



**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO**

**Department of Public Works**

**John Diodati**, *Interim Director*

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Los Osos Land Use Committee, LOCAC

From: Monica Stillman, Environmental Specialist, [mjstillman@co.slo.ca.us](mailto:mjstillman@co.slo.ca.us);  
805-781-1049

Date: January 13, 2021

SUBJECT: South Bay Boulevard Bridge Replacement Project Response to CEQA Referral Comments

Thank you for your comments on the CEQA referral for this project. Responses are provided below in question and answer format. We look forward to further opportunity to discuss any concerns or questions that you have and would like to be included on your next meeting agenda.

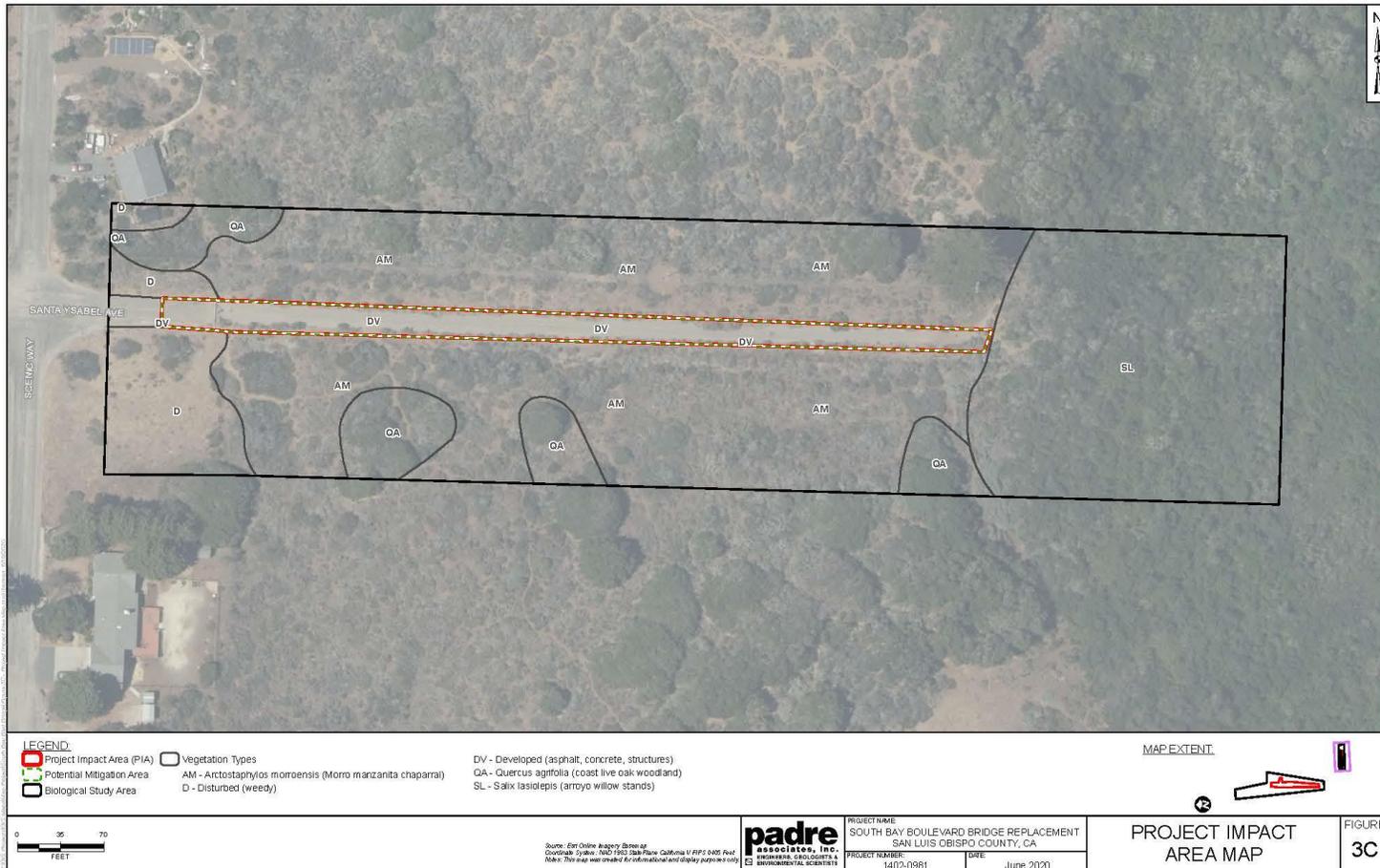
1. Concerns stated regarding the staging area.
  - The neighbors need to be notified; they presently have no idea that Santa Ysabel is planned to be used as a staging area
  - Equipment and staging may block the Church driveway and impede homes at the end of the block.
  - Santa Ysabel at that point is a one lane road
  - Just north of Turri Rd is a large patch of land, seemingly only a home to velt grass. This will be a couple year project, would they consider using that land?

**Response:** The County identified the east end of Santa Ysabel Avenue as a potential staging area because space for construction access and staging is fairly limited at the bridge location. The veldt grass area on the east side of South Bay Boulevard just north of Turri Road is already in the proposed construction disturbance area and will be available for the contractor. A map of the Santa Ysabel Avenue staging area is provided below.

The staging area at Santa Ysabel Avenue would be limited to the east end, east of the locked access gate, so would not block or impede access to any properties. Neighbors will be notified during the upcoming 30-day public comment period and prior to construction.



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**County of San Luis Obispo Department of Public Works**

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2. It is important the bridge be replaced soon, not only is it seismically compromised, but it is also only 1 of 2 ways in and out of Los Osos.

**Response:** We appreciate your concerns for safety and local access; that is why this project is a high-priority project for the County. The County is proceeding with project planning, design, and permitting as quickly as possible. The actual timing of the construction start will depend on obtaining all necessary permit approvals as well as availability of the federal and County funding. The County's goal is to begin construction to replace the bridge in 2023.

3. Could the old bridge be kept as a pedestrian/ bike path?

**Response:** The old bridge has been determined to be seismically deficient and subject to collapse, so will be demolished to avoid any safety concerns and the cleanup that would be required if it collapsed.

4. There appears to be a designated bike path in only 1 direction, on the Southbound side of the bridge. There should be designations and lines for bikers both Southbound and Northbound. A 5' wide shoulder may be acceptable to bikers, but there definitely need to be lines for them.

**Response:** South Bay Boulevard is designated as a Class II bikeway. The County is proposing to increase the bike lane width on the bridge from 5 feet to 8 feet with standard striping to better accommodate bikes. The County is proposing to build California Coastal Trail within the limits of the project. Currently this is proposed as a 5-foot wide separated pathway on the west side of the bridge. Each incremental increase in the width of the bridge increases the construction cost, project impacts to sensitive environmental resources, and the anticipated costs to implement environmental mitigation. The current proposal is subject to the requirements of the regulatory permitting agencies and could change.

5. Will there be environmental studies? Question was asked, but it is a negative mitigation project so no EIR is needed. We understand there is unique habitat there- morro manzanita, oaks and a different type of snail.

**Response:** The County has conducted a number of environmental studies including a Natural Environment Study and focused surveys/studies that addressed habitat conditions and special-status species, including, among others, Morro manzanita, Morro shoulderband

snail, tidewater goby, California black rail, marine mammals, essential fish habitat, environmentally sensitive habitat areas and vegetation communities, salt marsh, and native oak woodland. Separate Biological Assessments addressing federally protected species and habitats (such as California red-legged frog, steelhead) are being finalized for review by the federal resource agencies. The County is also preparing a Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan that will describe how temporary and permanent project impacts will be restored and mitigated to maintain the valuable habitat conditions at the site.

6. Could there be a coordination with the fiber optic project on South Bay Blvd?

**Response:** The County is aware of the fiber optic project and conducts periodic coordination on the status of that project and any potential opportunities or conflicts.

7. There was concern for the Los Osos Bear, but apparently his move is in the plans.

**Response:** Correct, the Los Osos Bear statue is proposed to be relocated to a similar setting on the west side of South Bay Boulevard as part of project construction.

8. Major concern about the sightlines both directions for the traffic at Turri Rd. Traffic turning off of Turri Rd to go either direction on SBB is compromised and would be very dangerous considering the speed of traffic on SBB. As it is presently it's not great, but with the change in the arc of the bridge, it looks like the realignment of South Bay Blvd on the north side of the new bridge will make it harder for drivers to see traffic approaching from the north on SBB. Is it possible South Bay Blvd could be moved to the east farther north of Turri Road where the intersection alignment is improved?

**Response:** We understand your concerns with line of sight at the intersection. The redesigned intersection will be designed in accordance with traffic engineering standards to ensure appropriate line of sight for turning traffic. There is no current plan to pull back the east side of South Bay Boulevard at the north side of this intersection. Mitigation plantings to be installed north of Turri Road will be set back from the edge of pavement in accordance with County standards so as not to interfere with line of sight at the intersection.

9. Concern for bike lanes, pedestrian paths and the current coastal trail...how can we improve and lessen the danger to bicyclists and pedestrians?

**Response:** The current project design has a pedestrian path crossing the bridge with a concrete barrier separating pedestrians from traffic. This will provide a safer means of crossing than exists on the current bridge.

10. What restoration/mitigation will take place at the south end of the old bridge where it will be removed closest to the Elfin Forest and where the bridge will be moved over from its present connection to the (old) bridge.

**Response:** The portion of South Bay Boulevard south of the existing bridge that is no longer needed to access the new bridge is proposed to be removed and used as part of the area required for creation of Morro manzanita chaparral as mitigation for impacts to that protected habitat type northeast of the bridge. Some additional small pockets of mitigation for other vegetation communities (Lompoc ceanothus, suffrutescent wallflower) may also be located in those existing communities in the dune areas subject to erosion within County right-of-way. No project-related impacts would extend outside the County right-of-way.

11. It appears the Coastal Trail will be east of SBB as it comes south from Morro Bay but then hikers and equestrians using that trail are going to have to cross SBB to get to the west side of the new bridge. Crossing SBB is tough now because bunches of cars come along at high speed, the bunching up as a result of the signal at Santa Ysabel and of the "rubber-band-effect" on cars coming south from Morro Bay. Right now, there's hardly anyone crossing the street, but more people will be crossing there when the Coastal Trail becomes established.

**Response:** The County is basing its preliminary determination of the best side of the bridge for the Coastal Trail based on discussion with State Parks and the conceptual routes for the Coastal Trail in the Los Osos Community Plan. We have also solicited comments from other stakeholders as part of the CEQA referral project. The County is unlikely to be able to resolve all the issues with best alignments for the Coastal Trail, including which side of South Bay Boulevard the trail should be on and ensuring trail users have a safe way to cross South Bay Boulevard. Such planning exceeds the scope of the bridge replacement project, but we are doing our best to plan the trail on the side of the bridge that makes the most sense to the greatest number of stakeholders. There is opportunity to change which side of the bridge the trail is on; but at some point in the engineering design process, the County will need to commit to one side or the other.

12. What about putting the coastal trail on the west side of the bridge? Would that make it safer for pedestrians?

**Response:** See response to #11.