-3196 **Fax**
email
Address 50 Higuera Street
City San Luis Obispo **State** CA **Zip** 93041-5415

Project Location

County Santa Cruz
City Santa Cruz, Capitola
Region
Cross Streets San Andreas/Larkin Valley Roads, Morrissey Blvd.
Parcel No.
Township **Range** **Section** **Base**

Proximity to:

Highways Hwy-1, 17, 9
Airports
Railways Southern Pacific
Waterways Rodeo Gulch, Soquel Creek, Nobel Creek, Tannery Gulch, Borregos Creek, Aptos Creek, Valencia Cre
Schools Live Oak SD, Pajaro Valley SD, Santa Cruz SD, Soquel Elementary
Land Use

Project Issues Aesthetic/Visual; Air Quality; Archaeologic-Historic; Geologic/Seismic; Noise; Traffic/Circulation; Vegetation; Wetland/Riparian; Wildlife

Reviewing Agencies Resources Agency; California Coastal Commission; Office of Historic Preservation; Department of Parks and Recreation; Department of Water Resources; Department of Fish and Game, Region 3; Native American Heritage Commission; Public Utilities Commission; State Lands Commission; California Highway Patrol; Air Resources Board, Transportation Projects; Regional Water Quality Control Board, Region 3

Date Received 03/29/2004 **Start of Review** 03/29/2004 **End of Review** 04/27/2004

Resources Agency

- Resources Agency Nadell Gayou
- Dept. of Boating & Waterways Suzi Betzler
- California Coastal Commission Elizabeth A. Fuchs
- Colorado River Board Gerald R. Zimmerman
- Dept. of Conservation Roseanne Taylor
- California Energy Commission Environmental Office
- Dept. of Forestry & Fire Protection Allen Robertson
- Office of Historic Preservation Hans Kreuzberg
- Dept. of Parks & Recreation B. Noah Tlghman Environmental Stewardship Section
- Reclamation Board Lori Buford
- Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Paul Edelman
- S.F. Bay Conservation & Dev't. Comm. Steve McAdam
- Dept. of Water Resources Nadell Gayou
- Fish and Game
- Dept. of Fish & Game Scott Flint Environmental Services Division
- Dept. of Fish & Game 1 Donald Koch Region 1
- Dept. of Fish & Game 2 Banky Curtis Region 2

- Dept. of Fish & Game 3 Robert Floerke Region 3
- Dept. of Fish & Game 4 William Laudermilk Region 4
- Dept. of Fish & Game 5 Don Chadwick Region 5, Habitat Conservation Program
- Dept. of Fish & Game 6 Gabriela Gatchel Region 6, Habitat Conservation Program
- Dept. of Fish & Game 6 I/M Tammy Allen Region 6, Inyo/Mono, Habitat Conservation Program
- Dept. of Fish & Game M George Isaac Marine Region
- Other Departments
- Food & Agriculture Steve Shaffer Dept. of Food and Agriculture
- Dept. of General Services Robert Steppy Environmental Services Section
- Dept. of Health Services Wayne Hubbard Dept. of Health/Drinking Water
- Independent Commissions/Boards
- Delta Protection Commission Debby Eddy
- Office of Emergency Services John Rowden, Manager
- Governor's Office of Planning & Research State Clearinghouse
- Native American Heritage Comm. Debbie Treadway

- Public Utilities Commission Ken Lewis
- State Lands Commission Jean Sarino
- Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) Cherry Jacques
- Business, Trans & Housing
- Caltrans - Division of Aeronautics Sandy Hesnard
- Caltrans - Planning Ron Helgeson
- California Highway Patrol John Olejnik Office of Special Projects
- Housing & Community Development Cathy Creswell Housing Policy Division
- Dept. of Transportation
- Dept. of Transportation 1 Mike Eagan District 1
- Dept. of Transportation 2 Don Anderson District 2
- Dept. of Transportation 3 Jeff Pulverman District 3
- Dept. of Transportation 4 Tim Sable District 4
- Dept. of Transportation 5 David Murray District 5
- Dept. of Transportation 6 Marc Birnbaum District 6
- Dept. of Transportation 7 Stephen J. Buswell District 7

- Dept. of Transportation 8 Linda Grimes, District 8
- Dept. of Transportation 9 Gayle Rosander District 9
- Dept. of Transportation 10 Tom Dumas District 10
- Dept. of Transportation 11 Bill Figge District 11
- Dept. of Transportation 12 Bob Joseph District 12
- Cal EPA
- Air Resources Board Airport Projects Jim Lerner
- Transportation Projects Kurt Karperos
- Industrial Projects Mike Tollstrup
- California Integrated Waste Management Board Sue O'Leary
- State Water Resources Control Board Jim Hockenberry Division of Financial Assistance
- State Water Resources Control Board Student Intern, 401 Water Quality Certification Unit Division of Water Quality
- State Water Resources Control Board Steven Herrera Division of Water Rights
- Dept. of Toxic Substances Control CEQA Tracking Center

- Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)
- RWQCB 1 Cathleen Hudson North Coast Region (1)
- RWQCB 2 Environmental Document Coordinator San Francisco Bay Region (2)
- RWQCB 3 Central Coast Region (3)
- RWQCB 4 Jonathan Bishop Los Angeles Region (4)
- RWQCB 5 Central Valley Region (5)
- RWQCB 5F Central Valley Region (5) Fresno Branch Office
- RWQCB 5R Central Valley Region (5) Redding Branch Office
- RWQCB 6 Lahontan Region (6)
- RWQCB 6V Lahontan Region (6) Victorville Branch Office
- RWQCB 7 Colorado River Basin Region (7)
- RWQCB 8 Santa Ana Region (8)
- RWQCB 9 San Diego Region (9)
- Other