

## ASTI BRIDGE Q&A

*Compiled from email inquiries and meeting questions; as of June 6, 2022*

### PLANNING

Q: What is an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), what is the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review, and when will they be done?

A: Per CA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

[<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Environmental-Review/CEQA>] - The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) serves to:

- Disclose to the public the significant environmental effects of a proposed discretionary project, through the preparation of an initial study, negative declaration, mitigated negative declaration, or environmental impact report.
- Prevent or minimize damage to the environment through development of project alternatives, mitigation measures, and mitigation monitoring.
- Disclose to the public the agency decision-making process utilized to approve discretionary projects through findings and statements of overriding consideration.
- Enhance public participation in the environmental review process through scoping meetings, public notice, public review, hearings, and the judicial process.
- Improve interagency coordination through early consultations, scoping meetings, notices of preparation, and State Clearinghouse review.

State and local public agencies must comply with CEQA before making a discretionary approval of a project. Compliance can be met by determining a project is exempt from CEQA or preparing an environmental analysis, typically a negative declaration (ND), mitigated negative declaration (MND) or environmental impact report (EIR). MNDs and EIRs identify and contain an analysis of a project's significant environmental effects and discuss feasible measures to avoid or mitigate those effects. EIRs also analyze a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives to the proposed project

that would avoid or substantially lessen the project's significant effects. Compliance with other environmental laws and regulations is also typically discussed in an MND or EIR.

In addition to CEQA, the county plans to meet the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirement, in order to be eligible for possible federal grants/funding.

Q: Will the access road on the east side of the river be widened? What are the exact details of location/type/length/height of bridge? Will the bridge have pedestrian access? Bike lanes? Lighting? Will the public have input into design?

A: Specific details about a permanent bridge are not set at this early phase in planning. The next step in the planning process is for TPW to bring an item to the Board of Supervisors on May 24, 2022 for engineers to do environmental and design work.

Q: Will the bridge require the acquisition of private land in order to be built? How will those landowners be compensated?

A: Preliminary findings indicate that private land from a few owners may be needed. It is county practice to offer fair market value to purchase from private parties when necessary.

Q: Will the riverbed changes, including flooding of 2019 and huge gravel build-up at the river be mitigated as part of this bridge construction?

A: Specific details about a permanent bridge are not set at this early phase in planning. Nevertheless, a key factor in constructing a permanent bridge is to mitigate adverse environmental conditions and flooding hazards in the area; remediation of the riverbed/gravel displacement is likely to be a part of the solution.

CONSTRUCTION

Q: How long will construction take? Will there be access at that site during construction?

A: Specific details about construction are not set at this early phase in planning. In general, a bridge of the size and scope that would be needed could take 3-5 years, after design, engineering, environmental, funding, and other preliminary phases are complete. Construction is expected to take two years.

Q: If the bridge is constructed, will this cause further construction on the east side of the river?

A: This project concerns construction of a permanent Asti crossing only. No other construction projects are associated with it.

Q: Why is this project not considered "Mandated" by the county?

A: The current Asti seasonal crossing carries no legal obligation by the County to continue its installation, or replace it with a permanent structure. A temporary crossing could be discontinued at the county's discretion due to cost, environmental requirements, logistical, or other reason.

Q: Are there legal requirements/liabilities associated with the bridge or the additional traffic that it will bring?

A: A permanent bridge owned and maintained by Sonoma County will comply with laws and guidelines required of all county bridges.

## FINANCING & SPECIAL FINANCING DISTRICT

Q: What is the Special Financing District (SFD) and why the county has proposed this as a means of financing?

A: Local jurisdictions create SFDs for specifically defined areas and in response to public demand. Special districts mostly provide a single service, which principally benefits those within the district. Other examples

include projects associated with a local park/playground, cemetery, or school facility.

A SFD must be approved by the governing body (Board of Supervisors) before it goes to the district participants. Only those potentially affected by the financing (in this case, a parcel tax) are given a ballot, and the decision must be approved 50 percent +1 ballot in favor in order to be enacted.

Q: If a property owner owns more than one parcel will they be charged the SFD fee for each parcel?

A: Yes, the charge is calculated per parcel without respect to ownership. If the assessment is billed on the County Secured Property Tax Bill, the amount will be applied to each parcel.

Q: If a property owner owns more than one parcel will they get a "vote" for each parcel?

A: A proposed Special Funds District (SFD) follows rules set out by Proposition 218 ("The Right to Vote on Taxes Initiative" approved in 1996) in a "weighted ballot protest proceeding."

- After the elected body (Board of Supervisors) approves, a ballot is prepared for each parcel, specifically regarding this project only;
- The ballots are separate and unrelated to any other regular civic elections, (June or November elections, propositions, etc.). This, along with use of the term "vote" causes a lot of confusion, so we prefer to refer to it as "casting a ballot" instead.
- Each parcel owner is sent a ballot to cast to support or oppose the assessment.
- Each individual ballot is weighted according to the proportionate financial obligation, based on dollar value of the assessment on each parcel.
- The ballots are tabulated according to the WEIGHTED ballot amount of each ballot cast.

- For further detail, please see Prop 13, Cal Const. Art XIID Sec 4

Q: What is the number of votes required to approve the Special District?

The decision must be approved 50 percent +1 ballot in favor in order to be enacted

Q: What is the rationale for making the parcel owners portion 20 percent or 4 million?

A: Twenty percent is a customary reimbursement ratio for bridges; in this case it demonstrates the significant community commitment in order to prioritize the project amongst the county's many competing needs. The Asti Bridge SFD portion is not set and fixed at 20 percent. Also, the county is actively seeking grants, which would be applied to the SFD portion (vs. the County's share). The SDF be a fixed cost even if estimates rise, if recommended by the Department of Transportation and Public Works and approved by the Board of Supervisors.

Q: Why is this not a tax on the county as a whole?

A: There are 325+ nationally registered bridges that the County is responsible for maintaining; there are 17 active County bridge projects in process now, and dozens more await attention. The Asti crossing is temporary, un-mandated, and de-prioritized. An SFD is an appropriate method of funding and demonstrating the community's urgent desire for it.

Q: Who will pay for/maintain the bridge? Who pays for cost overruns/delays?

A: A permanent bridge Asti bridge would be built and maintained by the County. The County will bear responsibility for costs above what is approved by the SFD.

Q: How many households would be in the Special District?

A: Approximately 450

Q: What is "trip generation" based on? How does the County come up with how much each entity must pay?

A: The formula use to determine participant rates has not been set. The County expects to have a consultant's recommendation in the coming months.