

SCH NO. _____

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: California Dept. of Transportation
703 B Street
Marysville, CA 95901

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report

Reference: California Code of Regulations, Title 14, (CEQA Guidelines) Sections 15082(a), 15103, 15375.

Project Title: Echo Summit Bridge Project

Project Location: U.S. Highway 50 (US 50) Post Mile 67.30

Project Description: The project proposes to rehabilitate or replace the Echo Summit Bridge to address structural deficiencies caused by material wear in supporting piers and on the bridge deck. Project alternatives include replacement or repair of the structure in addition to a no build alternative.

This is to inform you that the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) will be the lead agency and will prepare an environmental impact report for the project described below. Your participation as a responsible agency is requested in the preparation and review of this document.

We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project.

A project description, location map, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

Please direct your response via US Mail to Suzanne Melim, Environmental Branch Chief, Caltrans District 3, 703 B Street, Marysville, CA 95901 or email suzanne.melim@dot.ca.gov.

Please supply us with the name for a contact person in your agency.

Date 2/9/2015

Signature Suzanne Melim for

John Webb, Chief
Office of Environmental Management

Project Description

The purpose of this project is to rehabilitate or replace the Echo Summit Sidehill Bridge (Bridge #25-0044) in El Dorado County, 7 miles west of South Lake Tahoe on US 50, at post mile 67.30. Inspections reveal that the existing 76-year-old reinforced concrete girder bridge is in poor condition. High chloride content concrete has resulted in damage to support piers and to the deck surface.

Project Alternatives

The project proposes to replace the Echo Summit Bridge and at this time, in addition to a No-Build alternative, there are five build alternatives being evaluated: one rehabilitation and four replacement alternatives. The four replacement alternatives all propose to use a precast/prestressed (PC/PS) girder construction method. The PC/PS girder method has all the formwork and placement/curing of the concrete occurring at the precast yard. The girders are then trucked to the site and hoisted into place. This method eliminates the need to erect false work, build formwork, and place and cure the concrete on-site. The PC/PS method is expected to save numerous working days and reduce the disturbance beneath the bridge.

Alternative 1A:

Remove the existing 24-foot wide bridge and replace it with a 26-foot wide bridge. This option meets standards for lane width (12 ft). This alternative would be completed in one construction season. See table below for specific duration and closure scenarios.

Alternative 1B:

Remove the existing 24-foot wide bridge and replace it with a 26-foot wide bridge. This option meets standards for lane width (12ft). This alternative would be completed in two construction seasons. See table below for more information on duration and closure scenarios.

Alternative 2A:

Remove the existing 24-foot wide bridge and replace it with a 30-foot wide bridge. This option meets standards for lane width (12ft) and allows room for bicycle traffic. This alternative would be completed in two construction seasons. See table below for specific duration and closure scenarios.

Alternative 2B:

Remove the existing 24 foot wide bridge and replace it with a 30-foot wide bridge. This option meets standards for lane width (12ft) and allows room for bicycle traffic. This alternative would be completed in two construction seasons as with Alternative 2A but with a slightly shorter duration. See table below for specific duration and closure scenarios.

Alternative 3:

This option repairs the bridge and retains the existing lane widths (11ft) with the only improvements being made to the structure of the bridge. This alternative would be completed in two construction seasons; however, this alternative may take longer than planned because the true extent of structural damage is unknown at this time. See table below for specific duration and closure scenarios.

Alternative 4:

No build. This alternative does not address the need to rehabilitate or replace the bridge. The previously mentioned deficient structural component will continue to deteriorate and the associated maintenance costs will increase. To avoid unscheduled closure of the bridge due to safety, Caltrans does not consider the no build alternative to be in the public interest.

		Build Alternatives Comparison				
		1A	1B	2A	2B	3
Construction Variations	Final Bridge Width	26ft	26ft	30.75ft	30.75ft	24ft
	Number of Construction Seasons	1	2	2	2	2
	Construction Days*	120-150	100-130	200-230	160-190	150-180
	Days of Full Closure*	60-90	20-50	0	0	20-50
	Days of one-way traffic control*	10-30	50-70	200-230	160-190	90-120
	Preliminary Cost Estimate	\$5.2M	\$5.2M	\$5.2M	\$5.3M	\$6.1M

*Preliminary estimate

Discussion of Potential Impacts

Caltrans environmental specialists are in the process of establishing complete environmental study limits (ESL) for the various resources within the project. The ESL will cover the following activities for the build alternatives: road widening, bridge work, road cut/fill, detours, grinding, disposal/borrow sites, equipment staging area, drainage/culverts, ground disturbance, and pile driving. Preliminary resource considerations are identified below.

Visual/Aesthetics

US 50 is an officially designated State Scenic Highway. This designation warrants special attention. The highway at the project location includes expansive views of Christmas Valley below and Lake Tahoe to the northeast. Views of the bridge itself are limited from the road given the configuration of the highway at the project location. The viaduct can be seen at a distance from Christmas Valley below. Because the bridge is listed as a contributing element to the historic highway, any repairs or replacement of the structure must be consistent with the overall visual context of the highway. Every build alternative would include the construction of new barrier rails with stacked rock aesthetic treatment.

Air Quality

Construction of the project could result in temporary impacts to air quality. Avoidance and minimization measures would be implemented to minimize these impacts.

Biological Resources

Based on the initial project work and brief review of the species lists retrieved from appropriate databases, the project is not likely to have measureable effects on protected species and habitats. The project is unlikely to affect wetlands or other waters of the U.S. present in the project area; however, wetland resources were identified adjacent to a proposed staging area at the Echo Summit Maintenance Station west of the project site on US 50. Caltrans will incorporate avoidance and minimization measures during the project development phase.

Cultural Resources

Archaeology: No known archaeological resources have been identified at this preliminary phase within the proposed project's ESL.

Built Environment: The proposed replacement or repair of the Echo Summit Bridge will require consultation with the State Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) to discuss project impacts and develop mitigation. The bridge was determined to be a contributing element to the Upper Meyers Grade, which was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 2007; therefore, the bridge must be assessed as an historic property under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Caltrans cultural staff will prepare a Finding of Effects (FOE) report evaluating the project impacts on the resource.

Section 4(f): The Department of Transportation Act (DOT Act) of 1966 included a special provision - Section 4(f) - which stipulates that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and other DOT agencies cannot approve the use of land from publicly owned parks, recreational areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, or public and private historical sites unless there is no feasible and prudent alternative to avoid the use of the land. The action should include all possible planning to minimize harm to the property resulting from use.

While the Echo Summit Bridge lacks individual distinction for listing as a historic site, it is a contributing element to the Upper Meyers Grade. The bridge is therefore considered a resource for the purposes of evaluation under Section 4(f).

Hazardous Materials

Based on initial studies of the Echo Summit bridge site, no asbestos is anticipated. The Caltrans Hazardous Waste specialist will prepare an Initial Site Assessment. Renovation or demolition of a bridge requires written notification under the National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) requirements to the local Air Quality Management District, in this case the El Dorado AQMD, prior to any renovation or demolition of the bridge.

Hydrology and Water Quality

The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (Lahontan) has jurisdiction along with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency over Lake Tahoe Basin water quality. The proposed project will follow the Lake Tahoe Erosion Control guidelines in regards to soil disturbance during construction. The project limits do not include active streams and therefore, no impacts are anticipated to waters of the State.

Land Use Planning

The project will be evaluated to determine compliance under the 2012 Lake Tahoe Regional Plan, which is administered by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA). Numerous TRPA policies relate to the protection of biological, recreational, community and water resources that have the potential to occur within the project area.

Noise

Construction of the project would temporarily increase noise levels in the vicinity of the work zone and may result in impacts to nearby residents and recreational areas. Noise generated during construction would be minimized with implementation of noise control measures.

Public and Emergency Services

Based on the isolated location of this bridge and the lack of detours in the area, full closure of this bridge and Highway 50 at this location for an entire construction season or more would have an effect on the community and visitors to the area. Caltrans is committed to early consultation with the community and interested parties.

In the event of an emergency during project construction, an emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan will be implemented. Implementation of a Traffic Management Plan (TMP) for each of the detour options will address the issues of safe and efficient movement of emergency vehicles through the construction zone as well as provide planning for handling of evacuation during an emergency event such as a forest fire.

Recreation

The Lake Tahoe Basin incorporates lands associated with California State Parks, the U.S. Forest Service, and public and private facilities including but not limited to golf courses, boating facilities, and ski areas. Tourism is a significant driver of the local economy. Construction of the Echo Summit Bridge project under any of the lane closure options will temporarily impede access to the southern part of the Lake Tahoe Basin. Public outreach measures will be utilized to reduce impacts to the Tahoe Basin recreation and tourism industry to the greatest extent possible.

Transportation/Traffic

The traveling public as well as local businesses will experience delays during construction of this proposed project under all proposed traffic management options. Motorists should allow approximately one hour extra travel time to enter or leave South Lake Tahoe during the construction period.

The following alternate travel routes are available from US 50:

From Sacramento: Exit US 50 at Power Inn Road and take State Route 16 east to State Route 49 south; at State Route 88 in Jackson, turn left (east). Take State Route 88 to State Route 89 and turn left again (north), and follow it back to US 50 in South Lake Tahoe.

From Placerville: Exit US 50 at Missouri Flat Road and take State Route 49 south. Follow State Route 49 to State Route 88 in Jackson and turn left (east). At State Route 89 turn left (north) and follow it back to US 50 in South Lake Tahoe.

In addition, the use of Johnson Pass Road for local traffic only is being considered as an option to facilitate access during construction. Under this detour option, Johnson Pass Road would not be advertised or recommended as a detour route for US 50 traffic. Only local traffic would be allowed to access the road and would be limited to non-commercial vehicles of a specified weight and length.

Scoping Process

The scoping process for the project includes early consultation with public agencies and the general public. A public scoping meeting will be held to provide interested parties the opportunity to learn about the proposed project and to submit written comments to assist the project team in the development of the project and the Draft EIR. The details of the meeting are as follows:

**Thursday February 26, 2015, 6pm-8pm
1901 Airport Road
South Lake Tahoe**

Written comments may also be mailed to Suzanne Melim, Environmental Branch Chief, Caltrans District 3, 703 B Street, Marysville, CA 95901. Your comments can also be emailed to suzanne.melim@dot.ca.gov. Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

Potential Responsible and Trustee Agencies

This Notice of Preparation serves as a request for comments from the responsible and trustee agencies listed in the following table regarding environmental issues, reasonable alternatives, and reasonable mitigation measures or measures to minimize harm that need to be discussed in the Draft EIR in order to address each agency's specific concerns in their areas of responsibility.

Potential Responsible and Trustee Agencies

Agency	Permits and Approvals
Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board	Clean Water Act Section 401 Certification
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Section 1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement
US Army Corp of Engineers	Section 404 Permit
USDA Forest Service	Temporary Construction Easement Concurrence on Section 4(f) findings
State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)	Concurrence on 106 findings
Tahoe Regional Planning Authority	TRPA Permit
El Dorado County	Encroachment Permit

EA 3F530K

LOCATION MAP

ECHO SUMMIT SIDEHILL VIA BRIDGE # 25-0044

ED 50 PM 67.3

