Presentation Transcript (English)

Rommel Pardo:

Welcome to the El Camino Real Roadway Renewal Scoping Presentation. Thank you for joining us to learn more about the scoping phase of this important project. This video presentation will take you through updates about this project, and it will explain where we are now, as well as next steps. You can pause this presentation any time by hitting the space bar or hitting pause on your viewing device. This presentation will be available for viewing until July 6th. Your presenters today are me, Rommel Pardo a Project Manager for Caltrans, Adrienne St. John from our Office of Landscape Architecture and Yolanda Rivas, the Environmental Lead on this project. We're excited to host this scoping meeting virtually for the convenience and safety of all, as we shelter in place during COVID-19. There are four parts of this virtual platform. First, the scoping meeting presentation, which is what you are viewing now. This video will last approximately 25 minutes, and we'll give you a complete overview of this project status.

Rommel Pardo:

The poster gallery can be viewed at any time by hitting posters in the top navigation bar. The poster gallery has a question portal where you can submit questions about the poster materials. We also have FAQs and comment cards, as well as a section with helpful project background for those who are new to this project. Unless indicated otherwise, all information will be up on this website until July 6th. Our meeting today will cover general information about the project status. We will introduce the environmental phase of work and it will provide you, the viewer, with multiple opportunities to provide input. Detail information about potential project design and specifics about an environmental impacts will be shared at future public meetings. Input from this scoping meeting will provide the necessary information to conduct environmental studies and explore detailed design alternatives. Over the past couple of years, a lot has happened in support of this project.

Rommel Pardo:

Starting in 2017, a Burlingame Task Force effort was conducted over 18 months, with a goal to identify strategies to address El Camino Real's issues while retaining its character. Caltrans worked closely with the Task Force and other stakeholders throughout the past two years to create a sensible path to a positive outcome for this project. In 2019, the project initiation document, or PID, was completed and officially kicked off the project development schedule. In January, 2020, Caltrans hosted its public education meeting to share information about the project and introduce the issues we'll be working through as we transform El Camino Real into a safe, livable, and beautiful roadway. Over the course of our planning process, we received input from many key stakeholders about the importance of roadway safety, maintaining character of the street, improved pedestrian crossings,

especially near your schools, and the historical significance of the trees on this stretch of El Camino Real.

Rommel Pardo:

Additionally, at the public education meeting, we received many thoughtful comments from the community, asking that we consider things like automobile safety, and the safety of pedestrians, the fire hazard that results from the tree debris that falls onto rooftops, flooding, the difficulty in securing certain insurance coverage because of the risk of fire and flooding, and retaining a tree canopy. There are several phases to complete during a complex project like this one. We are currently in the PAED phase. PAED stands for project approval and environmental document. During this phase, we will complete several environmental studies about the project area and prepare initial designs. This scoping meeting is a major milestone during the PAED phase of work. During this meeting, our goals are to, introduce the scope of our planned environmental studies, clarify the purpose and need of this project, and most importantly, invite you, the public, to provide comments or ask questions.

Rommel Pardo:

You heard us mention the purpose and need statement on the previous slide. This statement is a key element to any transportation infrastructure project, as it creates a clear outline of project deficiencies, frames future design alternatives, and helps to ensure that taxpayer dollars are used appropriately on the project. This project is funded through the SHOPP program, which is the state's fix it first program, SHOPP stands for the State Highway Operation and Protection program. The SHOPP program funds the repair and preservation of state highways. It tracks project accomplishments against program objectives. Now the need for this project is apparent to anyone who travels to this stretch of El Camino Real. El Camino Real has several key needs or deficiencies that have been identified. First, the condition of the pavement is extremely poor with severe cracking and potholes resulting in very poor ride quality. This roadway condition is due to significant issues that have developed several layers below the surface.

Rommel Pardo:

The curb and gutter system throughout the project area is in need of repair for better drainage. Sight distance for pedestrians and drivers is severely impaired. Sidewalks need to be brought up to ADA standards for accessibility and the existing crosswalks lack accessible pedestrian signals and striping. The educational meeting we hosted in January reviewed each of these conditions in great detail. To revisit the materials from this meeting, please visit our project website at elcaminorealproject.com. The needs mentioned on the previous slide will be addressed to meet four key purposes. First, enhancing the accessibility for all who travel on El Camino Real by increasing the safety and accessibility of this major corridor. Second, extending the life of the roadway. The poor conditions of the roadway can no longer be remedied through surface repairs. To improve ride quality for years to come, the subsurface issues must be addressed. Third, increasing the safety for pedestrians and drivers. El Camino Real has several complex safety issues that are best repaired through a comprehensive multi-pronged roadway renewal approach.

Rommel Pardo:

Like the pavement conditions and safety issues, the drainage issues on El Camino Real start deep under the surface with a dated, insufficient pipe work. To properly address this need, underground work is required. As we dig deep into the technical aspects of this project's purpose and need, we will keep the overarching project goals at the forefront of all we do. We understand the strong desire within the community to preserve the unique character of the roadway, to provide a safe and walkable street for all who utilize the corridor for future generations, and the goal of supporting a healthy urban forest. El Camino Real is a beloved neighborhood street. We understand its history and what this street means to Burlingame and the surrounding cities.

Rommel Pardo:

Our goal with this renewal project is to honor the past of El Camino Real while at the same time, setting it up for a long, beautiful and functional future. This map shows the general project area, which extends from East Santa Inez Avenue to Millbrae Avenue. El Camino Real is a conventional highway that occurs along and within the vicinity of residential and commercial areas, municipal concerns and places of worship. For a more detailed map of this project area, please visit our poster gallery. Now that we've covered some general information about this project, I'll turn it over to my colleague, Adrienne St. John, who will provide a closer look at some of the existing conditions on El Camino Real.

Adrienne St. John:

Thanks Rommel. The need for this repair project is clear to anyone who uses the El Camino Real corridor. The paving drainage and sidewalk issues are visible everywhere. But what's less obvious is the complexity of what lies beneath the surface of the roadway. Beneath the pavement is a complex web of infrastructure, including the foundations of retaining walls and power poles, as well as utilities like water, sanitary sewers, storm sewers, gas lines, and communications. All of these are interwoven with the roots of hundreds of mature trees. The majority of roots are shallow, occurring in the top one to three feet of soil, and this means they occupy the same space as many of the utilities and the installation and repair of these utilities over the decades has impacted root systems. For more information about the evolution of El Camino Real over time, be sure to watch the video, A Road's Journey, in the background section of this website. On the next slide, let's take a closer look at the constraints within this public right away.

Adrienne St. John:

The blue dashed lines indicate the width of the public right of way. Within this zone, we find two lanes of traffic in each direction separated by a double yellow line, in various locations throughout the corridor, sidewalks, planting areas, and driveways all occur in different configurations. In some cases, retaining walls can be found behind the sidewalk or even right at the curb. El Camino Real, as one of the oldest state highways in our system, has evolved over time to meet various needs, but is now due for some repair. Here, for comparative purposes, you can see how El Camino Real, shown at the top, stacks up against a standard conventional highway below. Today's standards typically include a continuous center median, wider lanes, standard shoulders, and where applicable, continuous ADA accessible sidewalks. I should be clear. This project is not considering such a wide footprint, but I want to highlight that while El Camino Real is narrower than some highways, within its

footprint, it contains far more complexity in the form of utilities, trees, driveways, retaining walls, and numerous other features.

Adrienne St. John:

This is the challenge we're grappling with as we develop this project. Additionally, we've heard from members of the community that the new design should look at addressing a number of other issues, including moving electrical utilities underground, repairing drainage facilities and retaining walls, including a landscaped buffer strip between the sidewalk and the roadway, keeping the road to its current width and rehabilitating the tree grove and canopy. These considerations will be integral to our efforts as we work to address the numerous needs, prioritize safety, maintain neighborhood character, minimize impacts to the public and work within the given right of way. In the coming months, we'll be studying the possible impacts this project would have. We hope you'll engage with us in this discussion and share your thoughts and knowledge about the resources, the setting and potential solutions for this project. As Rommel mentioned earlier in this presentation, one of the goals of this meeting is to provide an introduction to the work we'll be conducting as part of the environmental phase of this project. For this, I'm going to turn it over to our Environmental Lead on this project, Yolanda Rivas.

Yolanda Rivas:

Thanks Adrian. Now that we've looked at project features, I wanted to describe some of the important topics of interest that we'll be looking at moving forward. This is where you come in. Listen to the topics of interest and consider whether there's information you may know that we may not yet be aware of, beginning with cultural resources. Cultural resources studies identify, document and evaluate national state and local historic and archeological resources within an area called, the area of potential effect or APE. So far, we've identified 17 different historic architectural styles, such as Carpenter Gothic, and New Normalism within the project's APE. One of the oldest historic properties within the APE is the Howard Ralston Eucalyptus Tree Rows, planted in 1873, the same year UC Berkeley opened, blue jeans got their first rivets, and Ulysses S. Grant began his second term as President. Now, we'd like to ask you, are there any cultural resources we should be aware of within the project area, besides those we've mentioned.?

Yolanda Rivas:

Next, there's visual impacts and aesthetics. We'll be studying changes to the project's visual environment and simulate how things will look when the project is complete. We start by identifying important characteristics like scenic vistas and natural landmarks. In our study, we'll evaluate how the project might affect these characteristics and what can be done to reduce or offset potential impacts and enhance visual characteristics over the long term. Besides the impressive row of trees that line El Camino Real along the project area, can you tell us about other visual resources we should be aware of as we begin our studies?

Yolanda Rivas:

We'll also be conducting a tree health survey to collect information on each of the trees within the public right of way along El Camino Real for the entire length of the project. Some of the things we are noting include the tree location, overall health, signs of internal decline,

decay, and significant defects. We'll also take note of whether trees have damaged sidewalks and curbs and the proximity of trees to power poles, driveways, and corners. This information will help us identify possible locations where creative design solutions can be used to preserve existing trees. Is there anything else you'd like us to know about the trees along El Camino Real?

Yolanda Rivas:

Next there's biology. We'll be studying the natural elements of the urban environment. This will include resident plants and animals, as well as urban streams flowing to the Bay through the project corridor. We'll examine the original and current conditions of the surrounding area. For instance, the coastal sage scrub and live oak woodlands that cover much of San Mateo County offers yearly nesting space to many species of migratory birds. What other natural elements would you like us to be aware of in the project vicinity? When looking at floodplains, we'll determine and evaluate any project impact to the 100 year base flood plain shown in the FEMA flood insurance rate map. The FEMA defined base flood plain is a once or twice in a generation occurrence, and most people can go through life without experiencing such an occurrence. The flooding that is experienced by the public annually is localized flooding, and we'll be studying this and attempting to rectify the effects to the extent feasible on this project. Please consider what information may help us in evaluating the flood plain within the project vicinity.

Yolanda Rivas:

We also must consider water quality. We'll be studying pollutants from roadways and urban land uses within the project drainage area that typically contaminates storm water. These pollutants discharge into storm sewers, culverted drains and other adjacent waterways. As we look at the discharge system, we'll be looking into how we can reduce the amount of pollutants that discharge into receiving waters, both during construction and throughout the life of the project. Can you think of factors that may contribute to our understanding of drainage within the project area. Community. We'll also be studying more about the existing community and its character, such as parks, schools, points of interest and where it sits in the larger vicinity.

Yolanda Rivas:

We'll also evaluate the projects consistency with applicable plans and policies such as the Grand Boulevard Initiative and local general plans. Through our outreach efforts, we've been getting to know what's important to the community, things like the uniqueness of El Camino Real through the project area, it's valued tree canopy, it's schools and the level of civic involvement. We'd like to know what other community features, plans or organizations we should be aware of as we continue to engage with the community in the future.

Yolanda Rivas:

Bicycle routes. We are aware of the bicycle routes in the vicinity of El Camino Real, including the parallel route on California Street. We have identified the multiple routes that cross El Camino Real and connect to the California Street bicycle route. What do you want us to know about nearby bike routes that intersect the project corridor? Since public access is such an important part of this project, we'll be looking at enhancing access along the facility

for a variety of users, such as pedestrians, disabled individuals and families. We're considering various improvements or ramps at intersections, repairing sidewalks and installing high visibility, crosswalk markings. What other issues regarding accessibility would you like us to be aware of as we look at the project area?

Yolanda Rivas:

Construction-related impacts. Finally, we'll be evaluating how to build this complex project in an urban setting, characterized by both residences and businesses along the project corridor. Our goal is always to minimize construction impacts as much as we can. In doing so, we'll look at things like air quality and greenhouse gas emissions, noise and vibration, traffic handling, and maintaining access to businesses and residents during construction. What do you think we need to know while planning for construction?

Yolanda Rivas:

Moving the project status. As was mentioned before, we are currently in the project approval and environmental document phase of this project. This phase will take about two years to complete. We've kicked off our efforts in the spring of 2020, and we aim to complete this phase in the spring of 2022. We have a long way to go, but we couldn't have made it this far without the commitment and ongoing collaboration and hard work of your community members and local officials. Special thanks to our cities, Burlingame, Millbrae, San Mateo and the town of Hillsborough, as well as the El Camino Real Task Force that continues to work with us during this project.

Yolanda Rivas:

Thank you for taking the time to learn about this important project. We'd like to wrap up this presentation by asking you for your comments on the information we presented, such as the purpose and need of the project and the topics of interest during the PAED phase. In addition, please let us know your ideas on possible solutions you would like us to consider as we plan this project. The scoping comment period ends July 6th. There are four ways for you to submit comments. In our poster gallery, you can submit comments about the information on the materials in the comment box provided below each poster. Through the comments section of this website, you can submit a comment card. Thirdly, you can email us ecrproject@dot.ca.gov. Lastly, you can write to me Yolanda Rivas at Caltrans District 4, PO Box 23660, Mail Station 8B, as in boy, Oakland, California, 94623.

Yolanda Rivas:

Your comments on the information we've presented, such as the purpose and need, the environmental topics of interest, and potential solutions will help us as we develop this project. In the spring of 2021, we aim to release the draft environmental document. At that time, we'll present a summary of the public scoping comments and a guide for finding relevant information in that document. We understand you may have questions. Because we're just beginning our studies, at this time, we can answer general questions based on the information we've presented here. Please see our frequently asked questions section on this website. These FAQs will be updated where we can clarify information on what we've presented. Thanks again and we look forward to hearing from you.