

## **8 | Visual Impact Assessment (January 2020)**



# Memorandum

*Making Conservation  
a California Way of Life.*

**To:** JENNIFER GAGNON  
ASSOCIATE ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNER  
CALTRANS - DISTRICT 1  
NORTH REGION ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

**Date:** January 17, 2020

**File:** 01-MEN-1  
PM 59.8/62.1  
01-0B220  
EFIS: 0112000110  
Fort Bragg ADA

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Caltrans - District 1  
North Region Division of Project Development

**Subject: VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed ADA pedestrian infrastructure project is located on State Route (SR) 1 in Mendocino County between PM 59.8 and 62.1. The project proposes the following improvement measures: replacing/installing curb ramps, sidewalks, driveways, and crosswalk pavement markings, as well as installing a new retaining wall.

The project proposes to reconstruct and/or construct curb ramps from PM 59.8 to 61.2 and PM 61.7 to 62.1. From PM 59.8 to 60.0, between SR 20 and Boatyard Drive/Ocean View Drive, approximately 1200 linear feet of new sidewalk and an 860 lineal foot retaining wall is proposed on the east side. The retaining wall height would vary but would be up to 6 feet tall. From PM 60.0 to 60.2, between Boatyard Drive/Ocean View Drive and Noyo River Bridge, one driveway reconstruction and approximately 800 linear feet of new sidewalk is proposed on the west side. From PM 61.7 to 61.9, between Fir Street and Spruce Street, three driveway reconstructions and approximately 400 linear feet of sidewalk reconstruction is proposed on the east side. 150 linear feet of sidewalk reconstruction is proposed on the west side. From PM 61.9 to 62.0, between Spruce Street and Elm Street, one driveway reconstruction and approximately 150 linear feet of sidewalk reconstruction is proposed on the east side. Three driveway reconstructions and approximately 200 linear feet of new sidewalk is proposed on the west side.

## PROJECT LOCATION AND SETTING

The proposed project is located on SR 1 in Mendocino County, between the SR 20/SR 1 intersection and Pudding Creek Bridge. The project limits are within the City of Fort Bragg. SR 1 traverses much of California's coast, following nearly the full length of the Mendocino County coastline. The project is located within the Coastal Zone. SR 1 is eligible for designation as a State Scenic Highway. The entire Route 1 corridor within the county is considered sensitive regarding visual and scenic resources and is known for enduring views of coastal bluffs and the Pacific Ocean, both of which are visible from the project site. The

County recommends that the entire length of SR 1 located within the county be designated as a Scenic Highway. Under the Scenic Highways Element of the County's General Plan many visual elements within the project corridor are considered scenic resources, including valleys and ridges, river views, seascape, urban fringe, and natural wildlife and wildlife habitats. These scenic resources are predominantly in the background of the visual corridor where the work is proposed. SR 1 serves as an essential life-line for residents of the Mendocino Coast. Fort Bragg is the largest City on the Route within the county and is a destination point for locals and tourists. The Route is a popular choice for tourists using both motorized and non-motorized means of travel due to the scenic nature of the area. The Route is legislatively designated as part of the Pacific Coast Bike Route (PCBR). The California Coastal Trail (CCT) is located on a section of the project corridor.

SR 1 within the project limits is an urban and rural-urban highway, varying from four-lanes to two-lanes, and is functionally classified as a Rural Minor Arterial. The project traverses the City of Fort Bragg's Main Street. The posted speed limit ranges from 25 MPH to 40 MPH. Available sidewalk facilities are inconsistent. Hardscape and softscape elements are consistently present through the corridor, however, level of upkeep varies. The corridor is characterized by general commercial, highway visitor commercial, parks and recreation, and central business land use zones. There are intermittent views of the Pacific Ocean from the corridor, with enduring views when crossing Noyo River Bridge, as well as views of Noyo River and the harbor from the bridge.

Viewers of the project include highway users and highway neighbors. Highway users predominantly include locals, tourists, commercial trucks, cyclists, and pedestrians. Highway neighbors are local businesses, business patrons, and residents. It is anticipated that viewers would have a higher level of response to any changes within the visual environment due to the higher level of exposure and sensitivity viewers have to the area.

## **VISUAL IMPACT**

It is not anticipated that viewers would be substantially impacted by the proposed project. Visual changes would occur due to a new retaining structure, sidewalk, curb ramp, and driveway upgrades, new sidewalk installation, and vegetation removal.

It is anticipated that installation of the 6-foot high retaining wall would result in low to low-moderate visual impacts. At the intersection of SR 20 and Boatyard Drive there is an existing 8-foot tall retaining wall that then lowers to approximately 3 feet and follows SR 20 to the curb ramp at the intersection of SR 20 and SR 1. The existing wall is currently visible to Route 1 viewers. The proposed wall would be an extension of the existing wall and is anticipated to be the same type, as well as include the same aesthetic treatment. Installation of the wall would result in vegetation removal as the slope is currently vegetated with grasses and shrubs. Vegetation will still be a dominant feature growing on the hillside above the wall, and is not anticipated to impact the visual character or quality of the Route

Upgrades and new sidewalk would lead to a visual change from distressed concrete to new concrete, resulting in an increase in visual quality. The color of the new pavement and sidewalk would contrast in some locations with existing sidewalk until natural weathering occurs. This would result in minimal visual impacts.

In some locations the installation of new sidewalk would result in the removal of planters and vegetation. Just south of the SR 1/Boatyard Drive intersection, on the northbound side, a large hedge and a portion of an ornamental planting area would be removed. There is another hedge located just behind the hedge scoped to be removed. This hedge has a similar size and character, and therefore would not result in negative visual impacts. Removal of some plants in the ornamental planting area would result in low visual impacts as a narrower planting area would remain. Between Spruce and Elm Streets, planter areas would be removed on both sides of the highway. Both are currently relatively bare with weeds. Removal of these planter areas would result in low visual impacts.

During construction, neighbors and travelers would have views of heavy construction equipment, construction signs and other equipment used for traffic control and material related to roadway construction. Because of construction work, traveling speeds would be reduced, which would result in greater exposure to visual impacts for highway users. These temporary visual impacts are considered part of the general construction landscape.

The proposed project will have no visual impacts on a scenic vista or scenic resources. The project will not degrade the existing visual character or quality and will not create a new source of substantial light or glare.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Match the color of any reconstructed sidewalk to the existing adjacent sidewalk.

Match the color of new truncated domes to others used in the City and on SR 1 in Fort Bragg.

Consider replanting areas of disturbance where plants were removed due to construction activities.

Consider including a context-sensitive architectural design on the wall to enhance the visual character of the area.

