

SCH NO.

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To:

From: California Dept. of Transportation

111 Grand Ave, MS 8-B

Oakland, CA 94612

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: Saratoga Creek Bridge Project

Project Location: State Highway 9 (Post Miles 4.3/5.3)

Project Description: Caltrans proposes a bridge replacement to address seismic and structural deficiencies in the Saratoga Creek Bridge (No. 37-0074).

This is to inform you that the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) will be the lead agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) 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 more detailed project description, location map, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials.

A copy of the Initial Study (is) (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 Noray-Ann Spradling Telephone (510) 286-5961 at the address shown above. Please supply us with the name for a contact person in your agency.

Date

3/31/2016

Signature



Title

Environmental Analysis Branch Chief

Project Description

Saratoga Creek Bridge (No. 37-0074) is a two-span, earth filled concrete arch bridge with rubble masonry spandrel walls. This bridge was constructed in 1902 and is approximately of 165 feet long, 24 feet wide, and has an average height of 40 feet. It is located on State Route 9 (SR-9) less than a mile west from the city limits of the City of Saratoga, CA.

A Structure Maintenance and Investigations (SM&I) Report was prepared in 2004 and documented a number of seismic and structural concerns with the existing bridge. Further geotechnical investigations in 2011 found that the earth fill within the bridge had no steel reinforcement and does not meet the current Load and Resistance Factor Design standard. The in-depth investigation revealed that the material properties do not meet the strength and mechanical property standards for current bridge designs. In addition to this, the spandrel walls have begun to separate from the rest of the bridge structure. These conditions must be addressed in order to ensure the future ability of the structure to continue providing reliable traffic service on State Highway 9.

Caltrans proposes to address these concerns with the four possible alternatives identified below:

1. Southern Alignment: A new bridge would be constructed south of the existing bridge. If feasible, the existing structure would remain in place and open to traffic during construction. Once the new structure is built, it will service SR-9 traffic. The existing structure will then be removed unless another organization or individual will agree to accept legal and maintenance responsibility for it.
2. Northern Alignment: A new bridge would be constructed north of the existing bridge. If feasible, the existing structure would remain in place and open to traffic during construction. Once the new structure is built, it will service SR-9 traffic. The existing structure will then be removed unless another organization or individual will agree to accept legal and maintenance responsibility for it.
3. Existing Alignment: The existing structure would be replaced with a new structure on the same alignment as the existing structure.
4. No Build: The existing structure would remain in place without modification.

All alternatives, except the No Build, will require retaining walls to some degree. The most extensive retaining walls will be required for the Northern Alignment alternative, while the least extensive will be required for the Existing Alignment alternative.

Temporary construction access outside of the Caltrans right-of-way may be required for construction activities at the base of the existing bridge. These details will be further refined during the project development process.

Pile driving will be required for all but the No Build Alternative. The location and number of piles will be dependent on the specific alternative and will be determined once specific bridge designs have been identified.

Abutments and wingwalls will be constructed for the Southern, Northern, and Existing Alignment alternatives. A single bridge pier will be required approximately half way across the span of the bridge for all Alternative on the existing alignment. Other alternative may require zero to four piers. Sanborn Creek runs along the east side of the span, under one of the existing bridge arches, and it is not currently anticipated to have a bridge column placed within the active channel for any of the proposed alternatives.

Caltrans is currently considering three build options for the Existing Alignment alternative. The first option is to replace the existing bridge with a modern bridge that meets current Caltrans design standards. The second option is to replace the existing structure with one that is designed to mimic the look and shape of the existing structure. A visual treatment would be applied to the façade to replicate the stone look. The third option is to replace the existing with a new bridge that has the same look and shape of the existing but to reuse the stones from the existing façade to replicate the look of the original. During construction, the stones would be systematically removed from the façade of the existing bridge, stored during construction, and then reapply them as a visual treatment. However, the construction technique for this final build option is under consideration pending further analysis of the feasibility of construction and a cost-benefits comparison with other proposed alternatives that weighs all of the potential environmental and community impacts.

Potential Environmental Effects

A preliminary environmental analysis report was prepared for this project in 2013 to identify potential areas of concern for human and natural resources that may be affected permanently or temporarily by the project. Since this time, further investigation of the project and development of potential project alternatives has revealed additional areas of concern.

Resources that would be potentially affected by the project are: community impacts, community character, visual/aesthetics, cultural resources, hydrology and floodplain, water quality and stormwater runoff, noise and vibration, biological resources, cumulative impacts, utilities and emergency services, and Section 4(f) concerns.

Resources that are not likely to be affected by the project are: community cohesion, land use designations, inducing population growth, agriculture, timber or mineral extraction, hazardous waste/materials, energy and climate change, air quality, and paleontology.

The following discussion addresses the potential effects of the project related to those resources that may potentially be affected.

Community Impacts: This section of SR-9 connects the City of Saratoga with the Santa Cruz Mountains and is used by both commuters and recreational seekers traveling to and from the South Bay region. Traffic delays caused by construction have the potential to add to the travel time of these road users. Traffic congestion caused by detour routes has the potential to affect both the community of Saratoga and surrounding recreational uses.

Community Character: The Saratoga Creek Bridge is a distinctive bridge that has existed in this location for the last 114 years. It has the potential to be a valued resource to the residents of the City of Saratoga and of Santa Clara County.

Visual/Aesthetics: SR-9 is a designated scenic highway. There are extensive retaining walls proposed for the Southern and Northern Realignment alternatives. These walls will be visible from SR-9. The Saratoga Creek Bridge can be viewed from the Saratoga Springs Resort. All of the build alternatives will alter the visual appearance to the bridge area, though the Existing Alignment alternatives (a) and (b) would replicate the original bridge appearance to the maximum extent practicable.

Cultural Resources: The Saratoga Creek Bridge is a historic bridge and is on eligible for the National Register for Historic Places. There are also potential archeological sites near the project area that may require protection.

Hydrology and Floodplain: Retaining walls, fill material, and abutments built along the Sanborn Creek bank have the potential to alter the local hydrology.

Water Quality and Stormwater Runoff: Work potentially in and around Sanborn Creek and its banks during construction has the potential to release sediment and other construction related runoff into the creek waters.

Noise and Vibration: There is a potential to use pile driving as a construction method for each of the build alternatives. Pile driving may cause a noticeable rise in ambient noise within the area surrounding the project location. This may affect local wildlife and the surrounding residences and campground. Vibrations from pile driving may also have an effect on the local wildlife and on the existing Saratoga Bridge for the Southern and Northern Alignment alternatives.

Biological Resources: Impacts to state and federally listed species and their habitats will be evaluated. Riparian tree removal is anticipated along the banks of Sanborn Creek where the

possible bridge alternatives would be constructed. There may also be trees removed along the hill slopes where the retaining walls would be constructed for each build alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are a number of construction projects occurring along SR-9. The environmental and community effects of these projects, in conjunction with this project, will be taken into account.

Utilities and Emergency Services: There are overhead utility poles that run along the existing bridge alignment. These lines will have to be relocated for the project. Access for emergency services along SR-9 will be a concern for construction along the existing alignment due to the potential for road closures during construction. The nearest detour route would add a significant amount of travel time to any trips along this corridor to and from the City of Saratoga.

Section 4(f) Resources: The Saratoga Creek Bridge is considered a protected historic resource, as defined in Section 4(f) of the US Federal Highway Administration's Department of Transportation Act (1966). The first three proposed alternatives have the potential to affect the historic integrity of the existing bridge through alteration of the visual setting of the bridge. Alternative 3 will have the largest impact on the existing bridge since it would guarantee removal of the bridge. However, the Northern and Southern Alignment alternatives also have the potential to negatively affect the existing bridge's structural integrity through the vibrations caused by pile driving if the bridge remains in place for these alternatives.

Additionally, Sanborn County Park is also likely to be considered a protected park resource under Section 4(f). The retaining walls proposed for the Southern, Northern, and Existing Alignment alternatives may require the use of the part of the county park property that abuts SR-9 and part of Sanborn Road.

Scoping Process

Caltrans held a preliminary scoping meeting on March 24, 2016 with the County of Santa Clara and the Santa Clara County Parks Department. Also invited to this meeting, but not in attendance, were representatives of the City of Saratoga, the City of Los Gatos, the City of Monte Sereno, the City of Santa Cruz, the County of Santa Cruz, and the Bike Silicon Valley Coalition. The meeting was held in the Santa Clara County Roads Department building at 101, Skyport Drive in San Jose, CA.

A public scoping meeting has been planned for April 21, 2016 in the Saratoga Prospect Center at 19848 Prospect Road in the City of Saratoga, CA. The meeting will be held from 6 pm until 8 pm and will be attended by the Project Development Team (PDT). Notices for the public scoping meeting will be sent out at least a week in advance and be published in the San Jose Mercury news, in local newspapers, and posted in the project area and in public spaces in the City of Saratoga.

Trustee and Responsible agencies will receive a copy of the Notice of Preparation in the mail and a scoping meeting for these agencies is currently being organized pending interest from the agencies. Our current list of Trustee and Responsible agencies includes the following:

Santa Clara County Parks

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

California Native American Heritage Commission

California State Historic Preservation Office

This list is not final and more agencies and organizations may be added as the scoping process develops and other interested parties are identified.

