

SR 68 (Holman Highway) Widening Project

Monterey County, California
District 05-Mon-68, KP 6.1/7.1, (PM 3.8/4.4)

Final Environmental Impact Report



State of California Department of Transportation
In Cooperation with the City of Monterey



July 2008

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Widen and improve State Route 68, from SR 1 to approximately 0.2 km (0.1 mile) west
of the Community Hospital of Monterey Peninsula

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT


Submitted Pursuant to: (State) Division 13, California Public Resources Code

State of California
Department of Transportation

In Cooperation with

City of Monterey

3/24/09
Date of Approval


Richard Krumholz
District Director
California Department of Transportation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

State Route 68 is a two-lane undivided roadway constructed in the early 1940s. It serves as the primary transportation facility between State Route 1 and the City of Pacific Grove, Pebble Beach and the Community Hospital of Monterey Peninsula. State Route 68 is heavily congested (over 2,000 vehicles per peak hour) during the weekday afternoon period from 3pm to 6pm. Rear-end collisions are common, suggesting excessive vehicle queuing at all approaches for the signalized intersection with State Route 1 southbound ramps. Traffic forecasts show the pm peak hour traffic demand on State Route 68 reaching 2,860 vehicles by the year 2020. Traffic is projected to increase by 24 percent.

The 1993 Regional Transportation Plan recommended widening State Route 68 to four lanes from 0.2 km (0.1 miles) west of the Community Hospital of Monterey Peninsula intersection to south of the State Route 68 overpass at State Route 1. Some general project characteristics include adding retaining walls, replacing the Scenic Drive Overcrossing, and redesigning the intersection of State Route 68 and State Route 1 Southbound offramp. The purpose of the project is to relieve existing and future traffic congestion, improve traffic safety and traffic operations, reduce rear-end collisions, minimize delay of emergency vehicle access to Community Hospital of Monterey Peninsula and reduce the incentive for bypass traffic through the Skyline Forest neighborhood.

This environmental document along with several technical studies (see Appendix B) complies with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970. The following environmental document is a California Environmental Quality Act Environmental Impact Report. Because of federal funding, this project is also subject to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. The Federal Highway Administration and the California Department of Transportation agree that this project qualifies for a Programmatic Categorical Exclusion under the National Environmental Policy Act.

The following is a summary of affected resources for the proposed State Route 68 (Holman Highway) Widening Project. The major resources of concern are biological and visual resources. The reader is referred to Table 1 and to the discussion regarding impacts in Chapter 2 for more information about these issues.

Biological Resources

Monterey pine forest, both native and planted, dominates the vegetative communities in the project area. In addition to climatic change, current populations of Monterey pine are threatened by clearing activities for urban and residential growth. Fragmentation of a once continuous mosaic of forest habitat and isolation of individual stands by development endangers the sustainability of the forest community. The loss of Monterey pine forest resulting from construction of the State Route 68 (Holman

Highway) Widening Project is a potentially significant impact because of the rare and threatened nature of this special status plant community.

The Iris Canyon Greenbelt will serve as offsite mitigation for Monterey pine. The site is composed of 40 potential planting sites, for a total of 15,621 m² (3.86 acres). Complying with the City of Monterey tree protection ordinance, 626 trees (to replace the 481 displaced by the project in a 1:1 ratio plus an additional 30 percent overplanting) will be planted at this site. Additional measures to minimize and compensate for this impact are discussed in this report.

Monterey dusky-footed woodrats (*Neotoma fuscipes luciana*), listed as a species of Special Concern by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, could potentially occur within the area. Measures to minimize and compensate for this potential impact are also discussed in this report.

Visual Resources

State Route 68 and State Route 1 are within a picturesque portion of the Monterey Peninsula. The majority of the project area viewers are traveling on State Route 68 and State Route 1. The visual quality evaluation revealed a decrease in visual quality with construction of the project. The removal of natural vegetation and the replacement of the overcrossing would reduce the vividness of the area. Construction of retaining walls, the increased amount of impervious surface and the new 17-Mile Scenic Drive overcrossing would intrude upon the natural environment. Mitigation measures are required to reduce the impacts of the project.

Table 1. State Route 68 (Holman Highway) Widening Project Summary of Project-Level Impacts and Mitigation Measures

ADVERSE IMPACTS ¹ (SUMMARIZED)	LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE	MINIMIZATION, MITIGATION, AND/OR ABATEMENT MEASURES (SUMMARIZED)
VISUAL/AESTHETICS		
<p>The project would reduce the visual quality in the area through increased pavement, the construction of retaining walls and the removal of natural vegetation.</p>	<p>Less than Significant with Mitigation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Replacement of native oak trees. ▪ A removal permit from Monterey County and the City of Monterey shall be required for the removal of any healthy native trees, including Monterey Pine, native oak, native sycamore or madrone trees with a trunk diameter in excess of six inches, measured two feet above ground level. ▪ Native and native-compatible species, especially drought resistant species, shall be used to the maximum extent possible in fulfilling landscape requirements imposed as conditions of approval for discretionary permits. ▪ A landscape plan shall be incorporated into the final design of the State Route 68 improvements. ▪ Special architectural detail and aesthetic treatments shall be incorporated into the design of the proposed 17-Mile Scenic Drive overcrossing, potential State Route 1 bridge replacement and the retaining walls along State Route 68, Sunridge Road and the State Route 1 southbound offramp. ▪ The Architectural Review Committee shall review and approve the landscape plan and walls. ▪ An Aesthetic Design Advisory Committee shall be established to represent local and state interests concerning project aesthetics. The Architectural Review Committee chairman or other Architectural Review Committee members shall be included on the committee.

¹ The proposed project is the four-lane widening with a five-legged intersection at State Route 68/State Route 1 Southbound ramps. Information presented in this table describes impacts of that alternative. In addition, it should be noted that with proposed mitigation measures, impacts would be less than significant (see Appendix E).

Table 1. State Route 68 (Holman Highway) Widening Project Summary of Project-Level Impacts and Mitigation Measures (continued)

ADVERSE IMPACTS ² (SUMMARIZED)	LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE	MINIMIZATION, MITIGATION, AND/OR ABATEMENT MEASURES (SUMMARIZED)
AIR QUALITY		
Implementation of the proposed project would result in the generation of short-term construction-related air pollutant emissions.	Less than Significant	<p>The project applicant shall use appropriate measures from the list below when daily watering (required) is not adequate to minimize dust:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Water all active construction areas at least twice daily. ▪ Prohibit all grading activities during periods of high wind (over 15 mph). ▪ Apply chemical soil stabilizers on inactive construction areas (disturbed lands within construction projects that are unused for four consecutive days.) ▪ Apply non-toxic binders (e.g., latex acrylic copolymer) to exposed areas, after cut and fill activities and after hydroseed placement area. ▪ Haul trucks shall maintain at least two feet of freeboard. ▪ Cover all trucks hauling dirt, sand, or loose materials. ▪ Plant trees or windbreaks on the windward perimeter of construction projects if adjacent to open land. ▪ Plant vegetative ground cover in disturbed areas as soon as possible. ▪ Cover inactive storage piles. ▪ Sweep streets if visible soil material is carried out from the construction site. ▪ Post a publicly visible sign which specifies the telephone number and person to contact regarding dust complaints.

² The proposed project is the four-lane widening with a five-legged intersection at State Route 68/State Route 1 Southbound ramps. Information presented in this table describes impacts of that alternative. In addition, it should be noted that with proposed mitigation measures, impacts would be less than significant (see Appendix E).

Table 1. State Route 68 (Holman Highway) Widening Project Summary of Project-Level Impacts and Mitigation Measures (continued)

ADVERSE IMPACTS ³ (SUMMARIZED)	LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE	MINIMIZATION, MITIGATION, AND/OR ABATEMENT MEASURES (SUMMARIZED)
BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES		
The project requires the removal of 322 Monterey pine trees. This results in impacts to 12,682 m ² (3 acres) of planted and 2,086 m ² (0.5 acre) of native Monterey pine forest.	Less than Significant with Mitigation	Mitigation for the loss of Monterey pine involves planting 626 trees (481 trees plus 30 percent overplanting) along the Iris Canyon Greenbelt, which will comply with the City of Monterey tree protection ordinance for 1:1 replacement. The corridor encompasses a total planting area of 15,621 m ² (3.86 acres).
The loss of Monterey pine forest due to the State Route 68 project contributes to the region wide decline in potential dusky-footed woodrat habitat on the Monterey peninsula, but is a relatively insubstantial contribution.	Less than Significant with Mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To avoid potential direct impacts to woodrats that might occur in the project area, a qualified wildlife biologist shall survey the project impact area for evidence of dusky-footed woodrat nests. If woodrat nests are found within the project impact area, a qualified biologist shall, in consultation with California Department of Fish and Game, live-trap the woodrat(s) and relocate to a suitable site. ■ Mitigation proposed for loss of Monterey pine forest will compensate for contributions to cumulative impacts affecting woodrat habitat by restoring a portion of nearby large, unfragmented Monterey pine forest with a well-developed understory.
The wetland and other waters identified during the field survey are not within the project limits. To protect these sites from inadvertent damage during construction, abatement is needed.	Less than Significant with Mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The wetland and waters of the United States shall be designated as an Environmentally Sensitive Area. ■ No earth-moving activities, vehicles, heavy equipment, or other construction shall be permitted within this Environmentally Sensitive Area. ■ Boundaries of the Environmentally Sensitive Area shall be shown on plans and specifications, and shall also be delineated on the ground prior to construction with temporary orange safety fencing.

³ The proposed project is the four-lane widening with a five-legged intersection at State Route 68/State Route 1 Southbound ramps. Information presented in this table describes impacts of that alternative. In addition, it should be noted that with proposed mitigation measures, impacts would be less than significant (see Appendix E).

Table 1. State Route 68 (Holman Highway) Widening Project Summary of Project-Level Impacts and Mitigation Measures (continued)

ADVERSE IMPACTS ⁴ (SUMMARIZED)	LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE	MINIMIZATION, MITIGATION, AND/OR ABATEMENT MEASURES (SUMMARIZED)
HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS		
<p>The primary material of concern is aurally deposited lead; however, demolition of the Scenic Drive Overcrossing and pavement removal could trigger the presence of lead based paint and asbestos.</p>	<p>Less than Significant with Mitigation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Soil will be tested at known and potential hazardous material sites where any right-of-way, permanent or temporary, will be acquired. ▪ Any structures to be demolished will be tested for asbestos-containing materials. ▪ Any structure to be demolished will be tested for lead-based paints. ▪ Pavement striping will be tested for lead-based paints. ▪ Roadside debris, including, but not limited to, the possible chemically treated timbers, batteries or petroleum products, should be properly disposed of at a Class I landfill. ▪ A Lead Compliance Plan will be prepared by the contractor according to the California Code of Regulations, Title 8, Section 1532.1.
NOISE		
<p>During the construction phases of the project, noise from construction activities would dominate the noise environment in the immediate area.</p>	<p>Less than Significant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Construction noise is regulated by Caltrans standard specifications Section 7.01I "Sound Control Requirements". ▪ Pneumatic tools and demolition equipment operations shall be limited to the daytime hours. ▪ Residents shall be notified in advance of nighttime construction activities. To the extent possible, the nighttime construction work should be limited to the portion of the project site furthest from the residences.

⁴ The proposed project is the four-lane widening with a five-legged intersection at State Route 68/State Route 1 Southbound ramps. Information presented in this table describes impacts of that alternative. In addition, it should be noted that with proposed mitigation measures, impacts would be less than significant (see Appendix E).

Table 1. State Route 68 (Holman Highway) Widening Project Summary of Project-Level Impacts and Mitigation Measures (concluded)

ADVERSE IMPACTS ⁵ (SUMMARIZED)	LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE	MINIMIZATION, MITIGATION, AND/OR ABATEMENT MEASURES (SUMMARIZED)
UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS		
During construction there may be disruption of service in order to accomplish relocations and road work.	Less than Significant with Mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ During construction, underground utility alert (USA) services shall be used to identify the location of all underground services and to avoid the unplanned disruption of pipes or service lines during roadway excavation and other activities. ▪ A construction period public outreach and communications plan and program shall be developed for all phases of the project. ▪ Prior to start of construction, the project management team shall coordinate with the Highway Patrol, the City Police and Fire Department, the County Sheriff's Department, County Fire Districts, and local public and private ambulance and paramedic providers in the area to prepare a Construction Period Emergency Access Plan. ▪ During construction, the project management team shall review and update the Emergency Access Plan based on work scheduling.

⁵ The proposed project is the four-lane widening with a five-legged intersection at State Route 68/State Route 1 Southbound ramps. Information presented in this table describes impacts of that alternative. In addition, it should be noted that with proposed mitigation measures, impacts would be less than significant (see Appendix E).