



Council Agenda Report

FROM: Kimberly Cole, AICP, Community Development Director
Prepared By: Fernanda Roveri, AICP, Interim Principal Planner

SUBJECT: Adopt the City of Monterey Study: "Adapting a Threatened Transportation Network to Sea Level Rise," funded by a Caltrans Adaptation Planning Grant (Exempt from CEQA per Article 19, Section 15306, Class 6)

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council adopt a resolution adopting the City of Monterey Study: "Adapting a Threatened Transportation Network to Sea Level Rise".

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

The Council is committed to ensuring that Monterey retains its special character, which derives from its heritage, size and location. The Council also is committed to ensuring that Monterey remains a safe and welcoming place to live, work and visit. Sea level rise threatens our busiest transportation corridor (Del Monte Avenue and Lighthouse Tunnel), historic neighborhoods, businesses and residents, parking and utility infrastructure, our beaches, Window on the Bay and the Recreation Trail. This study discusses sea level rise projections, consequences, and adaptation strategies to maintain Monterey's unique quality of life we all enjoy.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

This study was prepared by Kimley-Horn and Associates and GEI Consultants thanks to a Caltrans Adaptation Planning Grant of \$212,472 and a City staff time match of \$27,528. According to FEMA, every \$1 spent on natural hazard mitigation reduces related future costs by an average of \$6. By adopting this study, the City is in a better position to tackle the challenges of sea level rise.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

The City of Monterey Planning Office determined the project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (Article 19, Section 15306, Class 6) because the project consists of data collection and research which are strictly for information gathering purposes.

Furthermore, the project does not qualify for any of the exceptions to the categorical exemptions found at CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2.

Exception a - Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located -a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially

adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies. The project consists of data collection and research which do not result in any disturbance to an environmental resource.

Exception b - Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant. The project consists of data collection and research which are strictly for information gathering purposes and would not result in cumulative impacts.

Exception c - Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. The project consists of data collection and research for information gathering purposes only and would not have any effect on the environment.

Exception d - Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The project consists of data collection and research for information gathering purposes only and would not affect scenic resources or highways.

Exception e - Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code. The project consists of data collection and research for information gathering purposes only and would not affect hazardous waste sites.

Exception f - Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. The project consists of data collection and research for information gathering purposes only and would not affect historical resources.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

The Caltrans grant that funded this study requires its adoption by February 28, 2021. There are no alternatives considered.

DISCUSSION:

Overview

The City of Monterey applied for a Caltrans Adaptation Planning Grant to study the effects of sea level rise on the City's transportation network and develop transportation adjustments. The "Adapting a Threatened Transportation Network to Sea Level Rise" study built upon the City's "Sea Level Rise and Vulnerability Analyses, Existing Conditions and Issues Report" completed in 2016. While this report identified existing vulnerabilities, it did not provide transportation strategies or projects to address them. This study fills this knowledge gap by providing transportation improvements and sea level rise adaptation strategies. By way of an RFP process, the City hired Kimley-Horn and Associates and GEI Consultants (hereinafter "consultants") to develop the study.

Stakeholder Meetings and Community Workshops

Consultants and City staff conducted a stakeholder meeting with the following representatives: City department heads, federal agencies (U.S. Army Garrison Presidio of Monterey and Naval Support Activity Monterey), and a state agency (California Coastal Commission). The purpose of this exercise was to discuss various sea level rise and flooding scenarios and identify potential impacts and their timing, which informed the types of adaptation strategies that were presented at the first virtual community workshop.

The first virtual community workshop was held on May 13, 2020. The City invited all of its neighborhood and business associations; City boards, commissions, and committees; local stakeholders, such as Monterey-Salinas Transit, Transportation Agency for Monterey County, Caltrans, U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, Coastal Commission, and more. The workshop was advertised on the City's website in English and Spanish, and a media release was sent to local media outlets. In addition, the City mailed a workshop postcard invitation in English and Spanish to every property owner in the Coastal Zone (600+ owners). Thirty-two people attended the virtual workshop, including representatives from Fisherman's Wharf Association, Naval Postgraduate School, Middlebury Institute of International Studies, New Monterey Neighborhood Association, Coastal Commission, City of Seaside, Caltrans, City of Pacific Grove, Monterey One Water, California State University Monterey Bay, Monterey Bay Aquarium, and Monterey Bay Air Resources District. The consultants presented an overview of the project, sea level rise projections, consequences, and solutions. Then, workshop attendees asked questions and gave comments for about one hour. After that, participants were encouraged to take an online survey to choose the transportation alternatives that they prefer for a flood protection scenario vs. a managed retreat scenario. Eighty-one people took the survey, with most preferring a managed retreat scenario with improved pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. The consultants incorporated the survey results and preferred alternatives into a draft.

The draft, which included all previous work, conceptual plans, and preliminary cost estimates, was presented at a second virtual community workshop held by the Planning Commission at its regular meeting on December 8, 2020. The Planning Commission discussed the draft, provided input, and gathered community feedback, which shaped the final study.

Final Study

The final study shows that the greatest sea level rise impacts will be felt in the following areas: Downtown, Wharves, Lake El Estero, Oak Grove Neighborhood, and Del Monte Beach Townhomes (La Playa condos). Therefore, the bulk of the recommended adaptation strategies addresses the transportation corridors that traverse these areas. Choosing which strategies to implement will require a robust benefit-cost analysis that evaluates each strategy and also assigns dollar values to intangible benefits vs. costs, such as the quality of life benefits of protecting the Recreation Trail behind a sea wall vs. the ecosystem costs of losing beach habitat on the other side. Such benefit-cost analysis is estimated to cost approximately \$400,000. The City has recently applied for federal grants to cover this cost, and if successful is anticipating to complete the analysis by 2025.

Next Steps

The community must begin efforts to prepare for temporary flooding from coastal storms. Forging local and regional partnerships to limit beach erosion while making long-term plans will be necessary to successfully address this challenge. Public engagement will be necessary to determine next steps and how local, regional, state, and federal resources can address sea level rise. The City of Monterey has created a public engagement platform called Have Your Say Monterey (<https://haveyoursaymonterey.org/sea-level-rise-adaptation-plan>) where updates, comments, questions and ideas will be posted. Staff has launched an “ideas tool” where members of the public can create virtual post-it notes to share their thoughts and suggestions.

All documents related to the study can be found at <https://haveyoursaymonterey.org/sea-level-rise-adaptation-plan>, including:

- Final Study with Appendices: "Adapting a Threatened Transportation Network to Sea Level Rise"
- First Community Workshop Recording
- Interactive Map of Preliminary Adaptation Options
- Second Community Workshop Recording
- Related Sea Level Rise Studies

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Attachments: 1. Resolution Adopting “Adapting a Threatened Transportation Network to Sea Level Rise” Study with Exhibit A
2. January 26, 2021 comment letter from Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC)

e: Steve Wittry, Public Works Director
Andrea Renny, City Traffic Engineer
Marissa Garcia, Traffic Division
All Neighborhood Associations
All Business Associations
Frederik Venter, Kimley-Horn and Associates
Rebecca Verity, GEI Consultants

Writings distributed for discussion or consideration on this agenda item, pursuant to Government Code § 54957.5, are posted at <https://monterey.org/Submitted-Comments> within 72 hours of the meeting.