



# City of Santa Barbara California

## PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

**REPORT DATE:** May 3, 2012  
**AGENDA DATE:** May 10, 2012  
**PROJECT AREA:** Highway 101 between Sycamore Creek and Olive Mill Rd.  
**TO:** Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Planning Division, (805) 564-5470  
 Danny Kato, Senior Planner *DK*  
 Daniel Gullett, Associate Planner *DPG*

### I. SUBJECT

The purpose of the environmental hearing is to receive comments from the Planning Commission on the adequacy and completeness of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the South Coast 101 HOV Lanes Project. Written comments on the Draft EIR, incorporating concerns raised by the Planning Commission will be prepared by City staff and submitted to Caltrans prior to the close of the comment period on Friday May 25, 2012. **No action on the Draft EIR or project approval will be taken at this hearing.**

### II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Caltrans proposes to modify Highway 101 to provide a part-time, continuous access High Occupancy Vehicle lane in each direction on Highway 101 extending from Carpinteria Creek in the City of Carpinteria to Cabrillo Blvd. in the City of Santa Barbara. The project begins 0.22 miles south of the Bailard Ave. overcrossing in the City of Carpinteria and extends to the Sycamore Creek bridge in the City of Santa Barbara. The portion of the project within the City of Santa Barbara's jurisdiction is between the Sycamore Creek bridge and Olive Mill Road bridge.

Three build alternatives and the No-Build Alternative were analyzed for the overall project. In addition, five independent alternative configurations for the Cabrillo Blvd. interchange were analyzed.

Each of the three build alternatives is identical within the City's jurisdiction between the Olive Mill Bridge and the interface with the Cabrillo interchange alternative configurations (just east of the Hermosillo Rd. Exit), and would result in the elimination of the planted median in that section. One soundwall is being considered within the City's jurisdiction for the top of the slope along the southbound side of the freeway near Olive Mill Road.

The five Cabrillo Blvd. interchange alternative configurations – F (Southbound Half Diamond), F Modified (Tight Diamond), J (Los Patos On- and Off-Ramps), M (Northbound Half Diamond, Los Patos On- and Off-Ramps, Eliminate Hermosillo Exit), and M Modified (Northbound Half Diamond, Los Patos On- and Off-Ramps) - would result in substantial changes to the area between Los Patos Way and Hermosillo Road (see Exhibit 1). Each of the five configurations result in closure of the

northbound and southbound median off ramps at Cabrillo, and additions to or replacement of the existing bridges over Cabrillo Blvd. Alternatives J, M, and M Modified include hook ramps at Los Patos Way and a new, higher railroad bridge, which requires raising the railroad profile. Alternatives F Modified and M Modified would keep the northbound exit at Hermosillo, and add a new northbound exit on the outside of the mainline at Cabrillo. Alternative (M) would eliminate the northbound Hermosillo exit, and add the new northbound exit at Cabrillo, and Alternatives F and J would keep the northbound Hermosillo exit, and not construct a new northbound Cabrillo exit.

### **III. REQUIRED APPLICATIONS**

The proposed project requires a Coastal Development Permit from the Planning Commission and design review by the Architectural Board of Review and the Historic Landmarks Commission. Caltrans anticipates submitting Coastal Development Permit and design review applications to each jurisdiction Spring 2013, after certifying the Final EIR.

### **IV. RECOMMENDATION**

Receive a Staff presentation outlining the environmental and public review process, summarizing the Draft EIR analysis, and providing Staff comments on the Draft EIR, and hold a public hearing to receive Planning Commission comments on the Draft EIR. Members of the public should submit comments in writing directly to Caltrans as indicated below.

### **V. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Environmental review of the project is being conducted pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), since this is a joint project by the Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration. Under CEQA, Caltrans is the Lead Agency and the City is a Responsible Agency, with discretionary review of the project.

The Draft EIR found unavoidable, significant cumulative and project-specific impacts in visual/aesthetics. Significant, but mitigable impacts were identified in the areas of Cultural Resources, Paleontology, Water Quality, and Biological Resources (temporary and permanent impacts to riparian habitat, and wetlands, removal of oak trees and landscaping, and possible take of endangered steelhead trout and tidewater goby). Less than significant adverse impacts were identified in the area of Noise.

No adverse impacts were identified by the Draft EIR in the following resource areas: Farmlands/Timberlands, Energy, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Relocations, Plan Species, Community Character and Cohesion, Geology/Soils/Seismic/Topography, Hydrology/Floodplains, Recreation, and Hazards and Hazardous Materials.

The significance of traffic impacts in the City is unclear in the body of the Draft EIR.

### **VI. INITIAL STAFF DRAFT EIR COMMENTS**

The following is a summary of initial comments from City Staff on the Draft EIR.

1. Plans/Policies – The Draft EIR should list applicable City plans and policies and show whether the project is potentially consistent or inconsistent with those plans and policies. Please be aware that if the Planning Commission and City Council cannot find that the project is

consistent with the policies of the City's Local Coastal Plan and the Coastal Act, the project may not be approved.

2. Cabrillo Interchange - The five alternative Cabrillo interchange configurations in the Draft EIR exclude resolution of project impacts at the Cabrillo Blvd./Los Patos Way intersection, exclude information on the existing and future bike and pedestrian facilities through the interchange, and require further evaluation to ensure that Configurations F and F Modified will function as described.
3. Olive Mill and Coast Village Road – The Draft EIR describes that this intersection will get worse, but does not propose a solution. The intersection currently operates at Level of Service (LOS) F and will further degrade with the proposed project. The Draft EIR should fully describe the current inadequacy of the intersection, the project's impact on it, and propose solutions to improve the LOS.
4. Traffic Study - The Draft EIR does not include the project-specific and cumulative impacts to city intersections identified in the Caltrans' SC101 HOV Traffic Study – Forecast Operations Report (October 19, 2009). This information should be included in the EIR.
5. Aesthetics – The Draft EIR appears inconsistent in its analysis of impacts among Cabrillo interchange options. The level of aesthetic impacts from the changes to the Cabrillo interchange and the remainder of the project within the City is unclear in the document. In the discussion of the visual simulations, the descriptions of impacts from aesthetic changes indicate that impacts are less significant than staff believes they are. All proposed mitigation measures to reduce impacts within the City's jurisdiction should be included whether or not the soundwalls in Summerland are eliminated from the project.
6. Cultural – The Draft EIR does not consider historic impacts in the vicinity of Cabrillo Blvd. and Los Patos Way. The Draft EIR should fully describe impacts to historic sites/structures and archaeology. Caltrans should provide historic sites/structures and archaeology reports to HLC for review and approval as required by the Master Environmental Assessment Guidelines prior to any changes to the EIR.
7. Biology – Three Cabrillo interchange configurations include new ramps at Los Patos Way and temporary relocation of the rail line toward the Bird Refuge. The Andree Clark Bird Refuge should be included in the Area of Potential Biological Effect in the Draft EIR and project effects on the Bird Refuge should be analyzed.
8. Storm Water – The Draft EIR must consider compliance with the City's Storm Water Management Program for the portions of the project within the City.
9. Noise – The Draft EIR must use the City's General Plan noise thresholds to determine noise impacts of the project.

## **VII. PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS**

The public review period for the Draft EIR began on Friday March 23, 2012. Caltrans held public hearings on the Draft EIR on April 24 & 25, 2012. Comments on the Draft EIR must be submitted to Caltrans by Friday May 25, 2012. City staff will forward a letter with Planning Commission comments heard at this hearing, as well as City Staff comments to Caltrans. Public comments should be submitted in writing directly to Caltrans (by email to [South.Coast.101.HOV@dot.ca.gov](mailto:South.Coast.101.HOV@dot.ca.gov) or by mail to Matt Fowler, Senior Environmental Planner, Environmental Analysis, California Department of Transportation, 50 Higuera Street San Luis Obispo, CA 93401).

Following the end of the public comment period on the Draft EIR, Caltrans will consider all written comments, and will prepare a Final EIR, including written responses to comments, and any clarifications or revisions to the document or analysis needed. Caltrans would certify the Final EIR prior to submitting applications for Coastal Development Permits.

Although the City is not responsible for certifying the Final EIR, the City will be relying on the EIR in its decision making process. At this time, it is important for the City to provide feedback to Caltrans regarding the adequacy of the Draft EIR to ensure that the Final EIR complies with CEQA and serves the City's purposes in consideration of the project. City comments should focus on any shortcomings of the EIR or on additional alternatives or mitigation measures the EIR should include.

Prior to reaching a decision on the Coastal Development Permit, the Planning Commission must consider the environmental effects of the project as shown in the Final EIR, adopt alternatives or mitigation measures that would that would substantially lessen or avoid any significant effect the project would have on the environment, and make findings for each significant effect on the environment. In considering alternatives and mitigation measures, the Planning Commission will only be responsible for mitigating the direct or indirect environmental effects of those parts of the project it decides to approve.

### **Exhibits:**

1. Proposed Cabrillo Boulevard Intersection Configurations
2. Draft Environmental Impact Report (previously distributed to the Planning Commission), is available for review at the Central Library (40 E. Anapamu St.), Eastside Library (1102 E. Montecito St.), Montecito Branch Library (1469 East Valley Rd.), Carpinteria City Library (5141 Carpinteria Ave.) and at: [www.dot.ca.gov/dist05/projects/sb\\_101hov](http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist05/projects/sb_101hov)



Figure 2-10 Existing Configuration of U.S. 101-Cabrillo Boulevard Interchange



Figure 2-11 Conceptual Image of Interchange Configuration F



**Figure 2-12 Conceptual Image of Interchange Configuration F Modified**



Figure 2-13 Conceptual Image of Interchange Configuration J



**Figure 2-14 Conceptual Image of Interchange Configuration M**



**Figure 2-15 Conceptual Image of Interchange Configuration M Modified**