

State of California
Business, Transportation & Housing Agency
Department of Transportation

ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS
Notice of Preparation
5-Mon-1 72.9/75.1
Action Item

Prepared by:
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Chief
Division of Environmental Analysis
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CTC Meeting: October 3-4, 2001

Agenda Item: 2.2a.

Original Signed By

MARK LEJA
Acting Chief Financial Officer
October 1, 2001

SUMMARY- NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
ROUTE 1 IN MONTEREY COUNTY

5-Mon-1

Between Carmel Valley Road and the Route 1/68 Interchange in the City of Carmel-By-The-Sea.

Proposed Action:

Operational improvements

Programming:

The project is in the current 2000 State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP) as a G-13 (long-lead) project. The capital funds are not programmed at this time and will be programmed in a later SHOPP cycle. The current estimate capital cost is approximately \$14 million (\$11 million for construction and \$3 million for right of way). The Environmental Impact Report is targeted for completion during the winter of fiscal year 2005/2006.

Alternatives Being Considered:

- Northbound climbing lane and median left-turn lane from Carmel Valley Road to Ocean Avenue
- Left-turn lane for northbound traffic at Handley Drive
- Additional northbound lane from Handley Drive to the Route 1/68 Interchange
- No build Alternative

Potential Significant Environmental Effects:

- Removal of mature trees on a Scenic Highway within the Coastal Zone
- Loss of visual qualities
- Increase in noise levels

Proposed Measures to Minimize Harm:

- Minimize tree removal; replant where possible within right of way; off-site mitigation may be necessary
- Consider measures to minimize noise

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

TO: Whom It May Concern

FROM: Caltrans, District 5
50 Higuera Street
San Luis Obispo, CA
93401-5415SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report/Statement
[References: Division 13, Public Resources Code, Section 21080.4 (State); 40
C.F.R. 1501.7 and 1508.22 (Federal)]

This is to inform you that the California Department of Transportation (Department) in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an EIR/EIS for the project described below. Your participation as a responsible/cooperating agency (or interested agency, group or individual) is requested in the preparation and review of this document.

We need to know the applicable permit and environmental review requirements of your agency and the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR/EIS prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project. We are also interested in comments from those groups and individuals who are interested in the project, but are not responsible/cooperating agencies, so that we can design the project to best meet the needs of everyone concerned.

Project Description

The Department proposes to construct operational improvements on portions of State Route 1 between Carmel Valley Road and the Route 1/68 interchange (a distance of 2.2 miles), near the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea, in Monterey County. The improvements would construct a northbound climbing lane and median left turn lane from Carmel Valley Road to Ocean Avenue; add a left turn lane for northbound traffic turning onto Handley Drive; and add an additional northbound lane from Handley Drive to the Route 1/68 interchange.

Possible Alternatives

The alternative to these operational improvements would be construct one, two or none of the three proposed improvements.

Probable Environmental Effects

Route 1 is a designated Scenic Highway located within the Coastal Zone (both state and local jurisdictions). The highway right of way is lined with dense, mature Monterey pines, oaks and Monterey cypress. Urban development borders the highway right of way.

The proposed improvements would require widening the existing highway. The widening could remove trees along Route 1, result in a loss of visual screening of highway traffic from the adjacent homes, result in a loss of visual quality of views both from the highway and of the highway corridor, and result in an increase in noise levels at some homes adjacent to the highway.

Background and Scoping

The Monterey County Congestion Management Plan (CMP) and its components, the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and Deficiency Plans (DP), prioritize short-term congestion relief projects for Monterey County. The CMP (March 1994) states that the purpose of the CIP portion of the CMP is to insure that Deficiency Plan projects are implemented promptly and that projects from the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC)-accepted Deficiency Plans will receive priority in the CMP CIP.

The TAMC-accepted Deficiency Plan for Highway 1 (October 1994) identifies as the Agency's Action Plan a series of "Interim Improvements" to be constructed on Highway 1 prior to construction of the Hatton Canyon Parkway. These interim improvements have been agreed upon by the Department and the County, and have been approved for construction by the California Transportation Commission. The current CMP CIP lists these interim improvements as a Priority 1 project: "Route 1 improvements vicinity Carmel, Carpenter Street to Rio Road." These interim improvements are also referenced in TAMC's Regional Transportation Plan (March 1994) as TAMC's number 1 priority project.

As the proposed Hatton Canyon Highway (Route 1 Bypass) remained delayed by controversy and litigation, the California Transportation Commission (CTC), at its February 1994 meeting, directed the Department to develop a list of short term operational improvements that could be implemented along the existing Highway 1 alignment. In response, the Department, working in conjunction with engineering staff from the Monterey County Public Works (MCPW), Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC), and others, developed a list of 12 candidate interim projects.

At the April 1994 CTC meeting, support and funding for the Hatton Canyon Highway was affirmed. In addition, the CTC directed the Department to pursue the 12 candidate operational improvement projects as proposed, to provide interim congestion relief until such time that the Hatton Canyon Highway could be built.

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In November 1997 a Notice of Preparation (NOP) and a Notice of Intent (NOI) (as required by the California Environmental Quality Act [CEQA] and the National Environmental Policy Act [NEPA], respectively) were prepared to solicit review and comment of the proposed highway improvements. At that time, the FHWA would not publish the NOI, nor participate in the proposed improvements for interim relief of traffic congestion, since the proposed construction date was later than that of the proposed Hatton Canyon Highway and the significant impacts to resources adjacent to State Route 1 would be unnecessary if the Hatton Canyon Highway was constructed. Environmental and design work on these highway improvements was suspended pending resolution of the controversy and litigation concerning the Hatton Canyon Highway project and Final EIR/EIS.

Support and funding for the Hatton Canyon Highway was ultimately rescinded by TAMC. Consequently, the Department does not expect to construct the Hatton Canyon Highway in the foreseeable future.

The operational improvements proposed by this project encompass three of the twelve operational improvement projects that the CTC directed the Department to pursue (Department reference: Operational Improvement Numbers 4, 11 and 12; 05-Mon-1-72.9/75.1; 0190N0). A Draft EIR/EIS will be prepared and circulated for review and comment. A public meeting will be held to discuss the improvements and the Draft EIR/EIS. Comments will be obtained from the circulation of this NOP (and the NOI). This will complete the scoping process.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than 45 days after receipt of this notice.

Please send your response and direct any comments or questions regarding this project to Janet Newland at the address shown above (phone: 805-542-4603). With your response, please include the name of a contact person in your agency.

Date:

June 26, 2001

Janet A. Newland

Janet Newland, Senior Environmental Planner
Central Coast Environmental Analysis