

Spanish Creek Bridge Project

PLUMAS COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
02-PLU-70-PM 35.1/35.5
373100

Final Environmental Impact Report / Environmental Assessment and Section 4(f) Evaluation



Prepared by the
State of California Department of Transportation

The environmental review, consultation, and any other action required in accordance with applicable Federal laws for this project is being, or has been, carried out by Caltrans under its assumption of responsibility pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327.



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**Replacement of the Spanish Creek Bridge
(Bridge No. 09-0015) on State Route 70 in Plumas County near
Keddie**

**FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT /
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND SECTION 4(F)
EVALUATION**

Submitted Pursuant to: (State) Division 13, Public Resources Code
(Federal) 42 USC 4332(2)(C) and 49 U.S.C. 303

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Transportation

12/30/08
Date of Approval


JOHN BULINSKI
District Director
California Department of Transportation
District 2



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

FOR

Spanish Creek Bridge Replacement Project
02-373100-PLU-70-PM 35.1/35.5

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has determined that Alternative B (Construction of a new bridge and removal of the existing bridge) will have no significant impact on the human environment. The FONSI is based on the attached Environmental Assessment (EA), which has been independently evaluated by Caltrans and determined to adequately and accurately discuss the need, environmental issues, and impacts of the proposed project and appropriate mitigation measures. It provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an EIS is not required. Caltrans takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope, and content of the attached EA.

The environmental review, consultation, and any other action required in accordance with applicable Federal laws for this project is being, or has been, carried-out by Caltrans under its assumption of responsibility pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327.



John Bulinski, District Director
Caltrans, District 2

12/30/08

Date



Summary

Caltrans is proposing replacement of the Spanish Creek Bridge (Bridge No. 09-0015) on State Route (SR) 70 in Plumas County, post mile 35.3, near the community of Keddie. The proposed project is a joint undertaking by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and is subject to state and federal environmental review requirements. Project documentation, therefore, has been prepared in compliance with both the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Caltrans is the lead agency under CEQA. In addition, FHWA's responsibility for environmental review, consultation, and any other action required in accordance with applicable Federal laws for this project is being, or has been, carried out by Caltrans under its assumption of responsibility pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327, effective July 1, 2007.

SR 70 is a two-lane conventional highway that connects SR 99 near Sacramento in Sutter County and U.S. Route 395 in southeastern Lassen County. The Spanish Creek Bridge is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. It is also a contributive element of the Feather River Highway Historic District (SR 70 from post mile 35.37 in Butte County to post mile 36.0 in Plumas County), which is also a National Register eligible property.

The purpose of this project is to provide a road crossing that meets modern highway design standards and accommodates interregional transportation needs. The existing Spanish Creek Bridge was constructed in 1932 and is approaching the end of its service life. The bridge exhibits signs of structural fatigue, does not meet modern seismic standards, lacks standard shoulder width, and cannot accommodate some large permit loads due to lane width and structural limitations for weight loading.

Due to traffic load restrictions on the existing bridge and the condition of the structural steel, permit loads on this section of SR 70 are often denied. The bridge is approximately 23 feet wide between curbs and has an 80,000 lb. maximum load restriction. Fires, landslides, and train derailments have occurred in the Feather River Canyon requiring the deployment of heavy equipment. PG&E, Union Pacific Railroad, and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection have been denied access through the area in the past due to the weight restriction. In addition, SR 70 is occasionally used as a secondary route for truck traffic crossing the Sierra Nevada mountain range when Interstate 80 is closed due to weather or other circumstances. Bridges on SR 70 located west of the Spanish Creek Bridge had the same seismic deficiencies and load restrictions. A project to correct these deficiencies was completed in 2006, at which time, the Spanish Creek Bridge

became the only remaining structure on SR 70 that limits permit loads. The Spanish Creek Bridge also does not have standard width shoulders, which makes maintenance difficult do to the need for traffic control and potential lane closures.

Two build alternatives and a No Build alternative were developed to address the purpose and need for the project. A fourth alternative (Alternative C) was considered, yet this alternative would only delay the need for eventual replacement of the bridge and was therefore eliminated from further consideration. However, since this eliminated alternative offered avoidance of impacts to historic resources, it was included in the Section 4(f) Evaluation in Appendix B of this document.

Alternatives considered for this project included:

- Alternative A - construction of a new bridge and seismically retrofit the existing bridge.
- Alternative B - construction of a new bridge and removal of the existing bridge.
- Alternative D - the “No Build” alternative, which assumes the existing bridge would be maintained and substantial improvements would not be made.

Based on an evaluation of environmental impacts, consideration of public input, and approval of the Final EIR/EA, Caltrans has identified Alternative B (Build New Bridge and Remove Existing Bridge) as the preferred alternative. Alternative B provides a modern, low maintenance bridge with standard shoulder width. The bridge will accommodate interregional transportation needs, including large permit loads. Traffic will remain on the existing bridge during construction of the replacement bridge, thereby reducing traffic delays and the need for a detour. The existing bridge will be removed upon completion of the new bridge, which will eliminate the cost associated with the routine monitoring and maintenance of the deteriorating structure.

The proposed project also considered two different alignments, Alignments 2 and 4. Alignment 2 has been carried forward, however, Alignment 4 was eliminated from further consideration due to potentially greater impacts upon the environment.

All of the build alternatives would require a construction staging area at each corner of the bridge at highway elevation and beneath the bridge at stream elevation. The main construction staging area would be situated beneath the bridge. An extensive falsework system would be required to support the existing and proposed bridges during construction and demolition. In addition, significant amounts of materials, equipment, and workers would need to be transferred to and from the main construction staging area beneath the bridge. Methods of accessing the main

staging area are limited due to the steep terrain. Standard cranes do not have the reach and lifting capabilities, nor are they efficient in terms of speed and the number of tasks they can accomplish in a given timeframe. Construction of a temporary construction access road system from the highway elevation to the area beneath the bridge is not feasible due to steep terrain and limited area. Based on an assessment of potential access points at each corner of the bridge, it was determined that it would not be feasible to construct an access road with grades and turning radii necessary to accommodate various types of construction vehicles. Natural barriers include the steep terrain, railroad, highway, and creek. Even if there were sufficient area, the creation of a temporary access road would result in increased environmental impacts due to factors such as increased vegetation removal, erosion potential, habitat destruction, aesthetic impacts, and a prolonged construction timeframe. Therefore, it is proposed to utilize the existing Spanish Creek Campground access road. The paved access road has sufficient width and leads to an open area at stream elevation where a temporary trestle would be constructed to access the opposite side of the creek. From the opposite side of the creek, the road would be extended, avoiding some of the larger trees, to the main staging area beneath the bridge. For safety purposes, the campground would be closed for the duration of major bridge construction operations. An assessment of impacts upon the campground and proposed mitigation measures are discussed in the Section 4(f) Evaluation in Appendix B of this document.

Implementation of either Alternative A or B would require the acquisition of approximately 2.7 acres of additional highway right-of-way immediately west of the existing highway. In addition, existing overhead utility lines that cross the highway in the vicinity of the campground entrance, and then run parallel to the west side of the highway, would require relocation.

Some impacts determined to be significant under CEQA may not lead to a determination of significance under NEPA. Because NEPA is concerned with the significance of the project as a whole, it is quite often the case that a “lower level” document is prepared for NEPA. One of the most commonly seen joint document types is an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (EIR/EA).

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, codified in federal law at 49 U.S.C 303, declares that “it is the policy of the United States Government that special effort should be made to preserve the natural beauty of the countryside and public park and recreation lands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites.”

Section 4(f) specifies that the Secretary of Transportation may approve a transportation program or project requiring use of publicly owned land of a public park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge of national, state, or local significance, or land of an historic site of national, state, or local significance (as

determined by the federal, state, or local officials having jurisdiction over the park, area, refuge, or site) only if:

1. there is no prudent and feasible alternative to using that land; and
2. the program or project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the park, recreation area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or historic site resulting from the use.

Section 4(f) further requires consultation with the Department of the Interior and, as appropriate, the involved offices of the Departments of Agriculture and Housing and Urban Development in developing transportation projects and programs which use lands protected by Section 4(f). If historic sites are involved, then coordination with the State Historic Preservation Officer is also needed.

The following Section 4(f) resources have been identified: The Spanish Creek Bridge, Feather River Highway Historic District, Plumas National Forest Recreation Area, Maxwell Ditch segment, and the Utah Construction Road segment.

Following are some of the consequences and estimated construction costs for the respective Alternatives:

| | Alternative A (new bridge/seismic retrofit existing bridge) | Alternative B (new bridge/demolish existing bridge) | Alternative D ("no build") |
|---|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| Significant effect upon Historic Bridge | Yes | Yes | Eventually |
| Require use of Campground | Yes | Yes | No |
| Affect Historic Highway District | Yes | Yes | No |
| Satisfy Purpose & Need | Yes | Yes | No |
| Estimated Construction Cost (\$millions) from 2003 PSSR | \$29.2 | \$21.3 | N/a |

The following regulatory permits will be necessary:

- California Department of Fish and Game, Region 2 - Streambed Alteration Agreement pursuant to Section 1602 of the Fish and Game code
- United States Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District – Department of the Army permit pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act
- Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region - Water Quality Certification pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act



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List of Technical Studies Bound Separately