Route 156 is a Focus Route and gateway for tourists traveling from the Bay Area to the Monterey Peninsula. On the weekends, 156 is heavily congested and there are safety concerns. This project proposes to convert the narrow two-lane conventional highway to a four-lane freeway.

The Transportation Agency for Monterey County has worked with Caltrans for many years. Through the environmental process, Alternative 11 has been selected as the Preferred Alternative. The selection was based on many factors including: improvements for safety, improving traffic operations, relieving traffic congestion, and seeking the least impacts to the surrounding community and environment.

The Preferred Alternative proposes to convert the existing 2-lane conventional highway to a 4-lane freeway from Castroville to the 101/156 interchange on US 101. The existing 101/156 interchange would be replaced by a more extensive interchange that would handle local traffic and interregional travel. A new interchange would be constructed at the intersection of Castroville Boulevard and Route 156. Also, the existing 156 lanes would be converted to a frontage road that would serve the local community.

The EIR/FONSI was signed on January 31, 2013. A supplemental environmental document process is underway to examine the impacts of tolling. The project is in the Coastal Zone and will require a Coastal Development Permit. Additional permits will be required from Army Corps, USFWS and CADFW.