

Central Coast Highway 1 Climate Resiliency Study
Public Workshop Summary
August 29, 2019

Welcome and Presentation

Heather Adamson, AMBAG, opened the public workshop by welcoming all in attendance and thanking them for coming. Ms. Adamson and Walter Heady, The Nature Conservancy, provided an overview of the study and the purpose of tonight's workshop. The goal of the workshop is to provide an overview of the study, background information for climate change impacts for Highway 1, the railway and Elkhorn Slough, and to provide the community with a chance to ask questions and provide comments.

The goals of the project are to identify sea level rise adaptation approaches for Highway 1 and rail that can promote healthy and resilient coastal habitats, improve transportation safety and efficiency, and provide economic security and benefits to the local community. With Elkhorn Slough being a wetland of international importance, potential adaptation strategies for climate change impacts are being modeled and analyzed to create the most effective long-term solution for Highway 1 and the surrounding areas.

Question and Answers

Public member: What do the years on the flood time horizon table represent and what processes do they account for?

Staff response: The years on the flood time horizon table represent the year by which the designated highway reach will be flooded. This is based off of previous flood hazard modeling conducted for the Coastal Resilience Southern Monterey Bay project. The Coastal Resilience website (www.coastalresilience.org) has a mapping portal where this information can be viewed. The timeframes represent near-term (2040), mid-term (2070), and long-term (2100). Inundation limits access to slough. Moss Landing may be gone entirely with long-term inundation.

Public member: Are there any other similar projects?

Staff response: Highway 37 has a similar study but it is project specific. This study is a pilot study to develop a vision for the corridor and will reference similar and related studies, such as the G-12 Corridor Study, which was completed recently. This study will be incorporating results and

building on the results of relevant studies to the local ecological resources, e.g. the Elkhorn Slough Tidal Wetland Strategic Plan, etc.

Public member: Are there unintended consequences of creating a harbor?

Staff response: Harbors can create scouring and tidal flux. The construction of the existing harbor entrance and jetties by Moss Landing have contributed to the present net sediment export from the Slough to the ocean.

Public member: Who approves the study?

Staff response: The AMBAG Board of Directors is responsible for approving the study as part of the grant. The study will be used as a guiding document and to continue to work with Caltrans, TAMC, Monterey County and other partners to obtain funding and implement the various recommended components of the study.

Public member: Expressed concerns regarding access to Highway 1. It was noted that the Local Coastal Plan (LCP) of 1982 calls for 4 lanes on Highway 1.

Public member: Representatives from the Moss Landing Harbor District, Union Pacific, and CA Public Utilities Commission should be included in the Steering Committee. They also noted that the area has a certified LCP and questioned why it is not guiding this effort.

Public member: Requested that the study consider impacts to Castroville & Pajaro, where homes were flooded in the 1990s. Castroville is disconnected with no access to the beach. Bike and walking trails to the coastal areas could be beneficial. There are also railroad lines very close to apartment complexes.

Public member: What projection timeframes are we looking at?

Staff response: The study is looking at timeframes up to 2100. Hazard maps developed under prior guidance assume that there will be approximately 5 and a half feet of SLR by 2100. Uncertainty around sea level rise estimates increases the further the time horizon.

Public member: What will be the agricultural impacts?

Staff response: Agricultural impacts are not part of the study.

Public member: What maps are you using? Are they obsolete?

Staff response: Probabilistic analysis maps from 2018. The study is using the best available data and maps, as well as creating new maps.

Public member: Is the railroad funding this study?

Staff response: Within Caltrans there is a Division of Rail and Mass Transportation who is responsible for the State Rail Plan. A portion of the study is funded through the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) which is the umbrella agency that includes Caltrans. There is a great interest in passenger and freight railroad. There is CPUC/Caltrans oversight blended in terms of railways in California and a mosaic of owners and operators.

Public member: Has there been success with Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) contact?

Staff response: Unfortunately, not for this particular study effort, although, staff has reached out to UPRR. CalSTA provided funding to include an analysis of the railway in study area.

Public member: Expressed concerns regarding this study relocating Highway 1 to the east. The Coastal Commission forced abandonment of alignment. Will Smith, AMBAG founder, called for alternative alignment to be abandoned due to environmental impacts.

Staff response: This is a just one of the potential scenarios that will be considered. Evaluation of a range of scenarios will be included in study.

Public member: The G-12 & Highway 1 traffic issues should be addressed now. Are there short term impacts in the study too?

Staff response: Yes, they will be included. The economic analysis will help determine early impacts to address current issues and short term concerns. Funding constraints will lead to a recommended scenario.

Public member: What is the Coastal Commission's involvement?

Staff response: Coastal Commission staff has been involved in the study and is a member of the Steering Committee. Staff from the Coastal Commission is also in attendance at this public workshop.

Public member: What are the study accomplishments so far?

Staff response: Procurement of a consultant team, subrecipient agreements and grant administration occurred during the first few months following the grant award. The study team has held a couple of Steering Committee meetings. Data collection and initial scenario concept options for the study have been compiled and now presented at the public workshop.

Public member: It is hard to get excited about new study when old studies have still not been implemented, such as the Moss Landing Community Plan. Will the study coordinate with land use assumptions?

Staff response: Yes. We are working with Monterey County staff to include the best available information.

Public member: Regarding San Miguel Canyon as an alternative, where would it be widened to?

Staff response: It will be widened to Hall Road.

Closing Remarks

Ms. Adamson, AMBAG, thanked everyone for attending and to encourage them to visit the two interactive stations. She also reminded everyone that comments cards were available to provide additional comments and input. A future workshop would be held in late 2019/early 2020 to present the results of the evaluation of the various scenarios.

Additional Comments Received

A number of written comments were received during the interactive session of the workshop. The comments are summarized below:

- A resident expressed that they hoped to see the study result in recommendations that are integrated into other plans with clear next steps.
- A public member stated that there is still no Moss Landing Community Plan and that this study can influence the future.
- A public member expressed concerns regarding funding and that to ensure that there would be a reliable source of funding after the modeling process, and whether financial feasibility will be taken into consideration during modeling.
- A public member requested that bike trails and passenger train services be considered in the area to address congestion in the area.
- A public member recommended applying for funds to maintain, upgrade, and utilize the Monterey Branch Rail Line before it is too far deteriorated.
- A public member stated that the only viable adaptation for Highway 1 in terms of money and environment is the existing path adaptation.
- A Castroville resident requested that when considering mitigation efforts for Moss Landing, Highway 1 and Elkhorn Slough, to also consider and mitigate the impacts of flooding for Castroville and Pajaro. Traffic impacts to Castroville should be considered when analyzing potential adaptation scenarios. Castroville has railroad tracks that are dangerously close to apartments and homes. Additionally the development of bike and walk trails that connect Castroville to beaches and wetlands should be considered.