

Meeting notes:

Mono Lake Shoulder Widening Project (26990_) PDT Meeting 0900 3-21-2001

Introductions-quickly went through self introductions

The issue of a separate bicycle path was brought up as an alternative to providing 8 foot shoulders. Bicycle issues are not specifically addressed in the scoping document, other than that bicycle safety will be improved through the introduction of wider shoulders. The basic need and purpose of the project is to address operational concerns, bicycle vs. vehicles being one of those. A separate bike path would address a portion of the concern, but does not address the vehicular portion of the need. Caltrans will help pursue a separate bike path project (if one is truly desired). There is a bike lane account that could be a primary source of some funds. Tea funds are somewhat limited, but may also be used. This may need to be addressed in the Draft Environmental Document as an environmental alternative. A bike path cannot be on the lake side of the road, according to the State Parks representative.

The possibility of including an alternative for four-foot shoulders. Showed some cross sections and discussed the changes in environmental impact between 8 foot and 4 foot shoulders. The width on the hillside would not change because it is controlled by the need to have a rockfall catchment area, therefore the overall decrease in ground disturbance is roughly 4 feet horizontally on the lake side. This would still mean that the slopes would be disturbed and a new slope (or retaining wall) constructed.

A discussion ensued as to what opportunity there is for actually improving the visual experience for the overall project, while still meeting the basic desire of the State to conform to the statewide standards. The team was challenged to come up with ideas to improve the viewscape or other aspects of the environment (water quality, fisheries, etc). The State's Landscape Architects are working on some before and after pictures (digitally enhanced photos) of what some scenes could look like after construction. These representations should be available at the public meeting currently planned for June.

Some ideas were tossed into the ring based on these comments, such as: looking into the possibility of a cantilevered road section (viaduct) in areas where walls or fill slopes may be significant. Look at eliminating the rock disposal practice of pushing them over the edge of the adjacent fill slope.

Need to look at the major rockfall areas and see if there is some other method (aside from or in conjunction with catchment area) of rockfall protection. Netting of some type was recommended for a couple of the slopes to hold the hillside in place. Revegetation of the cut side of the road at some locations will be very difficult to deal with because of the steep slopes.

No conclusions have been made at this time on the issue of impacts to the deer migration due to high walls along the roadside. The studies are pretty much done, but there has been no report on the findings yet. The area near the Shrimp plant is a high deer crossing area, also at the Marina area. These could be impacted if walls in these areas are very high.

The current estimate is that there could be about 1100 meters of walls. The average height of the wall south of Tioga Lodge is about 14 feet, with a maximum of 23 feet. North of Tioga Lodge, the wall averages about 7 feet high with a maximum of 8 feet. Many of the walls on the north end of the job are for the cut side. The team talked about various wall types and how the design criteria will change depending on the type selected. This makes it difficult to come up with hard numbers for size of walls.

A reminder to treat this area as a special place, as there is only one area like this, and we need to make it a beautiful and desirable place to visit.

Marina access. Enhancement funds may be available to make improvements to the marina area parking and access road. This may be able to be funded out of the highway project by calling this a vista point. The highway access will be improved as part of the project (left and right turn pockets). The State Parks will be looking at what they would like to accomplish for improvements to this lake access area. There could be some impacts to the environmental process since the area down by the lake has not been studied as part of the area of potential impact. The people who just drive through may be encouraged to stop if this were improved into something of a 'vista point' with inviting access from the highway.

Pull out locations and how many. We talked about the idea of putting one or more on the west side of the road to provide for SB vista opportunities without encouraging vehicle to cross the highway to the east. Asked everyone to look for possible locations as they drive through this area over the next few weeks. The team had a good discussion on the selection of pullouts. Issue came up about camping and truck parking in the pullouts. This could be signed to prohibit overnight parking, but would then become an enforcement problem. Maybe look into the possibility of having pictures from each of the likely turnouts available at the public meeting. Do we want to look at the possibility of going with a full viewpoint road connection versus just pullouts, and where would we put this. One suggestion was for a location north of the current project limits (just north of Cemetery Road). This could certainly be considered, but the risks to the schedule of the project need to be recognized, as the environmental process would have to begin again to cover this area. Attached to these meeting notes is a list of all likely candidate pullout locations (engineering, safety, and view). The team will visit each of the potential sites at our next PDT meeting.

We discussed the speed of the vehicles through this section, and a general desire from some in attendance to avoid doing anything that could encourage higher speeds. The road currently meets a design standard of about 50-55 mph. The State would like to meet the standard for the current posted speed limit of 60 mph. This would entail some modifications to some of the existing curves.

Showed some alternative types of guard railing. Those shown are not necessarily what could be used, or approved. They were shown just to indicate what types of railing systems that are out there. Concern over the current standard Metal Beam Guard Rail(MBGR) was discussed, to see if we could modify it to make it acceptable. The primary objection is that it is shiny. The state may be able to address this, and we will look into this possibility and report back at the next PDT.

Private access and businesses. Team informed that impacts to individual property owners and businesses will be addressed individually with each of the property owners. Any impacts to the project will be reported to the PDT.

Design issues. We had a discussion on removing cut slopes on the east side of the roadway. This would allow an unobstructed view of the lake, as well as provide some of the material needed to build the project. It would also allow us to get rid of some steep slopes that have little or no vegetation, by making them flatter and planting native plant matter on them to provide a more pleasing appearance in the future. One of the cuts is just south of the Picnic ground (marina access) road. This location may make a good vista point as well.

At the public meeting (sometime in June) we should be able to have some renditions of what walls may look like, and example photos of various types of walls. Need to be sure to look into utilizing different things at different locations. For example, use standard rail in some locations, then use the more aesthetic wall types at the pullouts or where the visibility could be enhanced greatly. Also look at using different wall types at different locations to break up the monolithic appearance. Need to look into making sure the wall does not become a graffiti board the full length of the project view from the visitor center and or the marina.

SCOTT BURNS, LTC: LTC meeting on April 9, this could be the forum for the LTC to be updated on some the project issues and risks

GWEN, Mono County: Need to address how the deer crossings area affected by the guard rail.

LARRY JOHNSTON, Mono County: April 4th is an RPAC meeting, Tim Shultz will attend to update the RPAC on current status of projects including this one.

TOM HALLENBECK, CT District Director: Be sure to bring everything to the PDT meetings from those that you represent. It is important that the team understand what everyone's concerns and desires are.

DESIGN what should the name of the project be? No resolution on this issue.

JOAN RONCI, Board of Supervisors. Need to keep the constituents informed. Need to get the word out to various agencies and Board of Supervisors. There is a need to brief the Town Council of Mammoth Lakes so that they are aware of what is going on. Need to have some good 'set' details on the project before we go out to the various agencies and government entities.

JERRY wants to present the traffic data for this stretch of road. He would like to be on the agenda for the next meeting to present this.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 9 at 0900, at the Visitor Center, with a field trip to the candidate pullout locations.

ACTION ITEMS:

Landscape Architect: continue working on photographic depiction of what walls and or slopes may look like after construction. These are to be available at the June Public meeting.

Design: Provide a list of all of the pullout locations that are being considered at this time. And mark their location in the filed so that everyone can look at them over the next several weeks. Continue to investigate alternative guard rail systems, and look into the modification of the standard system to be less shiny.