

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

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# W10a

**Prepared August 24, 2023 for the September 6, 2023 Meeting**

**TO:** COASTAL COMMISSIONERS AND INTERESTED PERSONS

**FROM:** Shana Gray, North Coast Deputy Director  
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**SUBJECT:** Caltrans Informational Briefing on the Last Chance Grade Permanent Restoration Project, Del Norte County

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At the September 6, 2023 meeting, the Commission will be given a briefing as part of the North Coast Deputy Director's Report by Caltrans staff on the status of the upcoming Last Chance Grade Permanent Restoration Project. The project site is located along forested steep bluffs of Highway 101 in Del Norte County (post mile 12.0 to 15.5) from about 9 miles south of Crescent City at the northern end to about 6.5 miles north of Klamath at the southern end (Exhibit 1). For over two decades, the 3.5-mile-long project area has been subject to frequent landslides that necessitate emergency repairs, temporary closures of the roadway, and long-term lane closures. The site is at high risk of a larger landslide that could shut down the roadway completely, severing regional connectivity with no convenient alternative route available. Vehicular travel between Crescent City and the Humboldt Bay region along Highway 101 through Last Chance Grade is approximately 75 miles. If access along Highway 101 through Last Chance Grade is lost to a catastrophic landslide, travelers between the two regions would have to detour an additional 6 hours and 300 miles.

The project area is located within old growth coast redwood forests of Redwood National and State Parks. As such, studying alternative roadway alignments in this highly sensitive roadless region is a complicated and lengthy process. Over a multi-year process, Caltrans has analyzed multiple potential new roadway alternatives based on preliminary studies and input from local stakeholders, including the National Park Service, California State Parks, Tribes, local, state, and federal elected officials from both California and Oregon, permitting and regulatory agency staff, local businesses, and local citizen groups ([Exhibit 2](#)). Caltrans now intends to move forward with two principal alternatives for its CEQA review that include (1) reengineering the existing roadway in place with a series of retaining walls, or (2) constructing a 10,000-ft.-long tunnel and road realignment.

Caltrans maintains a website for the project with information on the project history, process of developing alternatives, anticipated schedule (construction is currently projected to commence in 2030), and other information: <https://lastchancegrade.com/>. The project will require coastal development permits from the Commission and Del Norte County (or a single consolidated CDP processed by the Commission) and may also require review through the Commission's federal consistency process.

At the September 6, 2023 meeting, Caltrans will update the Commission on the Project, and the Commission will be invited to ask questions and offer preliminary feedback on the latest information presented by Caltrans. Critical questions to be addressed include project alternatives analysis, public access improvements, and mitigation opportunities for the Project's impacts to Old Growth redwoods.

## **EXHIBITS**

[Exhibit 1 – Project Location Map](#)

[Exhibit 2 – Alternatives Analysis Report \(November 2021\)](#)