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AGENDA ITEM NO.: 7 (Action Item – Public Hearing)

**PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING DATE:** February 22, 2020

SUBJECT: Approval of the Mitigated Negative Declaration for the North Round Valley Road Bridge over Pine Creek Bridge Replacement Project

PROJECT INFORMATION

Supervisory District: District 1

Project Applicant: Inyo County Public Works

Community: 40 Acres

Staff Recommended Action: 1.) Approve the Mitigated Negative Declaration

Alternatives:

- 1.) Deny the Mitigated Negative Declaration
- 2.) Approve the Mitigated Negative Declaration with additional conditions of approval
- 3.) Continue the public hearing to a future date, and provide specific direction to staff regarding what additional information and analysis is needed.

Project Manager: Ashley Helms

STAFF ANALYSIS

Background and Overview

The Inyo County Public Works Department (County) proposes the North Round Valley Road Bridge over Pine Creek Bridge Replacement Project (proposed project) which would involve the replacement of County Bridge 48C-0044.

The bridge is currently closed due to high velocity flows that occurred in June and July of 2017 that eroded approximately 50-feet of the south approach roadway behind the abutment. In addition to the eroded south approach, both existing abutment foundations were undermined due to scour, as native soil at this location is highly erodible. Pine Creek now flows behind the south abutment where the approach roadway was washed out. To reduce the future risk of the embankments eroding from high velocity flows, the replacement bridge will need to be significantly longer than the existing bridge. In addition, rock slope protection (RSP) will be used to armor both abutment embankments. The replacement of the existing bridge is being funded through the State of California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES).

The proposed Project would construct a replacement structure consisting of a single-span, precast/prestressed wide flange girder superstructure on high cantilever abutments founded on cast-in-

drilled-hole concrete piles, approximately 85 feet in length. The existing horizontal and vertical alignments of North Round Valley Road will be maintained. Bridge barriers proposed consist of Caltrans standard California ST-75 open bridge railing. Minimal use of falsework (temporary form-work used to support the concrete until it develops strength) will be necessary within locations of the creek channel. As the proposed project maintains the existing profile grades, the approach roadway work will be limited to reconstructing portions of both approach roadways (roughly 120 feet in each direction).

Environmental Review

County has assessed the potential environmental impacts to replace County Bridge 48C0044, including the demolition of the existing structure. This Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) has been prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) based on the assessment presented in the Inyo County North Round Valley Road Bridge over Pine Creek Bridge Replacement Project Initial Study.

The proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration was publicly noticed in the Inyo County Register on December 7th beginning a 30-day review window. The Notice of Availability for the proposed MND was filed on December 19th, 2019 with the Inyo County Recorder's Office. Two comments were received, from California Department of Fish and Wildlife and Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. Both comments were addressed in the Draft Final IS/MND. The public hearing for this environmental document was noticed on February 11th, 2019.

Tribal Consultation

California Assembly Bill 52 requires tribal consultation for any projects requiring a negative declaration, mitigated negative declaration, or environmental impact report. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.3.1, Tribes have 30-days, after receiving invitations to consult on the proposed environmental document, to request consultation opportunities. In March 2019, Inyo County Board of Supervisors sent a formal notification to representatives of the eight Native American tribes with traditional or cultural affiliation to the project area: Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone Tribe, Fort Independence Indian Community of Paiutes, Timbisha Shoshone Tribe, Bishop Paiute Tribe and the Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley, Cabazon Band of Mission Indians, Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, and the Twenty Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians. To date, no responses have been received, and no tribes have requested formal consultation or additional information about the proposed project. A records search did not identify any previously reported cultural resources within the project area. One previously unidentified, prehistoric archaeological resource was found during the archaeological field survey. It consists of a moderately sized lithic scatter predominantly containing debitage.

Mitigation Measures:

Mitigation measures have been identified to reduce potentially significant impacts of the project. Implementation of identified mitigation measures would result in avoiding the impact or reducing it to a less than significant level. These measures contain mitigations to ensure protection of special status species potentially present in the project area including the Swainson's hawk, Owens sucker and Owens speckled dace; and ensuring water quality is not negatively impacted by the project. Cultural mitigation measures include installing Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing around portions of archaeological resources, which are outside of the Area of Potential Effect of the project. The project will also require dust and engine emissions control measures. All mitigation measures are described in detail in the IS/MND.

RECOMMENDATION

County staff recommends the approval of the Mitigated Negative Declaration for the North Round Valley Road Bridge over Pine Creek Bridge Replacement Project.

Findings

1. The proposed project is an Initial Study with Mitigated Negative Declaration under CEQA guidelines and the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act have been satisfied.
[Evidence: Pursuant to Title 14 California Code Regulatory Sections 15000 et seq., the County has performed an Initial Study with a Mitigated Negative Declaration in order to “consult with other County departments, agencies, groups, and individuals, which may provide information and assistance to the Planning Department during this phase of environmental review” (Inyo County Code Section 15.28.030). This document contains the necessary “project description, evaluation of environmental impacts that may be conducted using an environmental checklist supported by sufficient explanations, discussion of any potentially significant impacts and mitigation measures” (Inyo County Code Section 15.28.040).