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memorandum

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to John Dinunzio, SLOCOG

cc

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subject FINAL Assessment Memorandum for the Morro Bay Estuary Climate Transportation Plan (ESA Ref. D202301353.00)

1 Introduction

This memo presents a preliminary assessment of existing conditions and performance of the transportation corridor to identify deficiencies along the corridor that will be used by the ESA team to focus development of adaptation actions as part of the Morro Bay Estuary Climate Transportation Plan (The Plan) with the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG). Results will highlight specific issues caused by the mobility corridor's deficiencies in terms of safety, connectivity, travel time reliability, and sustainability. The assessment will also include a preliminary description of a scenario where no action is taken, which will be built upon by findings of subsequent tasks (e.g., Task 2.2 Coastal Flood Hazard and Vulnerability Analysis).

2 Corridor Performance

2.1 Safety

2.1.1 Collisions

South Bay Boulevard has been identified as a Tier 2 High Injury Network south of the intersection with Morro Creek Road (SLOCOG, 2024b). Several intersections in the study area have also been identified as problematic, including the intersection of South Bay Boulevard with Quintana Road, State Park Road, and Turri Road. However, the density of vehicle-vehicle collisions in the study area is relatively low (SLOCOG, 2024e). There were no recorded or reported non-motorized collisions between vehicles and bicycles or vehicles and pedestrians from 2016-2020 (SLOCOG, 2024e) and there have been no recorded or reported collisions between vehicles and wildlife in the study area (UC Davis, 2024). However, there is anecdotal evidence of feral pigs that have been hit on S. Bay Blvd. The pigs are mostly in the watershed but come down to the estuary to feed when conditions are dry.

2.1.2 Evacuation routes

In the event of a natural disaster, such as a wildfire, or a nuclear disaster at the Diablo Canyon Power Plant, there are only two roads that serve as evacuation routes for the community of Los Osos: South Bay Boulevard and Los Osos Valley Road. If South Bay Boulevard was flooded or unusable for any other reason, the only evacuation route would be the two-lane Los Osos Valley Road.¹ Although it is outside the study area for the Plan, Los Osos Valley Road could also be vulnerable to current and future flood risks due its proximity to nearby creeks.

2.1.3 Emergency response times

In the event of an emergency, any emergency responders, such as police or fire personnel, traveling from Morro Bay to Los Osos would typically use South Bay Boulevard to travel to Los Osos and the travel time is typically 15 minutes, depending on the exact origin and destination. If South Bay Boulevard was flooded or unusable for any other reason, the only available detour (onto Highway 1 east to W Foothill Boulevard returning via Los Osos Valley Road) would double emergency response time to 30 minutes.²

2.2 Connectivity

2.2.1 Bike and pedestrian infrastructure

A Class II / designated bike lane exists on South Bay Boulevard and South Bay Boulevard is a part of the Pacific Coast Bike Route (SLOCOG, 2024a). However, the speed limit is 50 miles per hour, which may deter less experienced bicyclists from using the unprotected bike lane. Furthermore, there are no sidewalks along South Bay Boulevard (SLOCOG, 2024a).

2.2.2 Trail network

There is an existing trail system within Morro Bay State Park, west and east of South Bay Boulevard, including the trails surrounding Black Hill to the west and trails that lead from trailheads east of South Bay Boulevard to the eastern park boundary (State Parks, 2024). However, there are no existing trails that parallel South Bay Boulevard that would provide an alternative to walking or biking in the shoulder or bike lane on South Bay Boulevard. South Bay Boulevard is identified as a “Bike Only” segment of the California Coastal Trail (CCT). However, there is a gap in the CCT along State Park Road from Bayside Café in Morro Bay State Park to the intersection with South Bay Boulevard (California Coastal Trail, 2024).

2.2.3 Transit routes

San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority’s Bus Route 12 connects Los Osos and Baywood Park to Morro Bay and San Luis Obispo (SLORTA, 2024). The frequency is once an hour on weekdays and every two to three hours on weekends. There are Route 12 bus stops at the intersection of South Bay Boulevard and Quintana Road and at the intersection of Santa Ysabel Road and 15th St.

¹ Determined using Google Maps, accessed online.

² Estimated using Google Maps, accessed online.

2.2.4 Disadvantaged communities

Southeast Morro Bay and northern Los Osos, particularly near South Bay Boulevard, are identified as disadvantaged communities (SLOCOG, 2024c). However, those communities do not score highly as households with no vehicle available.

2.3 Travel time reliability

2.3.1 Level of service

During peak travel periods, i.e., 8-9 am and 4-5 pm, travel from Morro Bay to Los Osos (and from Los Osos to Morro Bay) along South Bay Boulevard can take several minutes longer than normal, i.e., 16 minutes rather than 14 minutes.³ Special events, such as a race, might cause congestion, particularly at intersections. However, a traffic survey would need to be conducted to gather more detailed information, which is beyond the scope of this study.

2.4 Sustainability

2.4.1 Greenhouse gas emissions / vehicle miles traveled

Greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) data are typically analyzed as required by the California Environmental Quality Act when new development is proposed. Recent data are not available for the study area and therefore, a GHG/VMT survey would need to be conducted to gather more detailed information, which is beyond the scope of this study.

2.4.2 Mode split

The primary mode of travel in the study area is private vehicle (73%) or as a passenger in a private vehicle (21%) with the primary purpose of traveling to/from home (34%), to work (15%) or to shop (11%) (Replica, 2024).

2.5 Other considerations

2.5.1 Asset management

Planned projects in the study area include the South Bay Boulevard California Coastal Trail Connector; State Park Road Bike Improvements; and the South Bay Boulevard Bridge Replacement over Los Osos Creek (SLOCOG, 2024d). The upcoming Los Osos Community Services District Water Resiliency Intertie Pipeline Project may also present an opportunity to co-locate with the planned Chorro Valley trail, which would enhance active transportation options in the study area.

3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the corridor's lack of active transportation options, i.e., safe bicycle and pedestrian routes, are its current primary deficiencies. In the future, South Bay Boulevard and State Park Road are anticipated to be vulnerable to sea level rise and in the absence of sea level rise adaptation, i.e., the no action scenario, the corridor's performance could become deficient for all modes of travel, including as a critical evacuation route.

³ Estimated using Google Maps, accessed online.

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