



DATE: September 23, 2016

MEMO TO: MROSD Board of Directors

THROUGH: Stephen E. Abbors, General Manager

FROM: Julie Andersen, Resource Management Specialist III

SUBJECT: Highway 17 Wildlife Crossing and Bay Area Ridge Trail Crossing Open House, Summary of Public Comments and Next Steps

On August 2, 2016, the Planning and Natural Resources Committee hosted a public meeting for the Highway 17 Wildlife Crossing/Bay Area Ridge Trail Crossing Project. A total of thirty-seven persons attended the public meeting and thirty-six comments were received during the public comment period which closed on September 6, 2016.

- Of the 36 total respondents, the most highly ranked wildlife crossing alternative was the Trout Creek Undercrossing. The most highly ranked recreational trail crossing alternative was the Montevina Rd/Alma Bridge Rd Undercrossing. Overall, respondents were more in favor of a wildlife crossing than a recreational trail crossing.
- See summary of public support for each alternative in Tables 1 & 2 below.

Table 1. Summary of Public Support for Wildlife Alternatives

	Alternative 1: Ravine Undercrossing	Alternative 2: Trout Creek Undercrossing
High	17	28
Medium	7	5
Low	8	2
Not ranked	4	1

(Green = Highest, Red = Lowest)

Table 2. Summary of Public Support for Recreational Trail Alternatives

	Alternative 3: New Overcrossing	Alternative 4: Montevina/Alma Undercrossing
High	3	10
Medium	13	6
Low	12	8
Not ranked	3	3

(Green = Highest, Red = Lowest)

Questions from public comment sheets and responses provided:

- Is there an option to extend the crossing over Highway 17 to pedestrians and add a marked bike line? That is an existing bridge, and might be cheaper?
 - The existing Bear Creek Road crossing is accessible to pedestrians (a sidewalk on the north side) and has marked shoulders which may be used by bicyclists. One of the selection criteria to advance a crossing to formal alternative evaluation was to satisfy requirements for both humans and wildlife. The existing Bear Creek Road Overcrossing was not considered as a potential wildlife crossing; there is too much vehicle traffic and too many paved lanes and conflicting on/off ramps to attract or accommodate wildlife. While a retrofit at this site may better accommodate recreational trail users, it would never serve the secondary function as a crossing for wildlife. For this reason, modifying the existing Bear Creek Road overcrossing was not advanced as a formal project alternative.

- My one concern is how to keep [undercrossings] from becoming a place that would be occupied by the homeless and keep out those it was intended to benefit?
 - Constructed crossing(s) will be patrolled to ensure legitimate uses. According to local law enforcement, sites favored by homeless are often close to urban areas and developed amenities. None of the alternatives meet this proximity criteria, so potential homeless use is expected to be low.

- Undercrossings seem much better than an overcrossing. Isn't the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority well into the planning for one? Suggest cooperating with them for a solution really workable?
 - The Santa Clara Open Space Authority (OSA) is evaluating potential wildlife crossings along Highway 101 within Coyote Valley. The Midpen Highway 17 team is in contact with OSA and other agencies throughout the region working on wildlife crossings. Safe crossings for wildlife are needed at multiple locations and it will take many agencies working together.

- My concern during this time of drought is that there would still be sufficient water available for wildlife in the more populated west side of Bear Creek Road. Presentation Center (1948 B. Creek Road) currently can't draw enough water from Collins Creek to run its emergency pumping system for fire control. Please work on monitoring how much water is being taken for residential wells.

- The Highway 17 wildlife passage project is not intended to change the hydrologic conditions of the area and will not modify water availability to wildlife. Monitoring residential wells is outside the scope of this project, but this comment has been noted.

Additional public comments received through the Hwy17@openspace.org email:

- One person asked for the names and contact information of the Caltrans representatives who were at the August 2, 2016 public meeting.
 - The information was provided and this person was placed on the interested parties list for the project.
- One person asked for more information.
 - They were placed on the interested parties list for the project.
- One person asked to volunteer to work on the project.
 - An email was sent to thank them for their interest and they were placed on the interested parties list for the project. They were also notified that they can contact their elected officials to show support for the project.
- One person stated that they would reach out to their 700 Facebook and Twitter followers to spread the word about the project.
 - An email was sent to thank them for their interest and they were placed on the interested parties list for the project.

Project timeline and next steps:

- February 2016: Project Feasibility and Preliminary Alternatives Report (Report) began, including meetings with the numerous project stakeholders.
- July 2016: Report was completed, presented to the Board with concept level designs for 4 different project locations. (Project Alternatives may be reviewed at: www.openspace.org/Hwy17)
- August 2, 2016: A public meeting was held to gauge public support for each of the alternatives.
- August 24, 2016: Board authorized the District to enter into a Cooperative Agreement with Caltrans to begin the first phase of the Caltrans process (Project Initiation).
- October 12, 2016: Board consideration of contract amendment for consultant team to prepare the needed Caltrans documentation.
- October 18, 2016: Planning and Natural Resources Committee meeting to select and recommend preferred alternatives for Board consideration. Once approved by the full Board and through the Caltrans process, the preferred alternatives will move into the next phase of the project (Environmental Review and Permitting).