



SUNOL CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL

SENT VIA EMAIL

September 16, 2021

Caltrans, District 4 Office of Environmental Analyses
 ATTN: Charles Winter, Associate Environmental Planner
 P.O. Box 23660 MS-8B
 Oakland, CA 94623-0660

Dear Mr. Winter,

On September 15, 2021, the Sunol Citizens' Advisory Council approved submittal of the following comments on the State of California, Department of Transportation Draft Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Assessment for the Arroyo de la Laguna Bridge Project.

Page	Comment
xxi	<p>Thank you for responding to some of our comments submitted during the scoping phase of the environmental review.</p> <p>We are glad to see that Caltrans has added safe bicycle and pedestrian access across the bridge, as we requested. (1)</p> <p>We are glad to see that Caltrans is now planning to align the bridge away from the Water Temple Gate and now plans to protect the one remaining Water Temple Gate, as we requested. (2)</p>
Viii Xviii 3-48 2-148 2-105 2-107	<p>Visual Impacts, Natural Communities, Cultural Resources</p> <p>Caltrans states the project will require the removal of 251 trees, many of which are majestic heritage oaks and sycamores. The EIR/ER analysis states that it will have moderate to high levels of impact after mitigation.</p> <p>The DEIR/EA lists five other Caltrans projects in the Sunol area. These five projects have already removed 900-1000 trees and will remove at least another 250 trees in Sunol this year. The other projects do not adequately mitigate the impact of removing these trees. These projects have already had a significant impact on Sunol and will continue to have a significant impact for many years. Caltrans states the bridge replacement project will not result in a contribution to cumulative impacts on animals, cultural resources or natural community. This conclusion is erroneous. A</p>

	<p>25% increase in the number of trees to be removed and trimmed is a significant cumulative effect on the town of Sunol, and its visual, cultural and natural resources.</p> <p>The DEIR/EA lists mitigations that may be implemented, if feasible, and, if implemented, it will be at distant locations. These are not mitigations. A mitigation would mitigate the impacts to the town of Sunol and to the people who visit Sunol. To address these significant cumulative impacts, the project needs to include mitigations implemented in Sunol.</p> <p>The project mitigation must include replacement trees (mature trees, not saplings, and not acorns) planted in Sunol. The project needs to include a process for working with the citizens of Sunol to identify locations in Sunol. We are ready to work with Caltrans to achieve this mitigation. (3)</p> <p>These majestic trees scheduled for removal should not be sliced and shredded into wood mulch. The project needs to include working with Urban Forestry specialists to preserve the wood from downed trees for use in Urban Forestry projects. (4)</p>
<p>2-43 2-56 2-57</p>	<p>Visual Impacts, Cultural Resources, Parks and Recreational Facilities</p> <p>Figure 2.2.9-11 shows that all but two trees on the southeast side of the school field will be removed. Caltrans states that the trees that currently screen the school from the bridge and roadway are on Caltrans property. Caltrans states that trees cannot be replanted in all areas along the right-of-way fence within state property due to insufficient setback/safety requirements so 100% rescreening is not possible.</p> <p>The school has expressed a desire to maintain trees surrounding the field and screening the bridge and roadway, even if planted on school property. The project needs to include the replanting of large trees on school property to screen the bridge and roadway and restore the rural feeling to the school field. (5)</p>
<p>2-95</p>	<p>Noise</p> <p>The DEIR/EA states that noise levels are expected to be high during all aspects of the project: bridge demolition, pile driving, excavating/grading, and paving.</p> <p>The DEIR/EA states that noise will impact the school and residents in the downtown area; therefore, the work will be done at night. It will also be done during the summer when school is not expected to be in session. Based on experience with the construction of the intersection at Paloma and Pleasanton Sunol Boulevard, the noise will also impact residents in the surrounding hillsides. Many Sunol homes don't have air conditioning and residents open their windows to cool their houses during night. The nightly construction in 2021 at the intersection has kept residents awake with the constant beeping sound of back-up vehicle beepers and what sounds like asphalt rubble-izing. Residents have just experienced one summer without sleep and are anticipating three more summers of this project without sleep.</p>

	<p>The eight listed avoidance/abatement, minimization measures (AMM) are not adequate. For example, “AMM 4 Consider reducing the impact of detours,” or “AMM8 If feasible, use solar or electricity as a power source rather than diesel generators.” These AMMs will not reduce the noise and are not realistic.</p> <p>The project needs include constant (weekly), direct communication about the phase of the work and the type of noise to be expected. This communication should be done prior to the start of the work so that residents can purchase and install air conditioners and then Caltrans should continue to communicate weekly, so that residents can anticipate when to run their air conditioners and to use electricity when they wouldn’t under normal circumstances. (6)</p> <p>The project should include scheduling the work during daylight hours as much as possible and ensuring that vehicle traffic doesn’t detour through Foothill Road and Main Street. (7)</p> <p>The project should include prohibition of night-time work when PG&E institutes Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) or flex-power shutoffs. (8)</p>
<p>1-10 2-26 2-30 2-50</p>	<p>Community character and cohesion</p> <p>The document describes the pedestrian and bicycle pathways on the bridge, it does not describe the connections at each end. It appears that it has not been adequately planned or considered. These connections have been historically problematic and have discouraged pedestrians and bicycle riders. This route is important to people currently living in Sunol and it is important for the future Niles Canyon trail and Sunol’s efforts to be more pedestrian friendly.</p> <p>The pedestrian crossing from Main Street across Niles Canyon Road to the bridge should be under the bridge to reduce contact with vehicles traveling at expressway speeds. (9)</p>
<p>Xiii 2-97</p>	<p>Natural Communities</p> <p>The DEIR/EA states that trees would be removed from an area of 3.8 acres for construction, staging, and creek diversion. The new bridge will require the removal of trees on more than .4 acres. One acre of wetlands would be destroyed.</p> <p>It appears that a large portion of the land to be scraped is downstream from the bridge. If this area is to be used for staging, it is not appropriate. Staging should be done outside of the Arroyo streambed. (10)</p>
	<p>Cultural Resources</p>

	<p>Decades ago, Caltrans removed the historic pillars at the intersection of Paloma, Pleasanton-Sunol Boulevard, Niles Canyon and Water Temple roads. The pillars were part of the entranceway to the historic Water Temple and to Sunol.</p> <p>As mitigation for the removal of our magnificent trees and the loss of Cultural Resources, Caltrans needs to replace the historic pillars at the intersection. (11)</p>
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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the DEIR/EA. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or need clarification about our comments.

Sincerely,



Connie De Grange, Chair
Sunol Citizens' Advisory Council

Copies:

David Haubert, Supervisor District 1
Richard Valle, Supervisor District 2
Each Member, Sunol Citizens' Advisory Council
Superintendent, Sunol Glen Unified School District