



COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION
DRIVE, ROOM 102A
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 9/10/2024

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Sonoma County Public Infrastructure

Staff Name and Phone Number: Johannes J. Hoevertsz, 707-565-2550

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): Fourth

Title:

Adoption of a Resolution for a Mitigated Negative Declaration and Approval of the Asti Permanent Bridge Construction Project

Recommended Action:

- A) Adopt a Resolution adopting a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) and Mitigation Monitoring Program (MMP).
- B) Approve the Asti Permanent Bridge Construction Project.

Executive Summary:

The Sonoma County Department of Public Infrastructure (SPI) is requesting the Board adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration and a Mitigation Monitoring Program and approve the Asti Permanent Bridge Construction Project.

Discussion:

The Asti Permanent Bridge Construction Project ("Project") includes construction of a new two-lane bridge across the Russian River on and near Washington School Road near the community of Asti in Sonoma County. The new bridge would replace the current, temporary seasonal crossing, also known as the Asti Summer Crossing (ASC). The purpose of this Project is to enhance safety and connectivity in Sonoma County and to eliminate the financial cost and environmental consequences of the ASC. The Project will be designed in accordance with Caltrans standards including improvements to roadway approaches and appurtenant facilities. The Project is not growth-inducing and is not anticipated to increase overall vehicular travel in the area. Rather there will be an expected redistribution of existing vehicle traffic which now must travel approximately 10.5 miles to the Cloverdale Bridge on Crocker Road and back to get to Asti Road. The Project will provide for two lanes of vehicular traffic, pedestrian access, and bicycle passage.

The Project has been analyzed under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines and the County Code and Regulations. Pursuant to the requirements of Chapter 23A of the County Code, the draft Initial Study was first presented to the County Environmental Review Committee (ERC) on December 19, 2023, and again on May 7, 2024. The ERC reviewed the Initial Study and concurred that Project impacts could be mitigated to a less than significant level and recommended a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) be prepared.

The MND identifies twenty-one (21) environmental factors for the Project that were studied and presents the mitigation measures, if required, for each. The MND references the Mitigation Monitoring Program (MMP), which will be used to ensure Project compliance with each mitigation measure, documenting how each measure will be implemented, when it will be implemented and who is responsible for the implementation.

As part of the environmental review process, the team identified the factors affecting the project site and outlined their associated mitigation measures below. (For a detailed discussion of these factors, please refer to the MND under separate cover.) Additionally, technical studies have been conducted to document these factors and provide a detailed analysis supporting the conclusions presented here. Some of the key factors are:

1. Aesthetics mitigation includes retaining walls along the bridge approaches to reduce the project impacts on oak trees and other vegetation; minimizing vegetation removal and restoring areas following project construction; minimizing tree removal and replacing trees on site and off site in accordance with CDFW-required ratios; locating staging areas away from the public view (these areas would be fenced to reduce visibility and would be kept clean and orderly); incorporate design elements in the bridge to better harmonize the bridge with its surroundings.
2. Air Quality mitigation includes reducing construction emissions, controlling odor, and monitoring emissions.
3. Biological Resources and Hydrology and Water Quality factors mitigation includes preconstruction surveys, on and off-site mitigation for tree removal performed outside of nesting season, construction exclusion fencing, biological monitor, limited construction activity, and flows within the Russian River diverted in such a way that prevents and/or minimizes downstream turbidity, and mitigation for permanent impacts on critical habitat will be accomplished through on-site creation, restoration, and enhancement.
4. Noise mitigation includes limiting construction operating hours.
5. Cultural Resources mitigation includes construction monitoring by an archeologist.
6. Geology and soils mitigation includes providing a qualified paleontologist, if previously unidentified paleontological resources are encountered or unearthed during construction.
7. Hazards and hazardous materials mitigation includes allowing for preconstruction screening.
8. Tribal and cultural resources mitigation include an authorized tribal representative to be present during ground disturbing activities to monitor for Tribal cultural resources.

A detailed list of environmental factors that have been investigated and the corresponding mitigation measures are presented in the table below.

	ENVIRONMENTAL FACTOR	MITIGATION MEASURES	SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS
1	Aesthetics	VIS-1 - VIS-5	Less Than Significant to Less than Significant with Mitigation
2	Agriculture and Forestry Resources	Not Required	No Impact to Less than Significant
3	Air Quality	AQ-1 - AQ-8	No Impact to Less than Significant with Mitigation
4	Biological Resources	BIO-1 - BIO-42	No Impact to Less than Significant with Mitigation
5	Cultural Resources	CUL-1 - CUL-4	No Impact to Less than Significant with Mitigation
6	Energy	N/A	No Impact
7	Geology and Soils	GEO-1	No Impact to Less than Significant with Mitigation
8	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	N/A	No Impact to Less than Significant
9	Hazards and hazardous Materials	HAZ-1 - HAZ-3	No Impact to Less than Significant with Mitigation
10	Hydrology and Water Quality	BIO-32 - BIO-41	No Impact to Less than Significant with Mitigation
11	Land Use and Planning	N/A	No Impact to Less than Significant
12	Mineral Resources	N/A	No Impact
13	Noise	NOI-1 - NOI-5	Less than Significant to Less than Significant with Mitigation
14	Population and Housing	N/A	No Impact to Less than Significant
15	Public Services	N/A	No Impact to Less than Significant
16	Recreation	N/A	No Impact
17	Transportation	N/A	No Impact to Less than Significant
18	Tribal Cultural Resources	TCR-1 - TCR-8	Less than Significant with Mitigation
19	Utilities and Service Systems	N/A	No Impact to Less than Significant
20	Wildfires	N/A	No Impact to Less than Significant
21	Mandatory Findings of Significance	BIO-1 BIO-42 CUL-1 - CUL-4 TRC-1 - TRC-8 VIS-1 - VIS-5 AQ-1 - AQ-8 HAZ-1 - HAZ-3 NOI-1 - NOI-5	Less than Significant with Mitigation

The Project design and mitigation program include measures, as described above, to mitigate potential

environmental impacts.

The Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study were circulated for public and agency review for a period of 30 days from May 29, 2024, until June 28, 2024, in accordance with State and County CEQA guidelines. Tribal consultation under AB-52 has been completed. The following is a summary of the two comment letters received during the circulation period and that have been addressed in the MND.

First, adjacent neighbors inquired about flooding and the proposed bridge bicycle lane. The concern raised is that the proposed retaining wall added to the existing levee and the existing retaining wall would cause the water to back up onto their properties. Further, the neighbors inquired whether gravel movement and changes in flow in the river would cause more flooding on their properties. Finally, neighbors inquired what the county will do to prevent the massive flooding such as the flooding that occurred in 2019. In response, the design of the project would open up the river channel, reduce constrictions and increase the clear area for water passage in the river. These design features and the project would not cause more water to back up onto the neighboring parcels, which was verified in the hydraulic models. Further, with the existing seasonal crossing removed, the river channel would be less constricted, which should reduce the buildup of gravel. However, predictions of gravel movement would require a sediment transport analysis of the Russian River. Gravel movement and flood protection on the Russian River are both beyond the scope of the project. Second, the neighbors commented that Bike Lanes should not be included on the new bridge as River Road cannot handle more bicyclists. The applicable design code, AASHTO requires that shoulders be included adjacent to the bridge travel lanes. Per the California Vehicle Code, Section 21200, these shoulders and the traffic lanes are legally acceptable for use by bicycles. The project is not expected to increase bicycle use on Washington School Road as there is not a north end destination, however, the project would more safely accommodate existing riders.

The second comment letter from Caltrans recommended providing a vertical separation between the proposed bike lanes and vehicular travel lanes to reduce level of traffic stress for cyclists. Due to the low design speed (30 mph) and low average daily traffic, a vertical separation is not required to separate the bicyclists from the traveled way and is in violation of the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. In addition, adding a vertical separation would change the bike lane from Class 2 to Class 1, which would require substantial changes to the bridge and approach design that are not justified given the design speed and low average daily traffic.

Additionally, prior to the MND circulation period five letters in support of the project were received from homeowners and fellow neighbors in Palomino Lakes, and the adjacent communities and homes along River Road in Cloverdale, from the Alexander Valley Citizen League, and from residents on the east side of the Russian River who are completely reliant on one egress to cross the Russian River. An exit that is over three miles from their homes, elevating the risk of being trapped if a wildfire cuts off River Road north to Cloverdale and the seasonal bridge is not open. A Letter of support of the permanent bridge was received during the MND circulation period from the Alexander Valley Citizen's League and many property owners living on the east side of the Russian River.

The Department of Public Infrastructure will obtain all appropriate permits before finalizing the design and constructing the Project.

No other environmental impacts have been identified in the Initial Study or through any comments received as

part of the environmental review process. There is no substantial evidence before the Board that the proposed project, as mitigated by the mitigation measures described in the IS/MND and incorporated in the Project's Mitigation Monitoring Program, will have a significant effect on the environment and therefore, adoption of the Mitigated Negative Declaration is appropriate under CEQA and State and County CEQA guidelines.

If the Project is approved by the Board, the Department of Public Infrastructure will proceed to complete design and other tasks currently funded. Additional funding to complete the final design, permits and have a "shovel ready" project is being applied for. The County applied for \$5M from the "Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity" (RAISE) grant for Design and Environmental work. The County was not awarded funding and will apply again in Fall 2024. Staff will also return to the Board for financing recommendations, which may include formation of an assessment district to fund a portion of the cost.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

Prior Board Actions:

4/18/23 Authorize the Department to proceed with Phase 2 of the design work for the Asti Bridge Project

5/24/22 Professional Services Agreement with TRC Engineers, Inc. for design of the Asti Permanent Bridge Crossing Project.

7/13/21 Initiation of Proceedings to Form an Assessment District to Fund a Portion of the Cost of a Permanent Bridge at the Washington School Road Crossing of the Russian River Near the Community of Asti.

12/10/19 Authorization to work with community groups on long term options for the seasonal crossings and funding a feasibility study for the assessment district.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

Since the adoption of the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) and Mitigation Monitoring Program (MMP) will not trigger additional tasks or scope to the existing project there is no direct fiscal impact associated with this Board Action.

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

None.

Agenda Date: 9/10/2024

Attachments:

Resolution

Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND)

Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (MMP)

Response to MND Comments

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

None