

FAQ 32: What is the status of NEPA and CEQA Studies for the project?

A 32: The project's concept was approved by the Town Council on January 18, 2017, allowing the environmental studies and preliminary design to support these studies to begin. The environmental studies for this project are similar to a number of similar bridge replacement, retrofit and repair projects currently afoot in Ross Valley Watershed with similar natural settings concerning bridges over creeks.

The environmental studies required are fully known to Caltrans and our team of environmental scientists. They have been communicated to us via the Caltrans letter dated 1/22/15 (erroneously dated 1/22/14 on its first page), with specific instructions to the Town. This letter has been posted on the project's web site previously. The studies are summarized below:

1. Equipment Staging Technical Memorandum
2. Traffic - Traffic Technical Memorandum to include:
 - a. Address traffic handling during construction in regards to pedestrian, cyclist, transit, and emergency service access
 - b. Briefly describe reason new bridge will remain a one lane bridge
3. Noise - Noise Technical Memorandum (construction related)
4. Air Quality - Receive email from MTC which confirms Task Force PM 2.5 finding
5. Hazardous Materials - Hazardous Materials Technical Memorandum include in specification to test and properly dispose structure creosote-soaked timber
6. Water Quality/Resources – Best Management Practices (BMPs), include in NES/BA
7. Floodplain - Location Hydraulic Study and Summary Floodplain Encroachment
8. Biological Resources - Natural Environment Study (NES) and, if needed, a Biological Assessment. NES to include:
 - a. Wetlands (if needed)
 - b. Tree removal/trimming information - Describe the number, size, and type of tree removed/trimmed & replaced with if any consistency with your local tree ordinance and in compliance with the "Migratory Bird Treaty Act"
 - c. Construction staging and access
 - d. Water Quality (BMPs)Note: NES/BA report must reach a conclusion about the effects on federal threatened or endangered species/habitat using U.S. Fish Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service consultations language.
9. Visual Resources - Visual Resources Technical Memorandum (tree removal) disclose the change
10. Land Use and Community Impacts Technical Memorandum to include:
 - a. Public outreach & outcome/consequence information (removal of existing timber bridge)
 - b. Right of way information (explain what is on the parcel, how or where will your right of entry be, how will it affect the existing land use)
11. Cultural Resources – Requirements include preparation of an Area of Potential Affects (APE) Map, Historic Property Survey Report (HPSR), Historic Resource Evaluation Report (HRER), and an Archaeology Survey Report.

Caltrans, as the lead agency for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), has required the above technical studies to support the project's qualification for a NEPA Categorical Exclusion (CE) as opposed to a NEPA Environmental Assessment (EA) or NEPA Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), for which the Town is the lead agency, some of the CEQA studies will tier from the NEPA studies, such as Biological Resources. The process requires preparation of an Initial Study, the conclusions of which are anticipated to support the project qualifying for a CEQA Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND). If it is determined from the Initial Study that any significant environmental impacts cannot be completely mitigated to a level of less than significant, then the Town would be required to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) instead of a MND. An Initial Study/MND does not require scoping meetings pursuant to

CEQA. However, the draft CEQA Initial Study/MND will be circulated to the public and relevant agencies for comment for a minimum period of 30 days and the comments will be fully addressed and made available to the public before the documents are considered final.

The environmental studies take between 18 to 24 months to complete and will be permitted by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Regional Water Quality Control Board, and US Army Corps of Engineers. Since the project was just approved for environmental analyses, we anticipate circulating the Initial Study/MND in late 2018 to early 2019. The Town will have another project public outreach meeting in the future, as well as web site and Town Council updates on the project between now and then.