

La Honda Creek Parking Feasibility Study

Questions & Answers from Site Tour #1 Assessment Forms

October 19, 2019

- 1) Red Barn site: Driveway alignment and turning movements here are really the biggest issue. Is another alignment feasible? Note that the historic route of La Honda Road went right by the Barn (these unpaved roads are still in use). May want to explore limiting turn movements from 84 to right in/out. What about a roundabout? **(Sandy Sommer)**

In prior Red Barn site plan alternatives, the driveway was located where line-of-sight requirements were met. If this location is proposed by the PAWG, forwarded to the Board of Directors (Board) by the Planning and Natural Resources Committee (PNR), and approved for further study by the Board, the District will conduct additional analysis in the feasibility study phase including traffic circulation and driveway alignment considerations.

- 2) Sears Ranch Road Parking Area – Expansion of Existing Lot: What does Midpen hope to have in terms of education? Instructional signage located around the parking area? **(Denise Phillips)**

Sears Ranch Road – Former Residence Area (1 mile from existing lot): What does Midpen hope to have in terms of education? Instructional signage located around the parking area or by the roadway that people would be walking along? **(Denise Phillips)**

Educational amenities can take many forms such as interpretive signage, gathering areas for groups, or kiosks. Depending on the site, the District would need to determine what types of educational programs and amenities could be accommodated and what would fit in with surrounding uses.

- 3) When the board determined “central access” as a priority, how did the Board define “central” in this instance? **(Denise Phillips)**

The central area of the Preserve is shown on a map labeled “Exhibit 2-4 Preserve Areas” in the 2012 La Honda Master Plan. The southerly edge of the central area runs approximately east and west from Preserve Gate LH07. The northerly edge runs east and west approximately 0.75 miles north of the Red Barn area.

- 4) Why is Driscoll Ranch only equestrian parking? **(Melany Moore)**

The Event Center (also known as the former Driscoll Ranch) accommodates many uses on site, such as grazing operations, an interim coastal area office for District staff, and equestrian activities, which do not currently need a use permit from the County. Expanding the existing uses with additional public access at the site (e.g. new parking, hiking, etc.) would require a use permit from the County. In order to submit for a use permit, the District would need to develop a site plan for the property through a public planning process. If the Board selects the Event Center location as an option to pursue in the feasibility study phase, the District would need to prioritize site planning as a future project and would also need to complete an amendment to the 2012 La Honda Master Plan for these new uses.

- 5) Both Sears Ranch Road sites: Any way to do a gravel paved lot expansion, especially since that is better for horses? **(Sandy Sommer)**

If this location is proposed by the PAWG, forwarded to the Board by the PNR, and approved for further study by the Board, the District will conduct additional analysis in the feasibility study phase including using gravel instead of pavement for equestrian spaces in a new parking lot.

- 6) Expanded staging in this area would reduce available pasture and add more car trips to Sears Ranch Road. Would this increase conflicts with school and nearby residents? **(Sandy Sommer)**

If this location is proposed by the PAWG, forwarded to the Board by the PNR, and approved for further study by the Board, the District will conduct additional analysis in the feasibility study phase including the potential traffic effects on nearby school and residents. Based on District staff observations, use of Sears Ranch Road parking lot has lessened since the December 2017 grand opening when the lot generated high interest.

- 7) Both Sears Ranch Road sites – Roadway past school would probably have to be widened. Is this section publicly maintained or would Midpen have to assume responsibility for that? **(Sandy Sommer)**

The District owns a portion of Sears Ranch Road past the school, at a certain point where it narrows, and the District would be responsible for the maintenance of that portion of the road.

- 8) Red Barn – Area down slope from Red Barn: Would downsizing and scaling back previous plan accomplish anything? **(Sandy Sommer)**

If this location is proposed by the PAWG, forwarded to the Board by the PNR, and approved for further study by the Board, the District will conduct additional site plan analysis in the feasibility study phase. Future site plan designs at this location would be different from previous Red Barn site plan alternatives due to its unique site and access characteristics.

- 9) Event Center: May need to assess left turn movements into driveway. Turn pocket needed? **(Sandy Sommer)**

If this location is proposed by the PAWG, forwarded to the Board by the PNR, and approved for further study by the Board, the District will conduct additional analysis in the feasibility study phase including traffic circulation and driveway alignment considerations.

- 10) I would like to learn more about potential traffic calming measures to explore – flashing caution lights, rumble strips, enforcement – what is the best thinking about how to consistently and effectively slow drivers down? **(Sandy Sommer)**

The District has contracted with a transportation consultant to explore potential traffic safety and calming measures that in general might be applied to a rural highway like Highway 84 (note that any proposed change to Highway 84 requires Caltrans approval). The goal is to provide this information for the December 12, 2019 PAWG meeting.

- 11) I think the vehicle access to the Sears Ranch parking is safe for cars, but not sure about larger vehicles. Similarly, I think the proposed driveway at the red barn is perfectly safe for a modern

passenger vehicle, but I've never tried to accelerate a truck up to highway speed with a horse inside trying to remain on its feet. **(Art Heinrich)**

There is no issue for a larger horse trailer and truck to navigate Sears Ranch Road to the existing lot or to a potential parking area near the former residence, located a mile north from the existing lot. There is sufficient visibility, and the road is fairly wide with gradual turns and no steep drop-offs. In designing a parking area, the ease of access is generally the issue, with the preference being pull-through diagonal parking stalls, which do not require the driver to back up.

Turning right onto Highway 84 from the Red Barn site would bring vehicles into faster traffic, but it is downhill, so accelerating the truck and horse trailer would be easier. Turning left onto Highway 84 should not be a problem since the uphill highway traffic is moving more slowly with adequate line-of-sight to the future driveway entrance (see page 4 in August 10, 2016 traffic study). The horses are able to remain upright when a truck is accelerating in a straight line unlike going around a corner or stopping too fast which would be an issue for horses.

Maneuvering a horse trailer and truck involves the driver's sense of caution, experience, judgment of speed and spacing of other vehicles, and knowledge of his or her truck's capability.

(Equestrian information in above response provided by PAWG member Curt Riffle.)

La Honda Creek Parking Feasibility Study

Questions & Answers from Site Tour #2 Assessment Forms

November 16, 2019

- 1) How does Midpen determine potential popularity of newly opened preserve trails? (**Andie Reed**)

The District routinely observes usage patterns at preserves and regularly conducts visitor use surveys. Immediately after a new facility opens, there is often a high level of interest and visitation that then dissipates over time. However, certain facilities remain highly popular for a variety of reasons such as being a unique destination point, ease of access from and proximity to more populated areas, diversity of trails and loops, types of uses offered, and diversity of vegetation and terrain.

- 2) Need further study of pull-off from 84(LH07), is sight distance sufficient to not reduce traffic too suddenly? (**Andie Reed**)

If this location is proposed by the PAWG, forwarded to the Board of Directors (Board) by the Planning and Natural Resources Committee (PNR), and approved for further study by the Board, the District will conduct additional analysis in the feasibility study phase including assessing traffic circulation and safety.

- 3) Further study (of Sears Ranch Road Parking Area – Site West of Existing Parking Area) might reveal whether current parking lot could be made larger in existing location? (**Andie Reed**)

If this location is proposed by the PAWG, forwarded to the Board by the PNR, and approved for further study by the Board, the District will conduct additional analysis in the feasibility study phase including potential modifications to the existing lot and/or adding parking to the west area.

- 4) Study this area more (Gate LH07) Would need to acquire minimal amount of adjacent land (do a lot line adjustment?) (**Sandy Sommer**)

If this location is proposed by the PAWG, forwarded to the Board by the PNR, and approved for further study by the Board, the District will conduct additional analysis in the feasibility study phase including providing public access from the gate to the rest of the preserve.

- 5) I suggest we start engaging with Caltrans starting now. Is there any way to invite a representative to the PAWG meetings? (Note that a Caltrans representative has been attending the Hwy 17 Crossing public meetings and is also involved in POST's Cloverdale bluff trail planning efforts) (**Sandy Sommer**)

Caltrans was not yet willing to coordinate with the District project team during the Red Barn site development process. The District will attempt to re-engage Caltrans when there are sites that the Board approves for moving forward into the feasibility stage. The current focus of this phase of the project is to develop an option or options to move into the feasibility study phase.

- 6) I would like to learn more about potential traffic calming measures to explore – flashing caution lights, rumble strips – what is the best thinking about how to consistently slow drivers down? (**Sandy Sommer**)

The District has contracted with a transportation consultant to explore potential traffic safety and calming measures that in general might be applied to a rural highway like Highway 84 (note that any proposed change to Highway 84 requires Caltrans approval). The goal is to provide this information for the December 12, 2019 PAWG meeting.

- 7) Any way to do a gravel paved lot, especially since that is better for horses (both Sears Ranch locations)? **(Sandy Sommer)**

A gravel lot could be explored though the District's standard has been to build paved parking lots to avoid long-term operations and maintenance issues including poor drainage, loss of compaction, dust issues that result in poor visibility for motorists and inefficient parking due to lack of striping.

- 8) Expanded staging in this area (Sears Ranch Road – Cattle Corral – former residence area) would reduce available pasture and add more car trips to Sears Ranch Road. Would this increase conflicts with school and nearby residents? **(Sandy Sommer)**

*Expanded staging in this area (Sears Ranch Road – west of existing lot) would reduce available pasture and add more car trips to Sears Ranch Road. Would this increase conflicts with school and nearby residents? **(Sandy Sommer)***

If these locations are proposed by the PAWG, forwarded to the Board by the PNR, and approved for further study by the Board, the District will conduct additional analysis in the feasibility study phase including potential impacts on nearby uses, grazing operations, and existing public trails. Based on District staff observations, use of Sears Ranch Road parking lot has lessened since the December 2017 grand opening when the lot generated high interest.

- 9) If the committee does not recommend any site for accessing the middle of La Honda OSP off Highway 84, would trail work in the middle cease? **(Willie Wool)**

Other District project teams are working on expanding the trail system in the Preserve following the future phases of trails identified in the 2012 La Honda Master Plan including a trail connection between the Allen Road area and the Sears Ranch Road area.

- 10) Are there district guidelines for miles of trail/access points? Does the district have any standards it has set regarding length of trails from access point. Can the district construct a ten mile trail with access at only one end of the trail? Would that be considered accessible for hikers and emergency vehicles? If there were no middle access to La Honda Creek Preserve, could a trail be constructed that would go from Sears Ranch parking lot to the Coho Vista Point without any other access point. What are the current estimates (a range from high to low) for the length of that trail? **(Willie Wool)**

Access is determined on a preserve-by-preserve basis. In the case of La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve, the proposed trail network and access points were proposed in the master plan to provide public access that is distributed geographically across the preserve. The District does not have access standards that prohibit a long regional trail like one that would extend from Allen Road to the Event Center. However, where feasible, the District provides a variety of access points in order to distribute public use across the trail system rather than concentrate visitors at fewer locations. In addition, more access points allow more people with differing endurance levels to experience more of a preserve and encourage creation of more loop trails since a larger

number of people can access them. A long “out-and-back” trail can limit the number of visitors capable of using this longer distance trail.

Within the central portion of La Honda Open Space Preserve, existing access points used for District patrol use are not open to the public for accessing a trail between the Allen Road and Sears Ranch Road areas. The District is working on future trails that will provide additional loop trails in the southern portion of the preserve and other trails to connect the southern and central areas to upper La Honda.

11) Would a backpack camp be in order to allow the public full access? **(Willie Wool)**

The Service Plan for the San Mateo Coastal Protection Area (2003) prohibits camping on District lands located in the Coastal Protection Area (Guideline G.6.8 of the Service Plan). Backpack camps are special uses that would be considered on a case by case basis outside of the Coastal Protection Area. The central area of the Preserve is not in the Coastal Protection Area, but the Sears Ranch and Event Center areas are.

12) Is there any hope for more access off Skyline to Upper La Honda? **(Willie Wool)**

Expansion of the Allen Road parking area and an increase in use are not feasible due to a prior agreement with neighbors along this private road that limits vehicular access to ten vehicles per day.