

## Project Background

### 1. What is the Highway 17 Access Management Plan?

The Highway 17 Access Management Plan (Hwy 17 AMP) is a long-range plan focusing on the corridor's access, mobility, and safety. The plan will identify alternatives to reduce conflict points on Hwy 17.

### 2. What is access management?

**Access Management** is a term used by transportation professionals for the management of locations where vehicles enter and exit the roadway to maintain the safety of the transportation system, increase capacity on roads, and manage congestion.

### 3. What area of Highway 17 will the study analyze?

The study area is from Granite Creek Road, in Scotts Valley, to Summit Drive in Santa Cruz County. This section has been prioritized as having the most need because it has **no control of access**, meaning traffic flow may be interrupted by intersections, driveways, and traffic signals. Caltrans officials from Santa Clara County are also participating in this effort and will consider studying more segments in future plans.

### 4. Why is the study area limited to only this section of Highway 17? Why doesn't it extend further north?

The study is being conducted by Caltrans District 5. The District begins at the Santa Cruz County line. Santa Clara County is part of Caltrans District 4.

### 5. What is a conflict point?

**Conflict point** is a term used by transportation professionals to describe an area where two vehicles' paths can either cross, merge, or diverge. An entrance to a highway (access point) can have one or more conflict points.

### 6. What is the purpose of reducing conflict points?

Each conflict point is a location associated with of the potential for roadway collisions. Caltrans can maintain the safety and efficiency of Hwy 17 by reducing conflict points through access management strategies. Strategies will also promote optimal mobility for regional and interregional travelers and freight. These qualities will advance economic sustainability goals for the communities along the corridor.

## 7. How will Caltrans limit conflict points?

A basic principle of access management is to limit the number of conflict points along a roadway by limiting the number of driveways and median openings, and restricting certain movements at some median openings.

## 8. Will this involve closing roads or limiting access to/from Highway 17 on local roads?

No. The intention of the access management plan is to improve access, not impede it. The recommendations in this plan do not call for permanent closures until after the creation of alternative access. Since safety is the agency's #1 one priority, Caltrans cannot guarantee that no closures will be made. However, the agency is committed to transparency and communication regarding any potential closings, and whenever possible, will conduct thorough public review of any plans to restrict access, even temporary closures.

## 9. How will driveways be managed?

Access management involves a combination of techniques and strategies. In addition to managing driveways, typical concepts may look at the location and design of turn lanes, medians, frontage roads, and interchanges, as well as land use policies.

## 10. What is the time length of the project?

The study is scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2016.

## 11. What is Caltrans decision-making criteria for selecting improvements or changes?

There is no "one size fits all" strategy for access management. Caltrans uses a context-based planning approach, meaning that individual solutions are developed to meet the needs and challenges of specific places and stakeholders. At the same time, planning and engineering personnel follow national regulations and standards that have been thoroughly tested and researched.

## Community and Stakeholder Involvement

## 12. Who is involved in the development of the study?

Caltrans initiated a partnership with the agencies and local entities that have transportation and land use responsibilities. The partnership includes Caltrans, the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission, County of Santa Cruz, City of Scotts Valley, and California Highway Patrol.

## 13. Who can provide feedback to Caltrans?

Caltrans values and seeks a variety of community and stakeholder input that represents the diversity of highway users and the local community. The general public is encouraged to attend community workshops and provide their feedback regarding Hwy 17. Caltrans will also involve key stakeholders such as public agencies, transportation providers, bicycle/pedestrian groups, emergency responders, community groups, environmental organizations, business associations, freight industries, and schools.

### Draft Improvement Concepts

## 14. What are the Draft Improvement Concepts for the Highway 17 study area?

The Draft Improvement Concepts, as shown [here](#), are preliminary ideas for improvements that may increase mobility and access, ease congestion, and maintain safety at specific points along Highway 17 within the study area. The concepts were identified through a performance assessment that considered mobility, access and safety for each of 18 segments of the road, determined points where improvement concepts were needed, and rated each in terms of low, intermediate, or high need. For the purposes of this study, need is defined not as the necessity of an improvement or whether a project is more or less likely to be implemented, but as the scale of potential benefit gained by each improvement. Input from the first round of community workshops held in November-December 2015 was also incorporated into the draft concepts.

A total of 36 draft concepts were identified. Caltrans chose to initially focus on three high need concepts involving grade separation. ("Grade separation" means that an interchange incorporates multiple levels such as over- or underpasses.) These draft concept areas are: Old Santa Cruz Highway; Sugarloaf Road/Laurel Road/Glenwood Cutoff; and Vine Hill Road. These concepts were presented to the public for review at the June 2016 community workshops.

## 15. How is "mobility" defined?

The ability to get from one point to another on the road.

## 16. Does the analysis incorporate accident/collision data?

It is not a direct part of the current analysis, which is focused on what can be done to improve access at conflict points. However, this data was included in studies which form the basis of this analysis. Caltrans does continually monitor safety data and address issues.

## 17. What about traffic data? Was it incorporated into the study, and does the study take projected future traffic increases into account?

Yes, both current traffic data and projections for traffic 40-50 years in the future are incorporated. Caltrans is aware that weekend tourist and beach traffic is a source of congestion in addition to commuter traffic.

### 18. Won't these improvements just worsen traffic on local roads and create new conflict points at other locations?

No, the Hwy 17 AMP is intended to help lessen traffic congestion on the highway, thereby removing the incentive to take local roads. As for creating new conflict points, removing conflict at one location will not necessarily cause conflict elsewhere. Although the concept maps appear to consider the conflict points in isolation, the study uses a holistic approach and considers the total benefit for the corridor as a whole.

### 19. What is the time frame for making these improvements or changes?

Each of the concepts would be implemented as a separate project, and there is a specific series of steps that must be carried out for each project (see the [Highway 17 AMP presentation](#), slide 6). These steps include required environmental studies, public review, design and engineering, and finally construction. Although an exact estimate cannot be given at this stage, the estimated minimum time frame would be approximately ten years for project development and twenty years until completion.

### 20. What about shorter-term improvements?

Caltrans' Safety Division looks at and implements safety solutions on an ongoing basis.

### 21. How much will these improvements cost, and what is the source of funding?

Funding and specific cost estimates will be developed at a later phase. There are a number of possible sources of funding, including local, regional, state, and federal. Caltrans is seeking to work with partners to leverage different funding sources. The estimated ballpark cost per project is roughly \$10 to \$100 million, depending on size and complexity.

### 22. How will the projects be prioritized?

Prioritization is not being done at this early stage. The concepts, refined by feedback, will be incorporated in a report for consideration within the long-range Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Projects will then be prioritized based on goals and objectives in the RTP. After that, environmental study, impact assessment, and outreach can begin for each project as prioritized.

### 23. What does it mean to designate conflict areas as "low," "intermediate," and "high need?" Do the "high need" projects get built first, and are the "low need" projects postponed or not carried out?

The definition of "need" used in the Hwy 17 AMP analysis is based on the scale of potential benefit gained by each improvement. In the future, there will be many factors determining the prioritization of projects and the order in which they are carried out.

### 24. The draft concepts as presented include roads or structures built on private land. How will Caltrans secure right-of-way on private property?

Once a preferred alternative for a given conflict point is identified, any real estate negotiations will be conducted with full disclosure. No land will be seized and no one will be forced to sell property. Landowners will be contacted in a transparent manner and informed of potential impacts.

### 25. There are details depicted incorrectly on the draft concept maps, such as houses missing, or impacts on local roads that do not appear to be considered. Will Caltrans take these into account?

The draft improvement concepts are just that—purely conceptual and preliminary. They are not designs or engineering documents. They were created using best-available data, aerial views, and design software. Before final designs are created (at a much later stage), Caltrans will conduct detailed on-the-ground surveys. Input from the community, with its knowledge of local routes, features, and impacts, will also be taken into account and is an invaluable part of this process.

### 26. Will multi-modal transportation methods, such as bicycle and pedestrian access and public transit, be considered as part of this plan?

Yes, improvements and facilities for all modes of transportation will be considered as part of the Hwy 17 AMP. While the focus for the Highway 17 mainline will continue to be motor vehicles, this plan's recommendations expand east-west crossing opportunities for bikes and pedestrians.

### 27. Will construction of the improvements disturb or close the highway?

There will be no permanent disturbance and closures will be kept to a minimum.

### 28. Will the improvements in the Laurel Curves area disturb the planned wildlife corridor?

The improvement concept for that area moves traffic further away from the planned wildlife corridor.

### 29. Is the instability of the land in the area, due to winter rains and other factors, being considered in plans for large areas of cut-and-fill involved in the improvement projects?

Cut-and-fill limits have been assessed and are shown as green lines on the concept maps. Any impacts will be limited as much as possible.

## Traffic Enforcement and Additional Issues

### 30. Isn't the real problem reckless, speeding or inattentive driving? Can't Caltrans just improve safety by increasing enforcement of traffic laws, without the need for expensive improvements?

Access improvements will help maintain safety on Highway 17. However, reckless driving is certainly a major concern. Caltrans is not directly responsible for enforcement; that is a matter for the California Highway Patrol (CHP). However, Caltrans works with the CHP and other partners as a member of the Safe on 17 Committee, and brings relevant issues to their attention at its biannual meetings.

### 31. Commercial trucks contribute to congestion and conflicts on Highway 17. Can truck traffic be banned, limited or regulated in some way?

Ideas regarding variable speed limits and restrictions on trucks will be studied and considered, but given that Highway 17 is the most viable freight route between Santa Cruz and Santa Clara, banning trucks entirely is neither possible nor desirable. As for creating a separate road for trucks, that is not cost-effective.

## For Further Information

### 32. What are the next steps in the process once the study is complete?

The concepts will be refined based on community feedback and a report will be completed. The recommendations included within the report are intended to be integrated into the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

### 33. How can I stay informed?

The project website is the best available resource for getting information about the Hwy 17 AMP. Visit [www.CA-hwy17amp.org](http://www.CA-hwy17amp.org)