

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

SAN DIEGO COAST AREA

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Staff Report: December 16, 1996
Hearing Date: January 8-10, 1997

STAFF REPORT: CONSENT CALENDAR

Application No.: 6-96-142

Applicant: California Department
of Transportation

Agent: Lawrence Carr

Description: Widening of existing southbound freeway on-ramp from one lane to two lanes for a high-occupancy vehicle lane and CHP enforcement pad with installation of ramp metering system, and extension of an existing sound wall by an additional 350 feet. The proposal includes staging areas, and landscaping/revegetation of the construction area.

Site: Tamarack Avenue southbound on-ramp to Interstate-5, Carlsbad, San Diego County.

Substantive File Documents: Certified Carlsbad Local Coastal Program - Mello II Segment; Caltrans Project Report dated January 1994

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The staff recommends the Commission adopt the following resolution:

I. Approval.

The Commission hereby grants a permit for the proposed development on the grounds that the development will be in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 3 of the California Coastal Act of 1976, will not prejudice the ability of the local government having jurisdiction over the area to prepare a Local Coastal Program conforming to the provisions of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act, and will not have any significant adverse impacts on the environment within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act.

II. Standard Conditions.

See attached page.

III. Findings and Declarations.

The Commission finds and declares as follows:

1. Project Description/History. Proposed is the widening of the Tamarack Avenue southbound on-ramp to Interstate-5 in the City of Carlsbad. Also proposed is the extension of an existing sound wall by approx. 350-linear feet; the sound wall is parallel to and west of the on-ramp. The ramp widening is required as part of a Caltrans project to install ramp-metering systems along various freeway interchanges in northern San Diego County. The Tamarack Avenue ramp widening will accommodate both single- and high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes and a pocket (parking pad) for use by California Highway Patrol officers to enforce the appropriate use of the HOV (carpool) lanes. As part of the Caltrans project, metering is also proposed at the Las Flores Drive and Carlsbad Village Drive southbound on-ramps to Interstate 5. However, the actual installation of the meters and associated improvements (controllers, lane detectors, flashing beacons, etc.) at all three interchanges is exempt from coastal development permit requirements; it is the provision of additional travel lanes which requires a coastal development permit. Additional lanes are only proposed at the Tamarack Avenue southbound on-ramp.

This proposal is virtually identical to the project approved by the Coastal Commission in Coastal Development Permit #6-94-43. However, the project was not begun within two years of the date of Commission action (May 13, 1994), and the applicant failed to extend the permit; thus, the prior permit expired last spring. The former approval included special conditions addressing construction staging areas and landscaping/revegetation. However, the applicant has made those items part of the current proposal. All staging will occur within the right-of-way, with no use of adjacent or nearby public streets or parking areas, and all areas of construction activity will be revegetated consistent with pre-construction conditions. Therefore, no special conditions of approval are required for the current proposal.

2. Visual Impacts/Public Access. The Mello II segment of the City of Carlsbad's certified LCP contains various policies which address the visual quality and/or preservation of visual beauty of the coastal zone areas, preservation of community character of older communities, and other related policies. As stated, the subject development will be located along Interstate 5, a major north/south coastal access route serving numerous coastal communities. As such, potential adverse impacts associated with the proposed project could be significant. The proposed widening of the existing on-ramp will involve cutting into an existing vegetated slope to the west of the on-ramp and removal of three pine trees and other shrubs for the provision of the new travel lane. No sensitive vegetation such as coastal sage scrub or riparian species, however, are located in this area. Caltrans has indicated they intend to replace all trees removed at ratio of 3:1 (three trees replanted for every single tree removed).

In addition, the existing sound wall at the top of the slope is not now very visible from the freeway due to its elevation and existing vegetation.

However, the newly proposed extension of the wall may be visible by motorists on the on-ramp and I-5. For this reason, as noted in the Caltrans project report, landscaping is proposed to lessen the visual impact and inhibit graffiti associated with the wall. Adequate landscape/revegetation plans were submitted as part of the proposal, so the Commission finds the project consistent with the scenic and visual resource policies of the certified LCP.

Furthermore, since the proposal involves development along a major coastal access route (I-5), it is important that construction related impacts do not impede the public's ability to visit the coast in this area. Therefore, the applicant has identified that all construction corridors and staging areas for the project will be located within existing right-of-way. No nearby public streets or parking areas will be required, and traffic plans will maintain open roads throughout the project. As proposed, the Commission finds the project consistent with all the public access policies of the certified Carlsbad LCP.

3. Local Coastal Planning. Section 30604 (a) also requires that a coastal development permit shall be issued only if the Commission finds that the permitted development will not prejudice the ability of the local government to prepare a Local Coastal Program (LCP) in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act. In this case, such a finding can be made.

The proposed development is located along Interstate-5. The subject proposal for development on a public highway by the California Department of Transportation is exempt from all local approvals. The proposed project, as conditioned, is consistent with all applicable policies in the certified LCP. Carlsbad has recently assumed coastal development permit authority for this area of the City. However, the subject application was received in the San Diego office prior to the transfer of permit authority, so is being processed by the Coastal Commission. Approval of the development, as submitted, should not prejudice the ability of the City of Carlsbad to implement its certified Local Coastal Program for this area.

4. Consistency with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Section 13096 of the Commission's Code of Regulations requires Commission approval of coastal development permits to be supported by a finding showing the permit to be consistent with any applicable requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Section 21080.5(d)(2)(i) of CEQA prohibits a proposed development from being approved if there are feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen any significant adverse impact which the activity may have on the environment.

As discussed herein, the proposed project will not cause significant adverse impacts to the environment. Specifically, the project has been found consistent with the public access and visual resource policies of the Coastal Act. There are no feasible alternatives or mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen any significant adverse impact which the activity might have on the environment. Therefore, the Commission finds that the proposed project is the least environmentally damaging feasible

alternative and can be found consistent with the requirements of the Coastal Act to conform to CEQA.

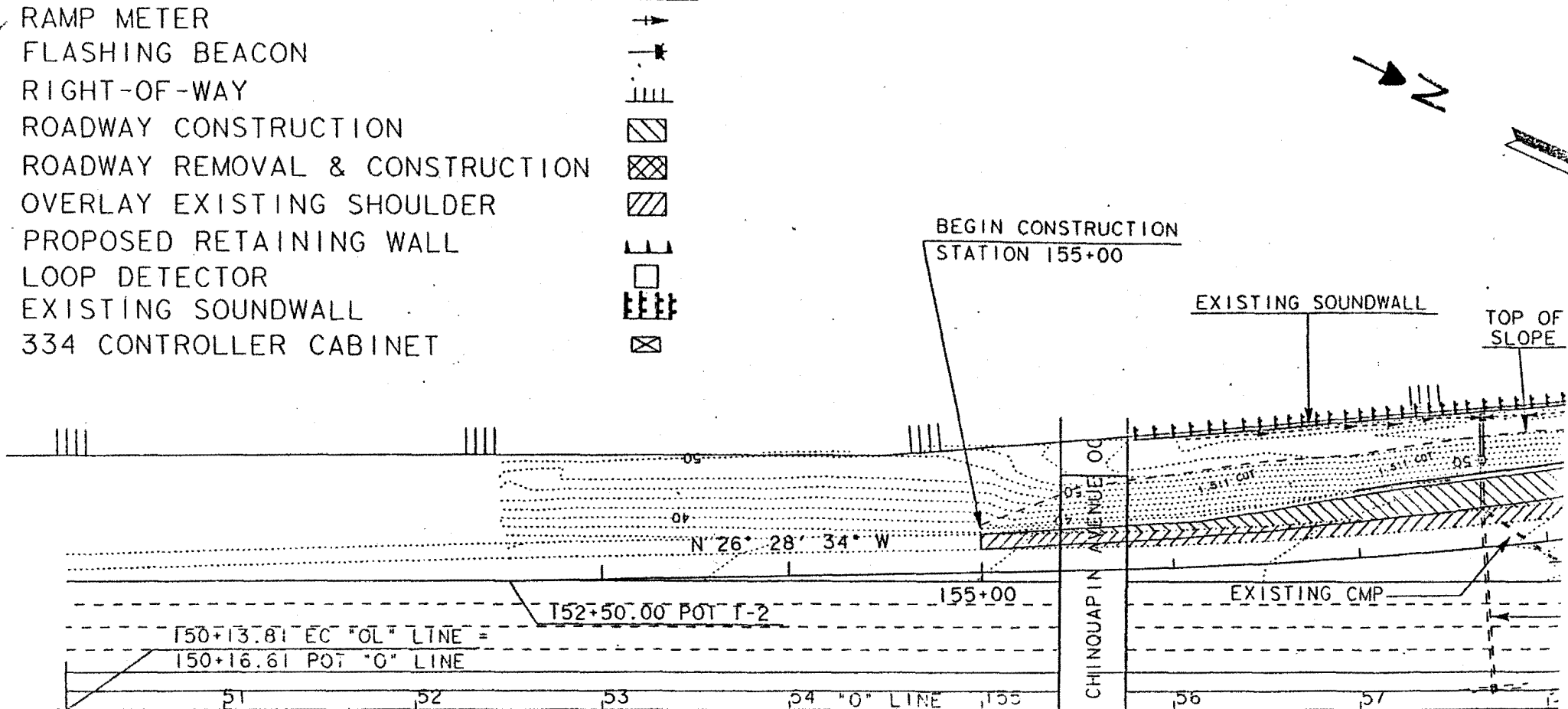
STANDARD CONDITIONS:

1. Notice of Receipt and Acknowledgement. The permit is not valid and development shall not commence until a copy of the permit, signed by the permittee or authorized agent, acknowledging receipt of the permit and acceptance of the terms and conditions, is returned to the Commission office.
2. Expiration. If development has not commenced, the permit will expire two years from the date on which the Commission voted on the application. Development shall be pursued in a diligent manner and completed in a reasonable period of time. Application for extension of the permit must be made prior to the expiration date.
3. Compliance. All development must occur in strict compliance with the proposal as set forth below. Any deviation from the approved plans must be reviewed and approved by the staff and may require Commission approval.
4. Interpretation. Any questions of intent or interpretation of any condition will be resolved by the Executive Director or the Commission.
5. Inspections. The Commission staff shall be allowed to inspect the site and the development during construction, subject to 24-hour advance notice.
6. Assignment. The permit may be assigned to any qualified person, provided assignee files with the Commission an affidavit accepting all terms and conditions of the permit.
7. Terms and Conditions Run with the Land. These terms and conditions shall be perpetual, and it is the intention of the Commission and the permittee to bind all future owners and possessors of the subject property to the terms and conditions.

(6142R)

LEGEND

RAMP METER	
FLASHING BEACON	
RIGHT-OF-WAY	
ROADWAY CONSTRUCTION	
ROADWAY REMOVAL & CONSTRUCTION	
OVERLAY EXISTING SHOULDER	
PROPOSED RETAINING WALL	
LOOP DETECTOR	
EXISTING SOUNDWALL	
334 CONTROLLER CABINET	



← Southern
end of
work

EXHIBIT NO. 2

APPLICATION NO.

6-96-142

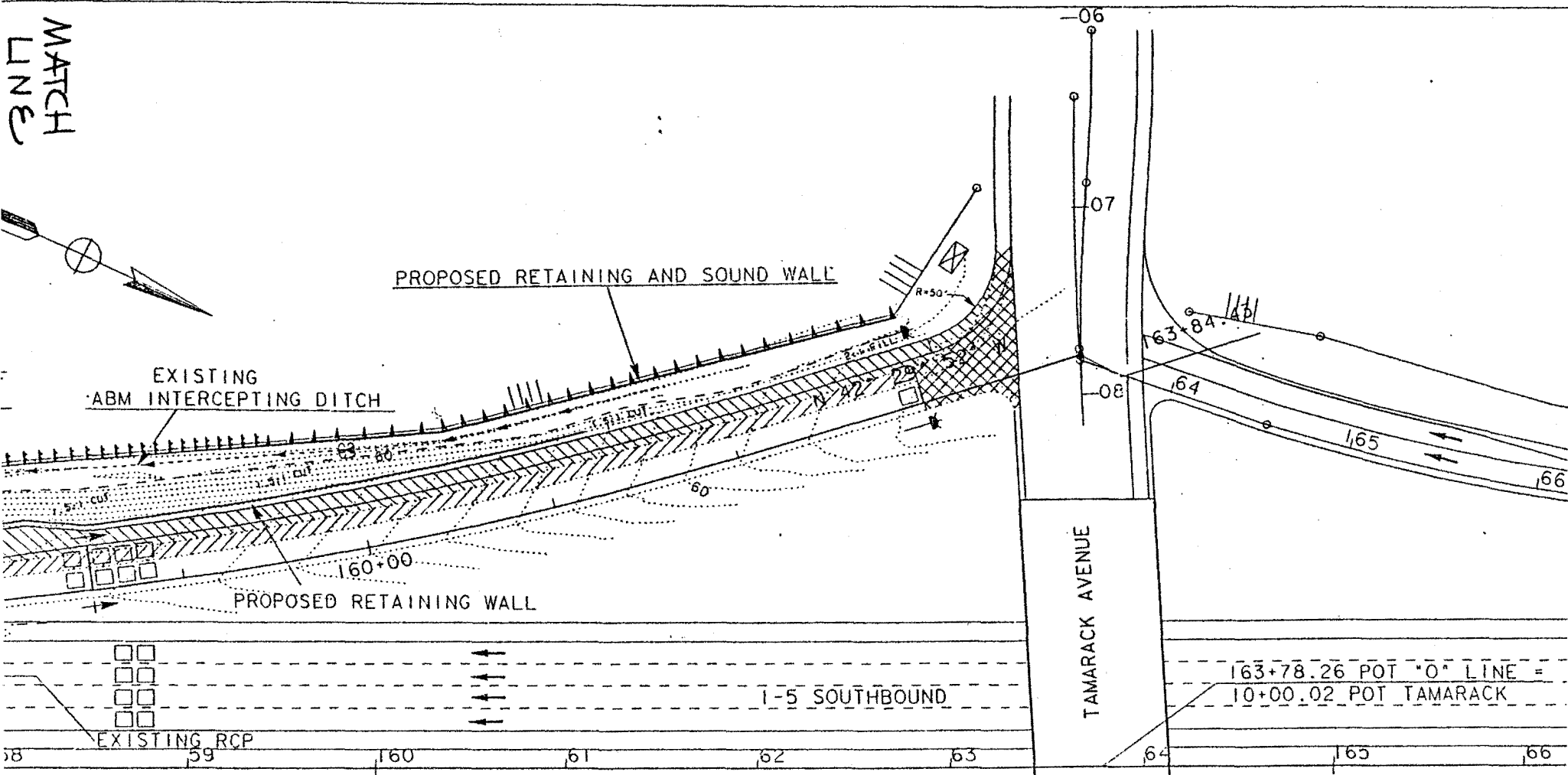
Site Plan

1 of 2

California Coastal Commission

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MATCH
LINE



Northern
area of
work

11-SD-5 PM R4E
PLAN VIEW
TAMARACK AVENUE
SOUTHBOUND ENTRANCE F

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