



NOTICE OF PREPARATION
of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the
City of Santa Barbara Los Patos Underpass Removal Project

Date: October 8, 2024

To: State Clearinghouse, Responsible Agencies, Trustee Agencies,
and Interested Parties

Project Title:

City of Santa Barbara (City) Los Patos Underpass Removal Project, Project No. PLN2019-00591

Project Location:

The Los Patos Underpass Removal Project (proposed Project) site is located along Los Patos Way, directly off the southbound Exit 95 from U.S. Highway 101 (U.S. 101). It includes the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) Underpass and the UPRR rail line from Los Patos Way to just east of Cabrillo Boulevard. The Project's site consists of the right-of-way owned by Caltrans, the UPRR, and the City (see Figure 1).

Notice Of Preparation Comment Period:

Friday, October 11, 2024, to Monday, November 11, 2024

Scoping Meeting:

On **Thursday, October 24, 2024, from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.**, the Scoping Meeting will be held at the Palm Park Beach House, at 236 East Cabrillo Blvd, Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Lead Agency Contact:

City of Santa Barbara, Public Works Department/Engineering Division, Beth Anna Cornett, Senior Planner I, BCornett@SantaBarbaraCA.gov

Introduction:

The City is the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). After preparing an Initial Study, the City has determined that the Project may have a potential significant effect on Aesthetics, Biological Resources, Cultural, and Tribal Cultural Resources, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, and Land Use and Planning. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be prepared to evaluate these potential effects.

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This Notice of Preparation (NOP) from the City informs agencies and interested parties that an EIR will be prepared for the proposed Project. This NOP solicits guidance from regulatory agencies about the scope and content of the environmental information included in the EIR as related to the agencies' statutory responsibilities. The agencies will use the EIR when considering their respective permits or other approvals related to the Project. This NOP allows interested parties to inform the City regarding environmental issues that should be addressed in the EIR.

Project Description:

As part of the Caltrans U.S. 101 HOV and Widening Project's 4E North Segment, the Highway 101 southbound off-ramp at Los Patos Way will permanently close. Once the off-ramp is closed, the Los Patos Underpass Project (Project) will remove the underpass (Bridge No. 51-0235) and fill in the underpass with compacted soil and reinstall the UPRR track on top of the fill. Landscaping will replace the former off-ramp. The terminus of Los Patos Way at the former underpass will be turned into a cul-de-sac. There will be gated access at the end of the cul-de-sac for maintenance access.

There will be a temporary shoofly (rail bypass) constructed between the Project and the Cabrillo and Los Patos Roundabout Project to allow continued train travel during construction of both projects. The shoofly will be created once the retaining walls for the new Cabrillo/Highway 101 interchange are constructed as part of the U.S. 101 HOV and Widening Project's 4E North Segment. Funding is still pending for the Cabrillo/UPRR Bridge Replacement Project and U.S. 101 HOV and Widening Project's 4E North Segment. If state funding is awarded, construction is anticipated to begin in 2025 and be completed in 2028.

The draft of the [CEQA Initial Study](#) for the Project is available for review on the City's website: SantaBarbaraCA.gov/LosPatosUnderpass.

Probable Environmental Effects and Scope of the EIR:

The Los Patos Way Off-Ramp Underpass (Underpass) was evaluated by Rincon Consultants, Inc. in the Historic Structure/Site Report (HSSR) for the Project in February 2020. The findings indicated the Underpass was eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) and as a City of Santa Barbara Structure of Merit. As a structure eligible for listing in the CRHR and local designation, the Underpass qualifies as a historic resource, as defined in Section 15064.5 of the CEQA Guidelines. In April of 2020, the report findings were presented to the City Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC), and the conclusions were approved.

The Underpass would be demolished as part of the proposed Project. The Underpass is considered a historical resource per the findings in the HSSR and subsequent determination by HLC. Per Section 15064.5 of the CEQA Guidelines, its demolition would have a potentially significant impact. When potentially significant impacts are identified during the CEQA review process, Section 15126.6 of the CEQA Guidelines requires the

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Project EIR to explore a range of reasonable alternatives that would feasibly attain most of the basic project objectives but would avoid or substantially lessen any of its significant effects.

The EIR is a project-specific document that will analyze the potentially significant environmental impacts of removing the Underpass and the construction of the shoofly. The EIR will evaluate whether feasible mitigation measures exist that may lessen or avoid identified significant impacts and identify and evaluate feasible alternatives to the proposed Project to avoid or lessen the significant impact. Potential mitigation measures and alternatives are discussed in Attachment A of the [CEQA Initial Study](#).

In accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15063(a), the City prepared the [CEQA Initial Study](#), which found potentially significant impact(s) in five environmental issue areas. The City advises that an EIR would be necessary to evaluate the potentially significant environmental effects on the following environmental topics outlined in Appendix G of the *State CEQA Guidelines*.

- Aesthetics;
- Biological Resources;
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources (removal of Structure of Merit);
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials; and
- Land Use and Planning (removal of Structure of Merit)

NOP Comment Period:

In accordance with the time limits identified in State law (CEQA Guidelines 15082(b)), please respond to this NOP with your comments on the scope and content of the EIR as soon as possible, but **no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, November 11, 2024**. November 11, 2024, is 30 days following the date this NOP was first posted and published. The City requests comments on the efficacy and feasibility of the identified alternatives and mitigation. Please include the name of the contact person for your agency and submit written comments to:

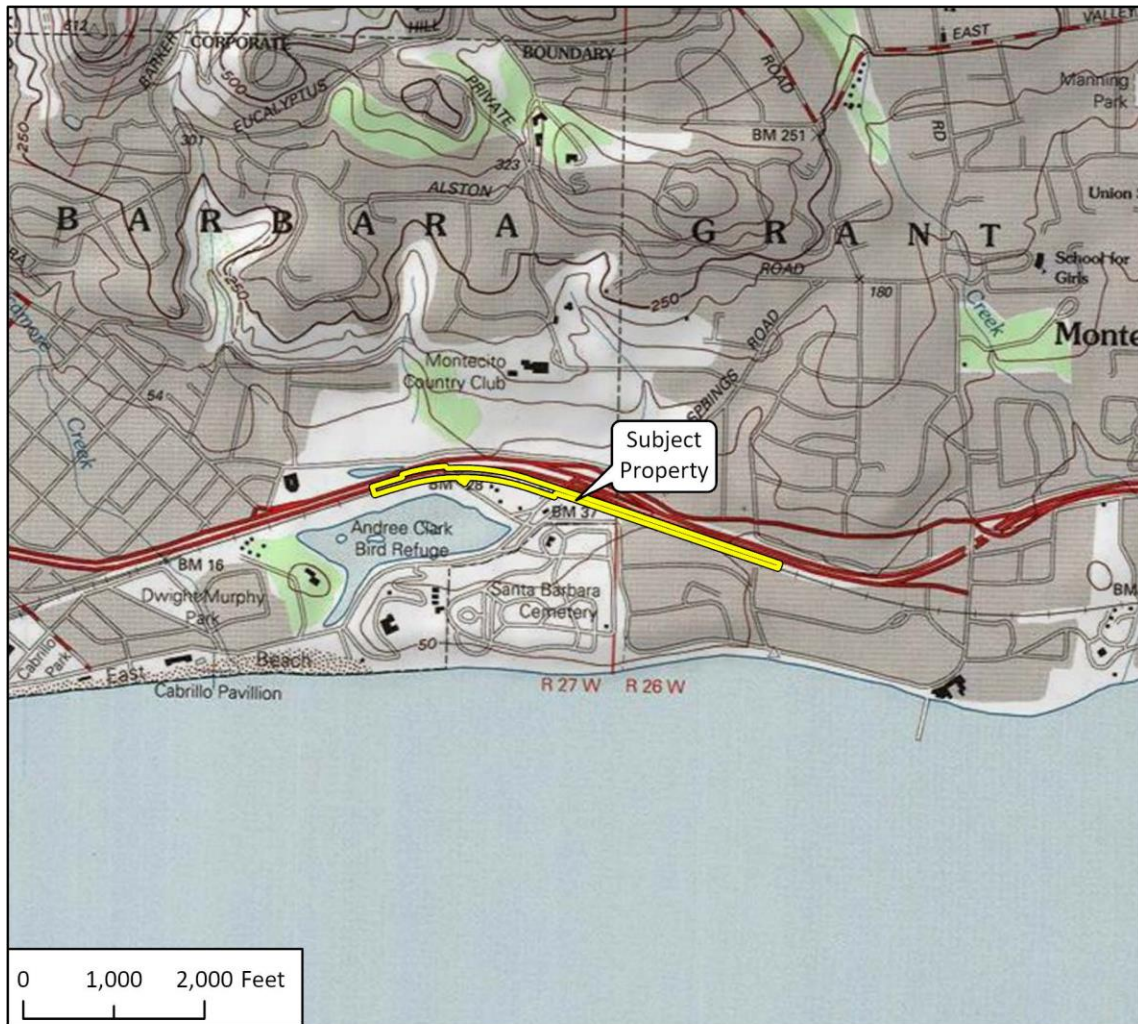
Beth Anna Cornett, Senior Planner I
City of Santa Barbara, Public Works Department, Engineering Division
630 Garden Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93102
Email: BCornett@SantaBarbaraCA.gov

Americans With Disabilities Act:

If you need services or staff assistance to attend or participate in this meeting, contact the City Administrator's Office at (805) 564 5305. If possible, notification at least 48 hours before the meeting will usually enable the City to make reasonable arrangements. Specialized services, such as sign language interpretation or documents in Braille, may require additional lead time to arrange.



Figure 1 – Regional Location



Imagery provided by National Geographic Society, Esri and their licensors © 2023. The topographic representation depicted in this map may not portray all of the features currently found in the vicinity today and/or features depicted in this map may have changed since the original topographic map was assembled.

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 PhiFig 1 Vicinity Map

 Subject Property





Figure 2 – Project Location

