

California Department of Transportation

DISTRICT 4
OFFICE OF TRANSIT AND COMMUNITY PLANNING
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July 30, 2021

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Hamid Heidary, P.E., Senior Civil Engineer
City of Calistoga
414 Washington Street
Calistoga, CA 94515

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

July 30 2021

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

Re: Water Reliability Transmission and Distribution Improvement – Conn Creek Water Line Project – Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND)

Dear Hamid Heidary:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for this project. We are committed to ensuring that impacts to the State's multimodal transportation system and to our natural environment are identified and mitigated to support a safe, sustainable, integrated and efficient transportation system. The following comments are based on our review of the July 2021 Draft IS/MND.

Project Understanding

The proposed project would upgrade an underground segment of the existing North Bay Aqueduct (NBA) pipeline that crosses the Conn Creek floodway. Approximately 100 linear feet of the underground NBA pipeline alignment is proposed to be relocated to the elevated position on the new Conn Creek Bridge, which was replaced by Caltrans in 2020. The project also includes replacement of up to 3,000 linear feet of 12-inch-diameter underground pipeline with new 16-inch-diameter underground pipeline in the same location parallel to and along the south side of Silverado Trail, a portion of which is State Route (SR)-128.

Hydrology

The limits of the proposed staging area are not clear. There is an unlined v-ditch and a bioretention basin on the north side of Silverado Trail between Conn Creek on the west and SR-128 on the east. These will need to be protected in place or re-established if damaged during construction.

The Conn Creek Bridge project placed rock slope protection in the creek and along the banks. Please clarify if the proposed removal of the concrete cap and pipe within the creek bed affects any of these rocks and if the proposed rocks tie into the existing area.

The clearance between the existing 18-inch pipe located southeast of the new bridge and the proposed water line appears minimal. Please specify the proposed clearance. If it is less than 1 foot, Caltrans recommends installing a concrete saddle.

Landscape Architecture

Section 4.1 Aesthetics: Caltrans agrees with the "less than significant impact" finding due to the mostly underground placement of the new water line. The new water line to be suspended from the bridge is not readily visible to travelers on SR-128, but is briefly visible from Conn Creek Road. The growth of vegetation will eventually provide screening.

Figure 2.6-1: it appears that the construction staging will damage the existing irrigation. The yellow area in the north east corner contains the existing mitigation planting, irrigation cam coupler assembly and valves. In the orange area, the existing irrigation and mitigation planting may be damaged by bringing heavy equipment to the creek bed and building scaffolding for the new pipe installation.

Sheet C-3: The proposed work to remove BO valve and CTS may disturb existing irrigation and native rose planting behind the guard rail.

Sheet C-4: The excavation for new underground pipeline in the shoulder area south east of the creek may impact the existing bioswale.

Sheet C-9: The construction for water line removal along the dirt access road may damage the existing mitigation planting and irrigation along the creek banks.

The mitigation planting and irrigation installed under the Caltrans bridge contract 04-1G4304 is currently in the plant establishment phase until early 2022. A second contract 04-1G43A1, which intends to maintain the existing planted areas at the project location, is targeted for advertisement in October 2021. It will provide 4 years of maintenance and required mitigation monitoring, with a proposed schedule from January 2022 to January 2026. Any damages to the existing irrigation and mitigation planting must be repaired or replaced in accordance with the 04-1G4304 contract documents for permit compliance.

Construction-Related Impacts

Prior to construction, the Traffic Control Plan should be submitted with the Encroachment Permit application to Caltrans which should show the proposed work hours of 7 am to 7 pm as indicated on page 4-74 of the IS/MND.

SR-128 on Silverado Trail overlaps at the Conn Creek Bridge location. All construction activities commencing near the highway travel lanes may require closing the adjacent travel lane and would consequently require lane closures unless reviewed by, and prior approval obtained from, the Office of Traffic Management. Project work that requires movement of oversized or excessive load vehicles on State roadways, and/or travel lane closures on SR-128 requires a transportation permit that is issued by Caltrans. To apply, visit: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/transportation-permits>.

Utilities

Utility encroachments on structures should be avoided where feasible and alternatives to locate utilities elsewhere must be analyzed. Please see <https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/design/documents/pdpm-chapter17-all.pdf> for detailed information. Also, any utilities that are proposed, moved or modified within Caltrans' Right-of-Way (ROW) shall be discussed. If utilities are impacted by the project, provide site plans that show the location of existing and/or proposed utilities. These modifications require a Caltrans-issued encroachment permit.

Equitable Access

If any Caltrans facilities are impacted by the project, those facilities must meet American Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards after project completion. As well, the project must maintain bicycle and pedestrian access during construction. These access considerations support Caltrans' equity mission to provide a safe, sustainable, and equitable transportation network for all users.

Lead Agency

As the Lead Agency, the City of Calistoga is responsible for all project mitigation, including any needed improvements to the State Transportation Network (STN). The project's fair share contribution, financing, scheduling, implementation responsibilities and lead agency monitoring should be fully discussed for all proposed mitigation measures.

Encroachment Permit

Caltrans has three types of ownership within the project area: Fee, Temporary Construction Easement (TCE) and a Planting Easement. The encroachment permit will cover only the fee area. The TCE expires on December 31, 2022 and its use is specific to construct the Conn Creek bridge. This project would need its own rights if the easement areas are needed.

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Please be advised that any permanent work or temporary traffic control that encroaches onto the State ROW requires a Caltrans-issued encroachment permit. As part of the encroachment permit submittal process, you may be asked by the Office of Encroachment Permits to submit a completed encroachment permit application package, digital set of plans clearly delineating the State ROW, digital copy of signed, dated and stamped (include stamp expiration date) traffic control plans, this comment letter, your response to the comment letter, and where applicable, the following items: new or amended Maintenance Agreement (MA), approved Design Standard Decision Document (DSDD), approved encroachment exception request, and/or airspace lease agreement. Your application package may be emailed to D4Permits@dot.ca.gov.

To download the permit application and to obtain more information on all required documentation, visit <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/ep/applications>.

Thank you again for including Caltrans in the environmental review process. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Yunsheng Luo at Yunsheng.Luo@dot.ca.gov. Additionally, for future notifications and requests for review of new projects, please email LDIGR-D4@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Leong". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal tail stroke.

MARK LEONG
District Branch Chief
Local Development - Intergovernmental Review

c: State Clearinghouse