



STATE ROUTE 156 MULTIMODAL CORRIDOR PLAN

Adopted by the TAMC
Board of Directors:
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PREPARED BY:

Transportation Agency for
Monterey County

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

State Route 156 West (“Route 156”) is one of the major thoroughfares used by residents, commuters, tourists, and commercial trucks traveling to and from the Monterey Peninsula. As a result, more than 39,000 vehicles travel along this route each weekday, and the Route experiences periods of heavy congestion, especially on weekends. This two-lane conventional highway can no longer accommodate this amount of traffic, especially when impacted by the confluence of commute traffic, tourism and agricultural goods movement.

With concerns about congestion and maintaining safety, Route 156 has been identified by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) as one of the key transportation corridors that must be



addressed. The State Route 156 West Corridor Improvement Project will construct a new four-lane expressway parallel to the existing route, with new interchanges constructed at Castroville Boulevard and at U.S. 101. The current two-lane highway will be converted into a frontage road that will provide safer community access, including for active transportation modes. The result will be improved safety and traffic flow in the area.

TAMC initiated this corridor study to address safety and congestion conditions experienced along Route 156. Over the past 20 years, TAMC and Caltrans have been studying, evaluating, and planning for multimodal transportation solutions for the corridor. This integrated multimodal plan incorporates corridor-level plans, such as the Environmental Impact Report and Level 2 Traffic and Tolling Study; regional plans, including the Regional Transportation Plan and Transportation Safety and Investment Plan; and statewide plans, such as the California Transportation Plan and Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan.

This State Route 156 Corridor plan includes a comprehensive overview of the outreach and stakeholder engagement involved in developing each of the corridor-level and regional planning documents that contributed to the development of the State Route 156 West

Corridor project. There is a significant history of public involvement in each of the many aspects of the State Route 156 Corridor concepts: from the establishment of the Community Advisory Group in 2007 (which provided input during the environmental review process from a range of local perspectives), to the extensive set of meetings held to create the Level 2 Tolling Study and accompanying Guidelines, to public involvement in the development of the 2018 Monterey County Active Transportation Plan, to members of the Measure X stakeholder group including the Highway 156 – Castroville Boulevard improvements the Transportation Safety and Investment Plan’s regional priorities.

Goals of the State Route 156 Corridor include enhancing safety for all modes, supporting safe walking and biking, and fostering access to low-income housing and nearby communities. Serving as a major freight corridor, Route 156 needs to provide congestion relief not only for interregional visitor and commuter traffic, but also to support the movement of agricultural goods – the region’s top industry. Travelers living along the corridor, including residents of the low-income Moro Coho mobile home park and students at North Monterey County High School, need improved access to these destinations from downtown Castroville – whether it be on foot or via bicycle, bus or car. This State Route 156 Multimodal Corridor Plan defines a multimodal, phased strategy of safety improvements, congestion relief and local road access enhancements that were developed by Caltrans, the Transportation Agency, and the County of Monterey in consultation with and the businesses and residents of the local community and the region.

The strategy for corridor improvements combines biking, walking and transit connections with a safer highway and enhanced local access. Reconstructing the interchange at Castroville Boulevard and State Route 156 will remove a traffic signal from this fast-moving highway, and create a new grade-separated interchange, with roundabouts at the approach roads. Construction of a new 4-lane alignment south of Route 156 and converting the existing road into a frontage road with bike lanes will accommodate increased volumes truck traffic and visitors, while providing safer, multimodal access to the Oak Hills community. Construction of a new interchange at US 101 will separate local, interregional and regional traffic to allow smoother and safer of traffic movements. Extension of Blackie Road to connect with Route 156 will reroute agricultural trucks around downtown Castroville and will provide access to the planned Castroville Rail Station. Future rail service to the Castroville Station will connect passengers to the planned SURF Bus Rapid Transit service that will go to the Monterey Peninsula. New walking and bicycling infrastructure will create shorter bicycle/pedestrian crossings and slow traffic at new roundabouts, improving connections from the Castroville Bridge to low income housing and the high school. In sum, this suite of corridor improvements will help meet the safety, congestion relief, access and multimodal goals discussed throughout this corridor plan.

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1. History and Overview

State Route 156 West (“Route 156”) is one of the major thoroughfares used by residents, commuters, tourists, and commercial trucks traveling to and from the Monterey Peninsula. As a result, more than 39,000 vehicles travel along this route each weekday, and the Route experiences periods of heavy congestion, especially on weekends. This two-lane conventional highway can no longer accommodate this amount of traffic, especially when impacted by the confluence of commute traffic, tourism and agricultural goods movement.

With concerns about congestion and maintaining safety, Route 156 has been identified by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) as one of the key transportation corridors that must be addressed. The State Route 156 West Corridor Improvement Project would construct a new four-lane expressway parallel to the existing route with new interchanges constructed at Castroville Boulevard and at U.S. 101. The current two-lane highway will be converted into a frontage road that would provide local community access, including for active transportation modes. The result would be improved safety and traffic flow in the area for all users.



This corridor study was initiated by TAMC to document safety and congestion conditions experienced along Route 156, an east-west corridor between Castroville and Prunedale. Over the past 20 years, TAMC and Caltrans have been studying, evaluating, and planning for multimodal transportation solutions to address the corridors congestion and safety concerns.

Route 156 was constructed in 1941, with the interchange to U.S.101 constructed approximately 30 years later in 1970. The need for the State Route 156 Corridor Project was identified and began in 1997 through a series of studies. The primary purpose of the studies has been to identify solutions that can maintain safety, relieve current and future traffic congestion, and improve local access to the neighboring communities. The development of the State Route 156 Corridor Project’s Environmental Document began in 2003 and continued until its adoption in 2013. In the meantime, upgrades were completed on the Route 156 and U.S. 101 interchange. Project open houses were held and a community advisory group was established to provide on-going input on the environmental analysis of the project. While the environmental analysis is complete, there is

still a large funding gap and pressing need to improve safety and address congestion deficiencies in the corridor to support the local economy and quality of life in the adjacent communities.

The area is most impacted on weekends due to travel related to tourist destinations such as the Monterey Bay Aquarium, Carmel State Beach, Pebble Beach golf courses, Laguna Seca Raceway and surrounding wineries.



Ocean Mist Farms Castroville Cooler (Ocean Mist)

Ocean Mist, based on the west end of the State Route 156 corridor, is the largest producer of fresh artichokes in North America with over 2,800 acres in cultivation. This agricultural activity contributes to over 3,000 trucks traversing the region, accounting for approximately 8% of the average daily traffic in the area, according to Caltrans traffic data. Currently, there are no east-west freight rail routes, so trucking is the dominant mode for moving most products. Trucking accounts for 75% of total shipments (measured by both tons and value) in the Central Coast.

State Route 156 has minimal bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Cyclists are legally allowed to ride on the shoulder of Route 156. Several barriers to walking and biking around the Castroville and Route 156 Interchange have been identified, largely due to gaps in the sidewalk and the need for a barrier between cars, pedestrians and bikes and to increase the level of comfort for active modes.

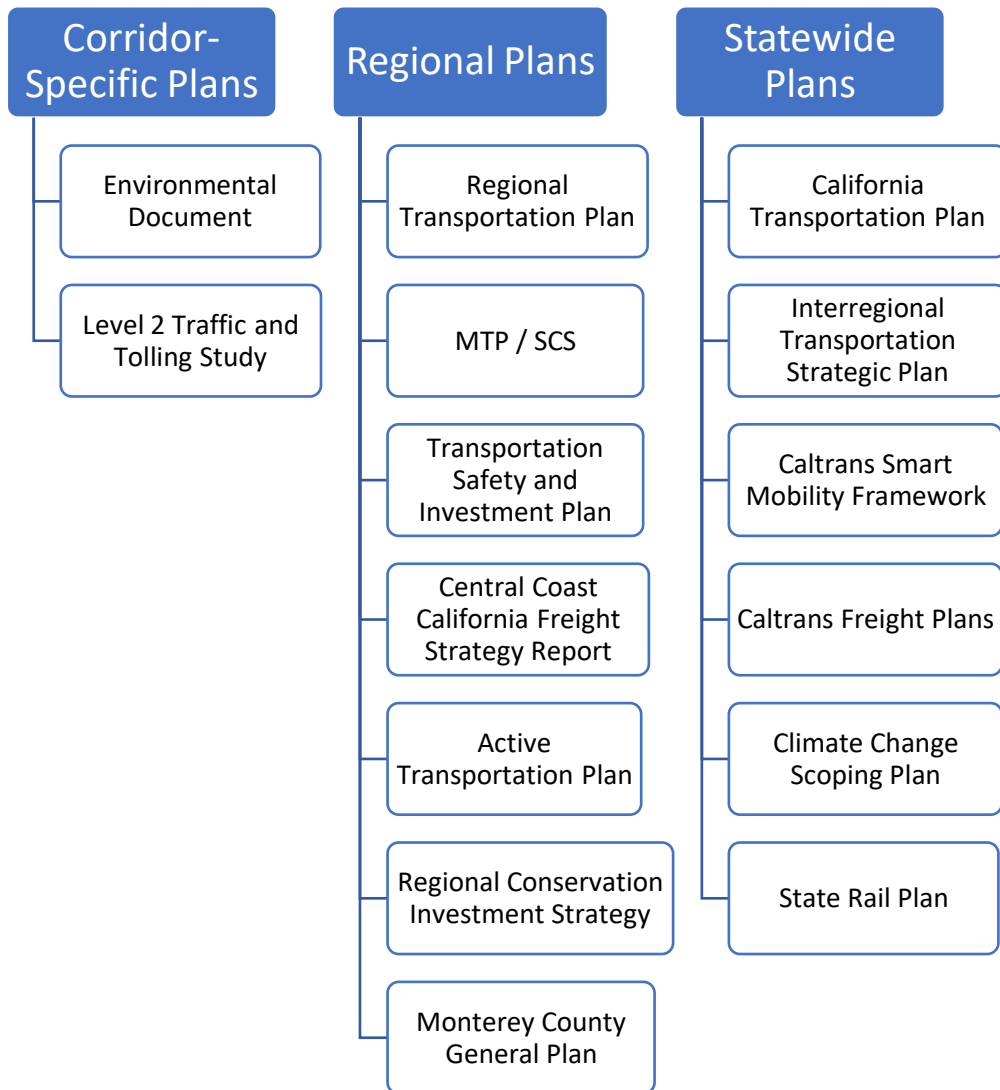
Along the corridor, there is a large portion of the population that identifies as being of Hispanic or Latino origin. The regions of Castroville and Prunedale vary in their population size and median household income, with Prunedale having a larger population and higher median household income. The unemployment rate and poverty rates are higher in the Castroville Area than in Prunedale and Monterey County at large, giving Castroville classification as a disadvantaged community.

Goals of the State Route 156 Corridor include enhancing safety, supporting safe walking and biking, and fostering access to low-income housing and nearby communities. Serving as a major freight corridor, another corridor goal is to support freight travel through congestion relief, while supporting interregional flow of traffic. This State Route 156 Multimodal Corridor Plan defines safety improvements, congestion relief and local road access enhancements that were developed by Caltrans, the Transportation Agency and the County of Monterey, in consultation with and the businesses and residents of the local community and the region.

2. Plan Contents and Relationship to State, Regional and Local Plans

This document is a “hybrid” plan developed with the intent of presenting an integrated analysis of mode-specific plans along the State Route 156 West Corridor. This plan was developed with specific intent to document the State Route 156 West Corridor’s eligibility for Cycle 2 (FY 20-21) of the Solutions for Congested Corridors Program per the California Transportation Commissions’ Adopted 2018 Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plan Guidelines.

Efforts have been underway to plan improvements along the State Route 156 West Corridor for decades. The State Route 156 West Corridor Project was developed through a variety of planning efforts, conducted over the twenty years at both the local and state levels. The following section outlines the relationship between various planning documents and the State Route 156 project. The below graphic identifies key documents produced (or in production) related to the corridor that were used to develop this hybrid corridor plan.



2.1 Corridor-Specific Studies/Reports

Environmental Document

The environmental document went through a very involved public process, that included the creation of a Community Advisory Group representing a range of community stakeholders. Through the environmental process, the purpose of the corridor project is to:

- Improve safety and operations
- Improve local road access to State Route 156
- Improve interregional traffic flow and route continuity along State Route 156
- Relieve existing congestion and provide capacity for future increases in traffic volume

The need for the project was defined through safety, local road access and interregional traffic flow, and capacity and congestion. The Final Environmental Document was approved in January 2013. The environmental document is currently undergoing a revalidation process, which is expected to be completed in fall 2020.

Level 2 Tolling Traffic and Revenue Study

The Transportation Agency for Monterey County commissioned a Level 2 Traffic and Revenue study, funded in part by Caltrans, on the feasibility of collecting tolls to fund the proposed new SR 156 road alignment between US 101 and Castroville Boulevard. The Tolling Study analyzed current and future traffic diversion, potential toll rates, toll discounts for local residents and business. After extensive public outreach and input, the Board of Directors adopted a set of Guiding Principles for evaluating tolling, to address the many questions and concerns raised. The Tolling Study evaluated the project feasibility and financing structure over 50 years under two delivery scenarios: a public tolling authority option and a public-private partnership option. The Transportation Agency Board of Directors received the study at their December 6, 2017 meeting, requested that Caltrans proceed with the supplemental EIR for the tolling project, directed Transportation Agency staff to continue to monitor options to fund and construct the full SR 156 improvement project, and directed staff to proceed with constructing the Castroville Boulevard interchange as an initial segment of the full project.

2.2 Regional Plans

Regional Transportation Plans

The State Route 156 West Corridor Project has been identified in Monterey County's Regional Transportation Plan since 2012. The State Route 156 Project is identified as a major regional investment in the "North Monterey County Gateways" in two main segments: Segment 1) Castroville/SR 156 Interchange and Segment 2) the addition of four lanes between Castroville and US 101 to the south of the existing highway and a new SR 101/SR 156 Interchange. The existing highway is identified for conversion into a frontage road to improve local access for

vehicles and safe bicycle and pedestrian access through the multiple residential communities along the corridor.

Metropolitan Transportation Plans/Sustainable Communities Strategies

The State Route 156 West Corridor Project is further reflected in the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments' (AMBAG) 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS), which positions the corridor in the context of land use and transportation. The Castroville area near the Route 156 is identified as an opportunity area, indicating a high chance for sustainable growth in the future. As an implementation strategy, the MTP/SCS identifies the need for the AMBAG and Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPAs) to "Work with Caltrans to incorporate multimodal design into highway projects such that transit can be accommodated on the highway and pedestrian and bicyclists connectivity is enhanced for access over the highway."

Transportation Safety and Investment Plan

The Transportation Safety and Investment Plan was developed alongside community leaders to identify solutions to regional safety and local road needs of the highest priority. The Transportation Safety and Investment Plan placed on the ballot as Measure X, was approved in November 2016, with 67.7% of the voters in Monterey County supporting the Plan. One of the regional projects identified in the Plan is the State Route 156 Castroville Boulevard Interchange, formerly referred to as the State Route 156 Safety Improvement Project. The project will build a new interchange at Castroville Boulevard and Route 156, with connections to Blackie Road to improve access for commercial traffic. The project benefits include congestion relief, improved safety for the local communities along the route, improved safety at intersections, supports our visitor economy and improves goods movement.

Central Coast California Freight Strategy Report

AMBAG's 2016 U.S. 101 Central Coast California Freight Strategy Report identifies Route 156 as a Priority Project based on its importance in the regional freight network. State Route 156 one of only two east-west connections between the Monterey Peninsula and the U.S. 101 corridor within Salinas and the Salinas Valley. The Route is identified as a trucking route with one of the highest truck volumes in the Central Coast. Stakeholders engaged in the development of this freight plan identified concerns about congestion and collisions along the State Route 156 corridor and support development of increased capacity and intersection modifications.

Active Transportation Plan

Active transportation improvements on and surrounding the State Route 156 Corridor are identified in the TAMC's 2018 Active Transportation Plan. Proposed improvements include the addition of a guardrail between State Route 156 and the Monterey Bay Area Sanctuary Scenic

Trail in Castroville and the addition of a Class II Bike Lane on Route 156. When phase 2, corridor widening, occurs, the plan calls for adding bike lanes on the old Route 156 alignment, which will become a county frontage road.

Regional Conservation Investment Strategy

The Monterey County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS) will assess the vulnerability of species, including the Santa Cruz Long-Toed Salamander, and habitat to climate change related stressors (drought, wildfire, and landslides, etc.) and develop conservation strategies to improve resiliency from the identified stressors. The RCIS will define a framework to finance the implementation of these conservation strategies as compensatory mitigation from new transportation. The types of conservation strategies that are eligible to be included in an RCIS will both directly and indirectly contribute to the climate resiliency of Monterey County's transportation infrastructure, including wildlife crossings, wetlands restoration, and habitat acquisition and conservation, supporting several State initiatives and priorities. The study is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2020.

Monterey County General Plan

Enhancing bicycle safety and connections within the Route 156 corridor is further supported by Monterey County's General Plan goals, one of which is to "promote a safe, convenient bicycle transportation system integrated as part of the public roadway system" (Goal C-9). Monterey County's General Plan identifies the need for collaboration with the State (Caltrans) and TAMC as a key element of the long-term transportation strategy for Monterey County.

[2.3 Relationship to Statewide Plans](#)

California Transportation Plan

Chapter 4 of the California Transportation Plan identifies that "California's transportation system must provide equitable and effective mobility and accessibility. To enhance California's economy and livability, it should be safe, sustainable, integrated, and efficient."

The State Route 156 Corridor West Plan aligns with the following goals (G) and policies (P) in the 2040 California Transportation Plan:

- Invest in solutions that improve the safety of corridors (G4-P1/P2)
- Develop and implement corridor-wide strategies to optimize bicycle and pedestrian safety, and reductions of greenhouse gas emissions (G1-P1/P2/P3, G5-P1; G6-P3)
- Reduce fatalities, serious injuries, and collisions, and support system-wide security through emergency preparedness (G4-P1/P2)
- Create neighborhood connectivity and continuity, while providing safe active transportation opportunities (G1-P3, G5-P2/P3)
- Support transportation solutions that enhance economic activity (G3-P1)

Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan

The Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan is a long-range planning document addressing interregional connections across the State of California. Goals of the interregional system include supporting multi-modal connections serving a variety of purposes – including freight movement, tourism, and active travel – and improving livability, sustainability, environmental health and transportation options within the State. The State Route 156 Corridor is identified as part of the Central Coast – San Jose / San Francisco Bay Area Strategic Interregional Corridor. The Central Coast corridor is identified as significantly important for the movement of freight, specifically agricultural products, as Salinas Valley is home to the top vegetable producing land in the nation. The Plan identifies the importance of State Route 156 due to the large share of trucks that traverse the corridor between the U.S. 101 and Highway 1, and the need to improve shoulders for bicycle and pedestrian travel along State Route 156.

Caltrans Smart Mobility Framework

The goal of Caltrans' Smart Mobility Framework is to move people and freight, while enhancing California's economic, environmental, and human resources. The Framework emphasizes convenient and safe multimodal travel opportunities, speed suitability, accessibility, management of the circulation network and efficient use of land. Principles of Smart Mobility include environmental stewardship, health and safety, location efficiency, reliable mobility, and a robust economy. The State Route 156 Corridor goals build on Caltrans Smart Mobility Framework in its localized intent to enhance quality of life and accessibility within the neighboring community while enhancing the safety of the infrastructure to support commuters as well as the regional economy.

California Freight Plans

The *2014 California Freight Mobility Plan* identifies the need to invest strategically to minimize congestion and enhance safety along freight corridors. The Plan identifies the benefits of truck-only facilities and reducing points of conflict. State Route 156 is not only a major trucking route – but also the main roadway for residents who live in the nearby communities to get anywhere. Separating the truck traffic from the local traffic through the State Route 156 Corridor can reduce conflict points while increasing the efficiency of the freight that traverses Route 156.

One of the strategies identified in the 2014 California Freight Mobility Plan is to “strategically add new capacity,” something that the State Route 156 Corridor project proposes. The Plan identifies that “the longer freight sits in traffic, the higher the prices of the delayed products and services,” (p. 129). With agriculture being a major export out of Monterey County, those impacts would be felt by the public in the cost of agricultural products.



Freight truck on State Route 156

The Freight Mobility Plan identifies Route 156 within the California Highway Freight Network, a subset of the State Highway System that represents the routes of most critical importance to the movement of freight within and throughout the state.

The 2016 California Sustainable Freight Action Plan further encourages the need to strategically invest to improve travel time reliability and achieve sustainable congestion on primary corridors. This is crucial as domestic trucking imports are expected to grow as we near the year 2040 – the California Freight Mobility Plan identifies trucking as the highest subcategory of domestic imports.

Investing in improvements to the freight network also supports the safety and well-being of *everyone* on our roadways. In 2012, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS) reported that of the 2,758 fatal traffic collisions, approximately 8% involved trucks; among those that involved trucks, about 70% indicated the automobile driver was at fault.ⁱ

California Climate Change Scoping Plan

The California Climate Change Scoping Plan sets forth a strategy for achieving California’s 2030 greenhouse gas target. The Climate Change Scoping Plan identifies various goals and objectives for achieving the greenhouse gas reduction targets, including: improving freight and goods movement efficiency and sustainability to allow for continued economic growth, and promoting vibrant communities and landscapes by reducing vehicle miles traveled and seeing increased use of the modes of walking, biking and using transit. With transportation accounting for 37% of total emissions recorded during 2015 in the State of California, advancements to transportation technology and the state’s transportation network are crucial in achieving greenhouse gas reduction targets. The State Route 156 project aims to strategically increase capacity in a manner that supports more walking and biking in the local community, and decreases congestion for the regional network, frequently traversed by freight vehicles.

California State Rail Plan

The State Route 156 West Corridor is located within the Central Coast Corridor of the State Rail Plan. The State Rail Plan provides a vision for expanded passenger rail and freight capacity and efficient management of the entire rail network. This supports goods movement and maintains expanded economic gains. The State Rail Plan identifies goals for increased frequencies in rail service connecting across the Central Coast, including two new stations in Pajaro/Watsonville and Castroville. The short-term goals also include enhanced integrated express bus service to connect Hollister, Monterey and Santa Cruz to the statewide rail network. The 2040 vision of the Rail Plan includes a regional rail network that connects communities across the Central Coast with each other and feeding into the High-Speed Rail network in Gilroy.

In closing, the State Route 156 Multimodal Corridor Plan demonstrates consistency with the goals and objectives of the above-listed plans. Regional support for the project has been underway for over two decades and includes various forms of coordination between the Transportation Agency for Monterey County, Caltrans and Monterey County staff.

2.4 Coordination with Other Agencies

A history of governmental and local agencies have informed the development of the entire State Route 156 corridor improvement strategy. Caltrans District 5 and TAMC have been the lead partners on this project since it was first envisioned. Caltrans has led the environmental review, design, and right-of-way acquisition process. TAMC has supported the effort by coordinating public outreach, securing funding, and conducting design review.

County of Monterey is the underlying local jurisdiction for the State Route 156 project area and the adjacent unincorporated community of Castroville. In 2019, County of Monterey completed a \$7 million bicycle and pedestrian bridge over the Union Pacific Railroad tracks. The State Route 156 Castroville Boulevard Interchange project will complete the only remaining gap of the bike/ped path connecting the community of Castroville to North Monterey County High School. The County is also the designated sponsor for a new road that will provide a direct truck connection between State Route 156 and the Castroville regional distribution center.

The following permitting agencies have been partners on the project's development and included in the development of the environmental document:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- State Water Resources Control Board
- California Department of Fish and Game
- California Coastal Commission
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services

A thorough discussion of Stakeholder and Community Engagement efforts undertaken regarding the State Route 156 Corridor, see **Chapter 5: Stakeholder and Community Engagement**.

3. Corridor Context

Route 156 is an east-west route, beginning in Monterey County at Route 1 in Castroville, joining with Route 101 until it departs again at San Juan Bautista in San Benito County, ending at Route 152 in Santa Clara County. It is functionally classified as a principal arterial, and serves as a regional route for agriculture trucking, business, local and commuter traffic. Land use within the corridor is predominately agricultural, except near the U.S. 101 and State Route 156 interchange in Prunedale, which functions as a mixed-urban use. This section, Corridor Context, provides an overview of the regional significance of the corridor, demographics, characteristics of the community, and existing transportation conditions.



School bus entering State Route 156

3.1 Regional Significance

State Route 156 is the primary access route from the Monterey Peninsula to California’s Central Valley and the San Francisco Bay Area. It serves as a key corridor for tourism, jobs, and the Monterey region’s significant agriculture economy. As part of the National Highway System, this route is considered essential for the Nation’s economy, defense and mobility according to the Federal Highway Administration.ⁱⁱ State Route 156 is eligible for the State of California’s Scenic Highway System, meaning it passes through the “memorable landscape” of North Monterey County. Furthermore, the corridor is identified as a crucial aspect of the statewide freight network, as expanding its capacity to support freight is identified as a high priority in the U.S. 101 Central Coast California Freight Strategy Report.

3.2 Demographic Characteristics

The United States Census identifies the majority of State Route 156 as part of both the Prunedale and Castroville Census Designated Places (CDPs). The following section outlines demographic, employment and commuter trends for the Prunedale and Castroville CDPs according to the American Community Survey's (ACS) 2017 5-Year Estimates. The ACS provides the most up-to-date information about population characteristics for years that are not part of the decennial Census.

Population Characteristics

Along the corridor, there is a large portion of the population that identifies as being of Hispanic or Latino origin. The regions of Castroville and Prunedale vary in their population size and median household income, with Prunedale having a larger population and higher median household income. The unemployment rate and poverty rates are higher in the Castroville Area than in Prunedale and Monterey County at large, giving Castroville classification as a disadvantaged community. The following table summarizes select population characteristics of Prunedale, Castroville and the greater Monterey County:

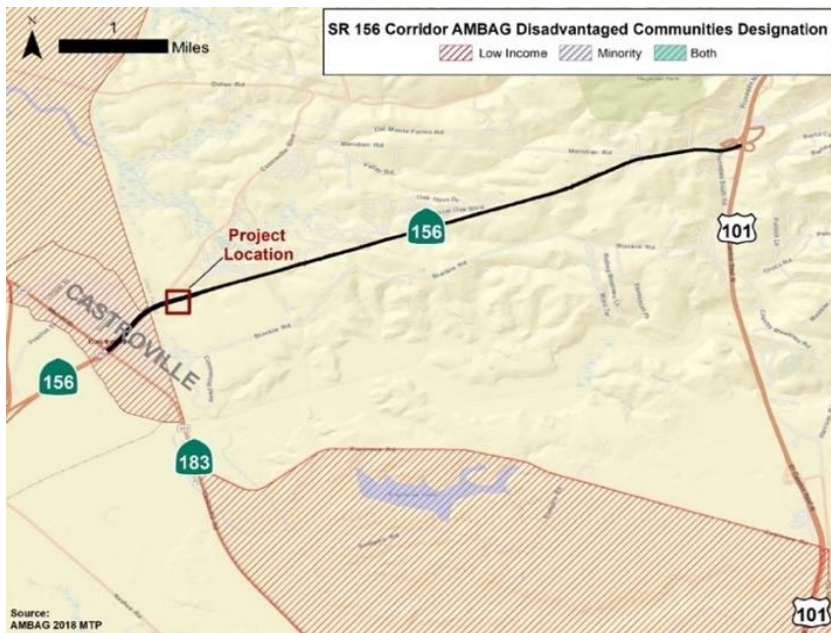
Table 1: Select Population Characteristics

| Characteristic | Prunedale | Castroville | Monterey County |
|---|--|--|--|
| Population Size | 20,928 | 6,689 | 433,168 |
| Median Age | 37.3 | 28.6 | 33.9 |
| Residents over age 65 | 12% | 8% | 53,745 |
| Percentage of people of Hispanic or Latino Origin | 55% | 87% | 58% |
| Dominant Race | White (70%), "Some other race" (25%) | White (60%), "Some other race" (37%) | White (68%), "Some other race" (22%) |
| Median Household Income | \$80,945 | \$52,555 | \$63,249 |
| Unemployment Rate | 3.9% | 6.8% | 2.7% |
| Poverty Rate | 8.3% | 20% | 14.7% |

Source: American Community Survey 2017, 5-year Estimates (Table: DP05/DP03)

Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the tri-county Monterey Bay region. The AMBAG 2018 Metropolitan Transportation Plan included defining a regional designation for disadvantaged communities. The regional designation adjusted national and state indicators such as minority characteristics and income measurements to account for population make up and cost of living factors in the region.

Castroville is designated as a Low-Income Community according to the regional definition. The definition of 'low-income' was considered a family whose annual income was less than \$75,000 annually.



AMBAG Disadvantaged communities by the project

Employment and Commuter Characteristics

This section highlights statistics regarding workers over the age of 16 in the region who may commute to and from work in both the Prunedale and Castroville Census Designated Places (CDPs).

The most common means of transportation to work in the Prunedale CDP is driving alone, at 76.5% of the population; additionally, 14% carpool to work. Neither walking nor biking to work are prominent commuting characteristics for this region, at 1% and 0% respectively. This may be due to present limitations in walking and biking infrastructure in the area. Within the region, 4% of individuals work from their home. Regarding travel time to work, there is a fairly even distribution of time, with the most common commute time being 20-24 minutes. It is notable that almost 20% of commuters travel 45 minutes or more to get to their work.

In the case of the Castroville CDP, there is an estimated population size of 6,689 but only 40% of individuals are workers over the age of 16 that may commute to and from work. The most common means of transportation in the region is driving alone at 78.5%, followed by carpooling at 10.2%. In the region, only 1.1% of workers work from home. The most common commute time is 30-34 minutes (18%), shortly followed by 30 to 34 minutes (17%) and 25-29 minutes (16%).

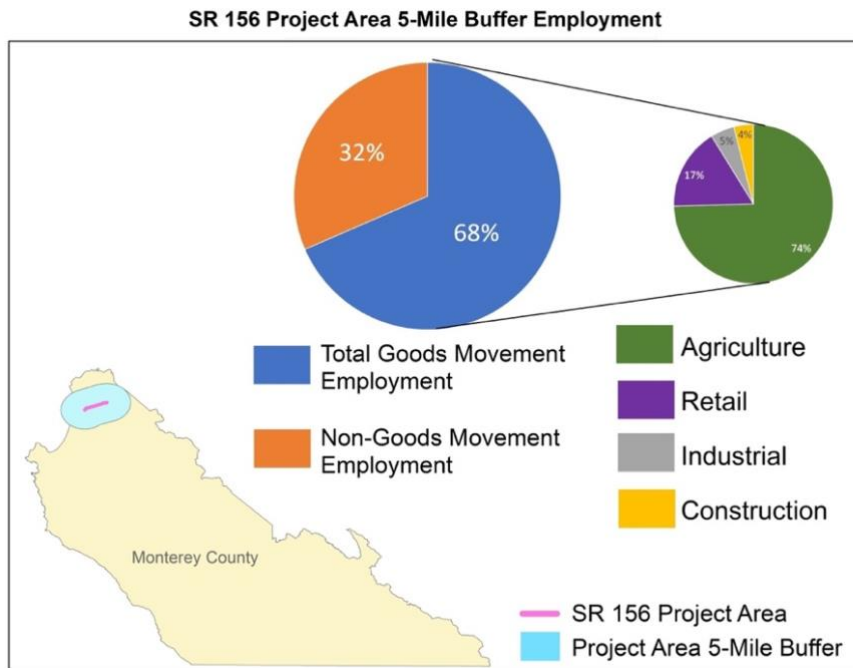
Table 2: Select Commuting Characteristics

| Characteristics | Prunedale | Castroville | Monterey County |
|---|---------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Workers 16 and over | 9,815 | 2,674 | 185,131 |
| Most common means of transportation to work | Drive alone | Drive alone | Drive alone |
| Most common commute travel time | 20-24 minutes | 20-24 minutes | 15-19 minutes |

Source: American Community Survey 2017, 5-year estimates (Table: S0801)

Accessibility to Jobs

There are approximately 26,500 jobs within a 5-mile buffer around State Route 156 and about 56,000 people residing. Sixty-eight percent of those jobs are goods movement-related (agriculture, construction, industrial, and retail employment). Since the total number of people with jobs is lower than the amount of people living in the area, it can be speculated that some people travel outside of the buffer zone to work in a different area. Furthermore, data collected through the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) survey, published through the US Census indicates that among the individuals that live in the Prunedale CDP area or the Castroville CDP area, almost 95% percent of them are employed outside that area.ⁱⁱⁱ This indicates that the Prunedale and Castroville CDPs are largely bedroom communities leaving most individuals to commute to work beyond the immediate area.



The Prunedale CDP has about 35% of residents that are not in the labor force and are instead either under age 16 or retired. The LEHD Origin-Destination Employment data indicates that as of 2017 approximately 5,300 individuals are employed in the Prunedale area but do not live there. The top industry in the Prunedale CDP is “Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting” – representing approximately 60% of all jobs. The second highest industry in the area is Construction at 8%, followed by Educational Services at 5.5%.

With regards to the Castroville CDP, approximately 30% of individuals are not in the labor force, likely under age 16 or retired. Among the 3,077 individuals living in Castroville and in the labor force, the majority work in the industry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (25.7%), followed by educational services, and health care and social assistance (12.9%).

The majority of the jobs located around the corridor are in the field of goods movement, largely in the field of agriculture. Residents rely on the State Route 156 to get to jobs, emphasizing the highway’s importance in connecting the residential neighborhoods to agricultural and other employment centers.

3.3 Community Characteristics

Land Use

The area surrounding State Route 156 is largely residential and agricultural, as the Route is surrounded by agriculture on one side, and housing and agriculture on the other. The Monterey County North County Land Use Map portrays denser housing, and pockets of commercial and mixed-use developments at the intersections of State Route 156 and the communities of Castroville and Prunedale.^{iv} Additionally, there are a handful of schools in the nearby area that are associated with the corridor, such as Castroville Elementary School and North Monterey County High School.



Map surrounding Castroville Boulevard Interchange

Community Health

The California Healthy Places Index (HPI) – a powerful tool developed to join housing, education, economic and social factors with their relationship to public health – identifies that the State Route 156 Corridor has a handful of health indicators that negatively affect the community,

including: a low level of retail density, limitations in housing options, a reduced transit access and high traffic levels. The Castroville area has an overall HPI in the 27th percentile and the Prunedale area scores in the 44th percentile.

The presence of low retail density affects the community as it results in a decreased level of access to jobs, shops, schools and other essential goods and services that affect quality of life. Communities that have higher mixes of use and destinations see increased health as individuals are encouraged to be more physically active and connect deeper with their community. The HPI recognizes that improved transportation access can support an increase in retail density and economic capacity.

Limitations in housing availability ties back to HPI's finding that the region currently has more *crowded* housing than *uncrowded* housing. Fortunately, there is a current affordable housing project underway near the Castroville entrance to State Route 156. This affordable, workforce housing project will support the housing needs of the region while offering a tighter connection between jobs and housing for individuals working in agriculture nearby.

The Healthy Place Index further identifies that this area of California has very low transit access with very high traffic density – in the 39th percentile. The area experiences limited transit access because the only transit stop is at the Prunedale Park and Ride, near where State Route 156 and U.S. 101 meet. The transportation atmosphere in the region is further burdened by limited availability of active transportation infrastructure that would otherwise support more active lifestyles. Active transportation lifestyles can be supported through integration of Smart Growth planning, as identified by the Healthy Places Index. ^v

3.4 Existing Transportation Conditions

State Route 156 ("Route 156") is a major thoroughfare used by residents, commuters, tourists and commercial trucks traveling to and from the Monterey Peninsula. More than 39,000 vehicles travel the route each weekday, and Route 156 experiences periods of heavy congestion, especially on weekends. Route 156 is a two-lane narrow highway with proposed rail service that would parallel the corridor (from an interregional perspective). Transit service is currently



Eastbound Traffic on Route 156

limited in the region, although there is an accessible Park and Ride lot in Prunedale that connects to expressway buses. Furthermore, the corridor has very minimal pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The following section outlines existing transportation characteristics regarding roadway, rail, transit, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities along the highway.

3.4.1 Roadway Conditions

Access Limits

Despite being a major thoroughfare, Route 156 is the only access for two housing subdivisions adjacent to the highway. The existing access to the Oak Hills subdivision requires at-grade turns that cross ongoing highway traffic. These turns are particularly difficult during periods of higher traffic volumes that occur during peak commute hours, the harvest season, and summer months. Route 156 is further vital for interregional traffic flow and route continuity, as it is designated as a Terminal Access Route to the National Truck Network. Commodity exports, including agriculture and quarry materials, generate significant truck traffic along Route 156. The roadway currently sees expanded demand during weekends, when traffic volumes range 10-15% higher than weekday afternoon volumes in the westbound direction, and 5-10% higher headed eastbound.

Low Levels of Service

A 2017 Traffic and Revenue Study on State Route 156 narrowed in on existing roadway conditions (level of service). Many of the intersections and roadways were identified to have low levels of service, with an estimated 8% truck/heavy vehicle usage, and percent-no-passing zone of 80%. Given that Route 156 is a two-lane conventional highway which motorists expect to travel at relatively high speeds – and a major commuter route – Route 156 was categorized as a Class I highway for Highway Capacity Manual 2010 analysis. The corridor has a posted speed of 55 miles per hour, although the National Performance Management Research Data Set estimates the free-flow speed is higher at 65 mph. Analysis reveals eight (8) intersections and nine (9) roadways that currently operate at an unacceptable Level of Service (LOS).

The following **Intersections** were identified to operate at an unacceptable Level of Service (LOS) under Existing Conditions:

- SR 183 & Oak Street / Blackie Road (Intersection #1) (PM Peak)
- SR 156 & Castroville Boulevard (Intersection #2) (PM & Saturday Peak)
- San Miguel Canyon Road & Prunedale North Road (Intersection #11) (AM & PM Peak)
- San Miguel Canyon Road & Castroville Boulevard (Intersection #13) (AM, PM, & Saturday Peak)
- SR 156 & Monte Del Lago (Intersection #14) (AM, PM, & Saturday Peak)
- SR 156 & Cathedral Oak Road (Intersection #15) (AM, PM, & Saturday Peak)
- SR 156 & Oak Hills Drive (Intersection #16) (AM, PM, & Saturday Peak)
- SR 156 & Meridian Road (Intersection #17) (AM, PM, & Saturday Peak)

The following study **roadway segments** function at an unacceptable level of service per County and Caltrans requirements:

- SR 156 between SR 183 and US 101 (Roadway Segments #1 - #6, AM, PM, & Saturday Peak)
- San Miguel Canyon Road between Castroville Boulevard and US 101 (Roadway Segment # 10) (AM, PM, & Saturday Peak)
- SR 183 between SR 156 and Blackie Road (Roadway Segment #12) (PM Peak)

Pavement Condition

Over half of the lane miles on State Route 156 currently have pavement rating of Fair or Poor. Caltrans' projections indicate that over 99 percent of the pavement in the project area will be in Fair or Poor condition by 2029 if left unattended.



Source: Caltrans Automated Pavement Condition Survey, 2019

3.4.2. Freight Usage

Route 156 falls within the Central Coast California freight region. The Central Coast region has visions for expanded rail services for both passenger rail and freight rail. Limited rail freight operates on Union Pacific railroad's coastal route which crosses Route 156 near Castroville. Route 156 is a major trucking corridor, largely supporting the agricultural industry and related industries such as manufacturing, warehousing and storage. The following sections discuss existing freight conditions surrounding Route 156 for both rail and trucking.

Trucking along the Highway

State Route 156 is identified as a one of the busiest trucking corridors in the Central Coast California region. Over 3,000 trucks traverse the region, accounting for approximately 8% of the average daily traffic in the area, according to Caltrans traffic data. Currently, there are no east-

west freight rail routes, so trucking is the dominant mode for moving most products. Trucking accounts for 75% of total shipments (measured by both tons and value) in the Central Coast.

Not only is Route 156 a trucking route but it also functions as a daily commute route for individuals traveling from the greater Bay Area to the Monterey Peninsula, and the primary road for residents who live in the Oak Hills community. An opportunity to separate the trucking traffic from the local traffic would substantially benefit the corridor by reducing conflict points between freight trucks and local traffic and improve the efficiency for individuals traversing the State Route.

Freight Rail

The majority of freight rail in California is centered in the state's Central Valley. However, Union Pacific has a reliever route along the Coast, whereby goods are delivered for their next stop in shipping. A 2014 Truck-to-Rail Intermodal Feasibility study identified that a transition from trucking to rail would have a significant cost savings, reduce environmental impacts and provide major safety benefit for much of the agriculture currently traversing in and out of Monterey County.^{vi}



Freight vehicles at Castroville Boulevard and State Route 156

Current passenger rail improvements underway in Monterey County include track improvements between Salinas and Gilroy that would have co-benefits for freight traversing between Salinas and Gilroy – which is identified in the 2018 California State Rail Plan to double in Union Pacific cartloads by 2040. In addition, the State has a plan to install positive train control between Oakland, CA and San Luis Obispo, CA, a major safety enhancement to reduce train-to-train collisions.

3.4.3 Transit and Passenger Rail Conditions

Bus Service

Transit service through State Route 156 is provided by Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST). MST provides bus service to the greater Monterey and Salinas areas as far south as Templeton and Big Sur and as far north as Santa Cruz and San Jose.

Within MST's service area, State Route 156 is currently traversed by MST's Line 55: Monterey – San Jose Express. Monterey-San Jose express bus service connects the Monterey area with the Caltrain Station and Amtrak rail services that depart out of San Jose. Ridership for the Monterey-San Jose express through State Route 156 accounts for approximately 0.7% of MST's total ridership. In September 2019, almost 2,000 passengers used Line 55 and it functioned at a rate of five passengers per hour. This route experienced delay in performance due to highway congestion, arriving on-time approximately 68% of the time; this is 20% below MST's goal of 90% on-time performance. The only bus stop along Route 156 is at the Prunedale Park and Ride, which is served by MST's Line 29 (Watsonville - Salinas via Prunedale), Line 86 (San Jose - King City), and Line 55. While limited in frequency, these services support commuters with weekday services centered on the AM and PM peak hours.

Connections through Castroville (not directly on 156, but nearby) to and from the Monterey Peninsula are serviced by MST's Line 27 (Watsonville – Marina) and Line 78 (Presidio-Santa Cruz). Line 27 starts at the Marina Transit Center and operates approximately every 2 hours, whereas Line 78 starts in downtown Monterey and connects to Santa Cruz with two daily roundtrips serving Castroville on weekdays only.

These regional bus services are important for system-wide coverage, but the transit agency does not currently see the Prunedale area or Castroville as a future growth opportunity but resolving congestion in the Route 156 corridor will substantially improve travel time reliability and safety for bus passengers.

Rail Service

Amtrak's Coast Starlight passenger rail service connects the greater Bay Area with the City of Salinas. Future passenger rail service to destinations along the corridor is planned as part of the Monterey County Rail Extension project, which will extend existing Caltrain and/or Capitol Corridor passenger rail service from the San Francisco Bay Area to Salinas with stops in Pajaro/Watsonville and Castroville. The Castroville Station is envisioned as a transfer stop for busway service into the Monterey Peninsula, but will also provide access for nearby residents along the entire 156 corridor to the San Francisco Bay Area, with connections to Sacramento. In recognition of the importance of service to these populations, the 2018 California State Rail Plan includes the Monterey County Rail Extension Project in the near-term (2022) scenario. Phase 1 of the Monterey County Rail Extension project is underway, focused on capital improvements to accommodate service to the existing Salinas train station; Phase 2 will make improvements to bring service to Pajaro/Watsonville, and Phase 3 will construct a station to allow service to Castroville.

3.4.4 Bicycle and Pedestrian Conditions

State Route 156 has minimal bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Cyclists are legally allowed to ride on the shoulder of Route 156. The Caltrans District 5 office is actively analyzing data collected regarding bicycle and pedestrian conditions along state highways for the development of District

5's Active Transportation Plan. Caltrans' analysis indicates that cyclists traversing Route 156 experience a level of traffic stress of four (4). At level four traffic stress, cyclists on Route 156 ride at the highest level of traffic stress, compared to a level 1 where bicyclists have their own separated right of way, such as a separated bike lane. Variables used in calculating level of traffic stress include factors such as: number of vehicle lanes, average annual daily traffic, posted speed limit, existing bike infrastructure, and the width of a paved shoulder.^{vii}



Bicyclist along Route 156 Corridor

Public input received during the development of the Transportation Agency's 2018 Active Transportation Plan identified several barriers to walking and biking around the Castroville and Route 156 Interchange, largely due to gaps in the sidewalk and the need for a barrier between cars, pedestrians and bikes and to increase the level of comfort for active modes. Comments received in this regard account for approximately 15% of all feedback collected during the map-based data collection phase of the 2018 Active Transportation Plan. Desired bicycle improvements identified include a Class II Bike Lane from Prunedale Road to Castroville Boulevard, with Class II connections identified going north and south at each end of the corridor.

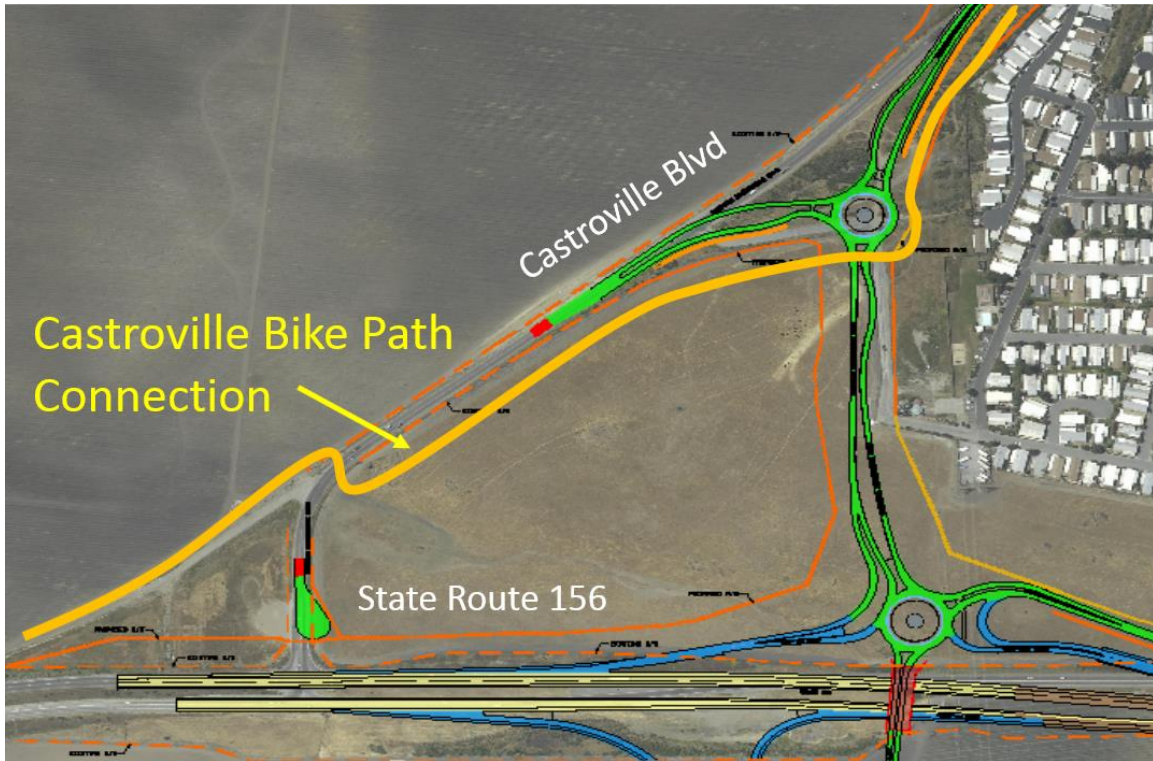
The planned corridor improvements include the installation of bike lanes along the existing State Route 156 when it becomes a frontage road, after the new alignment is constructed. One of the corridor's recommended bicycle and pedestrian elements has already been constructed: the Castroville bicycle and pedestrian bridge over the Union Pacific Railroad and a path to Castroville Boulevard. This project, opened to the public in 2018, closed a gap in which an active rail corridor

separated residents from safely accessing North County High School. Project elements of the Route 156 and Castroville Boulevard interchange will improve the connection where the new path across Castroville Boulevard by providing shorter, safer crossings at roundabouts. Once the 156 intersection improvements are completed, there will be contiguous a safe walking and bicycling corridor between the low-income Moro Coho housing project, the planned CHISPA low income housing project, North Monterey County High School and downtown Castroville, as well as the planned Castroville rail station.



Castroville Bridge at Night

In addition to serving as a resource for safe crossing, the bridge also has LED lighting to enhance safety and aesthetics for bicyclists and pedestrians.



Overview Map showing location of bicycle and pedestrian bridge

3.5 Existing Safety Conditions¹

The Route 156 Corridor has a history of fatalities and severe injuries from vehicular collisions. At the intersection of Castroville Boulevard and Route 156, there is an above average rate of injury collisions. In fact, there were 378 collisions on Route 156 during the five-year period from January 2005 to December 2010, 20% higher than the state average for highways of this type. Between 2013 and 2018, there were 127 recorded collisions, with 2 fatalities and 13 severe injuries along Route 156. State Route 156 between Cathedral Oaks Road and the US 101/State Route 156 interchange had the highest concentration of traffic collisions.



Image of a collision that occurred on State Route 156

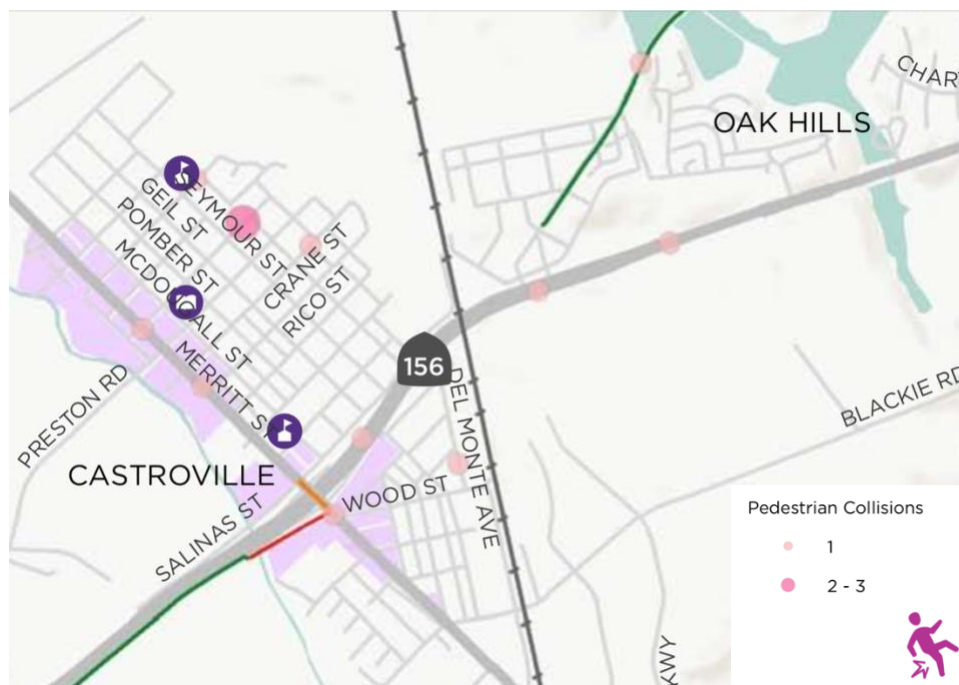
¹ The descriptions within the safety narrative reflect a planning-level overview conducted by TAMC of general safety-related themes and characteristics. This section does not represent a Caltrans safety analysis.

Listed below are five and ten-year collision totals for the project area. Ten-year summaries represent data from 2010-2019 and five-year summaries represent data from 2015-2019.

| Collision, Fatality, and Injury Statistics: 2010-2019 | | | | |
|---|---------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Location | | Total Collisions | Number of Fatalities | Number of People Injured |
| Local Streets and Roads (Castroville Boulevard) | | | | |
| | 5-year | 13 | 0 | 18 |
| | 10-year | 19 | 0 | 30 |
| State Route 156 Castroville Boulevard Intersection | | | | |
| | 5-year | 94 | 0 | 43 |
| | 10-year | 177 | 0 | 97 |
| Full State Route 156 Corridor | | | | |
| | 5-year | 339 | 1 | 203 |
| | 10-year | 571 | 4 | 312 |
| State Route 156 and U.S. 101 Interchange | | | | |
| | 5-year | 367 | 2 | 157 |
| | 10-year | 623 | 2 | 233 |

Source: Traffic Accident Surveillance and Analysis System (TASAS) and Traffic Injury Mapping System (TIMS).²

Most collisions along Route 156 that occurred between 2013-2018 were rear-end collisions (56.7%), followed by broadside collisions (13.3%), and hit objects (9.5%).^{viii} This trend remains the same when the timeframe is broadened to a 10-year period, 2008-2018. The Transportation



Agency’s Board of Directors adopted “Safety” as a Guiding Principle for the State Route 156 project in 2014, with the goal of: “improving safety for both local and interregional traffic on both the weekends and weekdays.”

² The data table uses two different data sources because TASAS only collects data on the state highway system. TIMS was used to collect data on the surrounding local roads.

4. Defining Purpose and Need

The purpose and need of the proposed State Route 156 West Corridor Project was defined in the Project Study Report, and refined in the Environmental Impact Report after broad public comment. The purpose and need as defined in the EIR discussed the reasons for and goals for the corridor improvements and provided structure for the development of project alternatives.

4.1. Project Purpose

The purpose of the corridor improvements is to:

- Improve safety and operations
- Improve local road access to State Route 156
- Improve interregional traffic flow and route continuity along State Route 156
- Relieve existing congestion and provide capacity for future increases in traffic volume

The signalized intersection at Castroville Boulevard and Route 156 is the only signal along the route west of US 101. Because of that, drivers may be unprepared for traffic that has completely stopped due to a red signal. Over the past 10 years, the accident rate at the Castroville Boulevard intersection on Route 156 is over twice the rate of what would be expected of a similar intersection in California.

This two-lane roadway is the major connector between the San Francisco Bay Area and the Monterey Peninsula. It connects two four lane facilities: US 101 and Highway 1; in fact, SR 156 between Castroville and Highway 1 is 4 lanes wide. Due to the resulting lack of sufficient roadway capacity, traffic has been known to backup in both directions for miles during the summer and for weekend events along the Monterey Peninsula. Additionally, the frequent stoppage of traffic at the signal causes congestion problems.

Construction of a new alignment for State Route 156 will divert interregional traffic away from the residential communities next to Route 156 and US 101, preserving the character of the local community. Designation of the existing alignment as a frontage road will improve existing access provided to the Oak Hills subdivision, home to over 400 people. Currently, Oak Hills residents or visitors must find a simultaneous gap in both directions of uncontrolled, high-speed, high-volume traffic; then turn left across the oncoming traffic to enter or exit the development. Residents of the low-income Monte del Lago mobile home park face a similar situation competing with recreational, truck and commuter traffic when traveling to Prunedale or Castroville for shopping, services, medical appointments and jobs.

The planned corridor improvements will address each of the identified project purpose goals: safety, congestion relief, local access. A new alignment for Route 156 and a new interchange at Castroville Boulevard will eliminate several crossing conflict points on Route 156 and allow uninterrupted traffic flow for recreational travelers to the Monterey Peninsula. Residents and communities next to Route 156 and the US 101 will be provided a more direct travel route via

the frontage road to shopping, services and jobs in Prunedale and Castroville, and the recommended improvements will also provide a safer corridor for bicyclists.

4.2 Project Need

The overall need for the project is discussed throughout this section. However, it is worth indicating that the three phases of the project each have independent utility in addressing the needs.

Safety

The project’s EIR identifies collision rate information (based on Traffic Accident Surveillance and Analysis System data from July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2010) that shows the total collision rate for State Route 156 was 21 percent higher than the state average. Collision rates for northbound and southbound U.S. Route 101 were lower than the state average. There were 182 collisions on State Route 156; there were 52 collisions on northbound and 65 collisions on southbound U.S. Route 101. During this period, construction began on the Prunedale Improvement project on U.S. 101. Temporary ramp and road closures, as well as reduced speed requirements associated with highway construction, may have contributed to the reduced collision numbers.

Collision Rates in the Proposed Project Area

| Accident Rates from July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2010 (expressed in accidents per million vehicles) | | | | | | |
|--|--------|---------------|------------------|---------------|---------|---------------|
| Location | Fatal | | Fatal and Injury | | Totals* | |
| | Actual | State Average | Actual | State Average | Actual | State Average |
| State Route 156 Post miles 1.4 to 5.4 | 0.000 | 0.023 | 0.38 | 0.37 | 1.09 | 0.86 |
| Northbound U.S. Route 101 Post miles 94.4 to 96.6 | 0.012 | 0.017 | 0.21 | 0.64 | 0.64 | 1.73 |
| Southbound U.S. Route 101 Post miles 94.4 to 96.6 | 0.000 | 0.017 | 0.26 | 0.64 | 0.80 | 1.73 |

Source: California Department of Transportation Office of Traffic Engineering 2011

*Totals include other factors, so the Total column will not be the sum of only the Fatal and Fatal + Injury columns

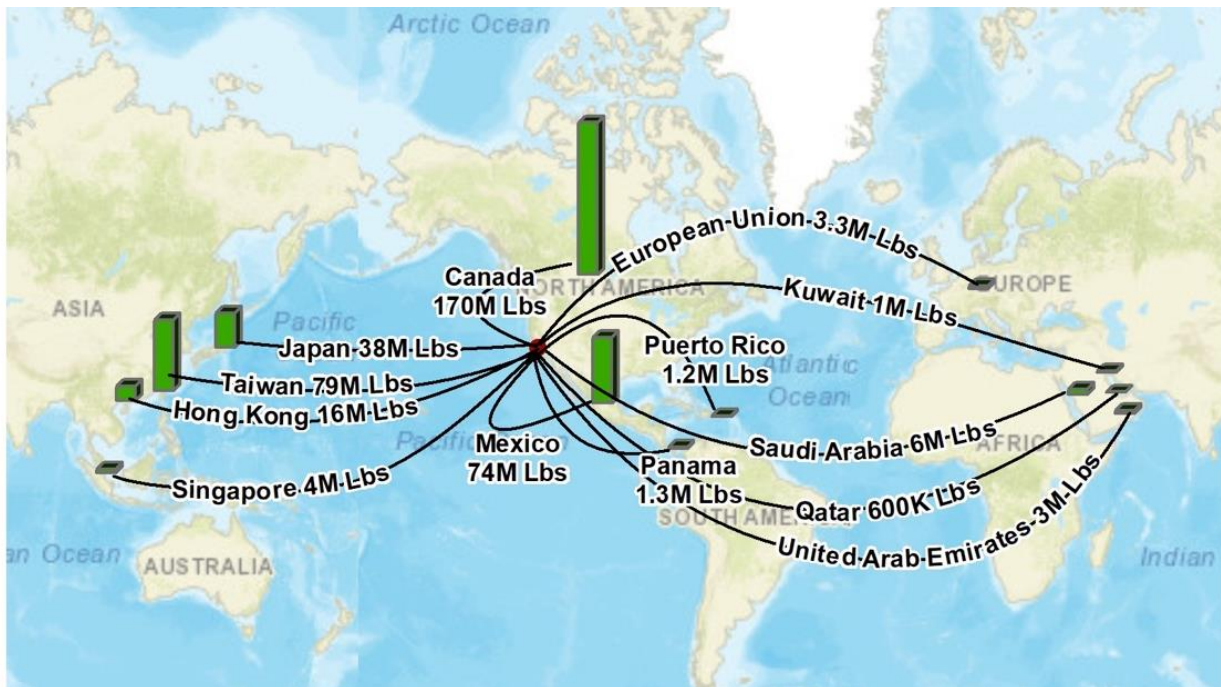
Local Road Access and Interregional Traffic Flow

The existing access provided from State Route 156 to the Oak Hills subdivision requires left turns that cross oncoming traffic going east or returning from the west. These turns are particularly difficult for the Oak Hills residents, who face higher traffic volumes in summer and during the vacation and harvest season, plus commuter traffic during peak travel periods.

Residents of the Monte del Lago mobile home park also face heavy recreational truck and commuter traffic when traveling to Prunedale or Castroville for shopping, medical appointments, services and employment.

STATE ROUTE 156 MULTIMODAL CORRIDOR PLAN

State Route 156 is the major local and regional connector to U.S. 101, which is the primary freight transportation route that links California's Central Coast to national and global markets.



Global Crop Distribution from Monterey County

State Route 156 within the project limits is designated as a Terminal Access Route to the National Truck Network. Commodity exports, including agricultural products and quarry materials generate significant truck traffic along Route 156 and US Route 101. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the global market share of the artichoke crop is produced in California within the Castroville area.^{ix} As such, State Route 156 has been identified a goods movement route of statewide significance by Caltrans. Commodities originating in the Central Coast region are moved to the San Francisco or Los Angeles areas and beyond via State Route 156. Goods destined further east also use State Route 156 to connect to Interstate 5 in California's Central Valley. State Route 156 is also vital for freight deliveries to the growing Castroville community for local consumption.

Good travel conditions are necessary on State Route 156 in order to properly serve goods movement industries and allow for a vibrant economy for the region. The project will help improve freight connectivity by providing a more reliable and efficient connection to U.S. 101 and to the clusters of agriculture businesses located around Salinas and south of Watsonville.

Within the project limits, State Route 156 is a two-lane roadway. Route 156 just west of Castroville Boulevard and next to the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange is a four-lane roadway. In Monterey County, the two-lane roadway of State Route 156 totals less than 4 miles. The lanes to be added under the Route 156 West Corridor project would make the roadway four lanes all the way – for a continuous four-lane route to and from the Monterey Peninsula.

Capacity and Congestion

Traffic volume and quality of traffic flow are used to analyze capacity and congestion issues:

- Traffic volumes are represented as average annual daily traffic counts, which are the average number of vehicles that pass a given point within a 24-hour period.
- Quality of traffic flow is represented as level of service. Level of service ranges from A to F. Level of service “A” indicates free-flowing traffic, while level of service “F” indicates gridlock and stop-and-go conditions.

A traffic analysis was performed for existing conditions (2006) and design year conditions (2036).

State Route 156 is a major recreational route where Friday and weekend traffic demand can be greater than weekday traffic. Weekend traffic volumes range from 10 to 15 percent higher than weekday afternoon volumes in the westbound direction and 5 to 10 percent higher in the eastbound direction (see table below).

Current and Future Traffic Volumes

| Location | 2006 Average Annual Daily Traffic Volumes | 2036 Projected Average Annual Daily Traffic Volumes | 2006 Existing Sunday Evening Peak Hour Traffic Volumes | 2036 Sunday Evening Peak Hour Traffic Volumes |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| Eastbound State Route 156 to northbound U.S. Route 101 | 11,802 | 12,500 | 1,133 | 1,770 |
| Eastbound State Route 156 to southbound U.S. Route 101 | 1,771 | 2,188 | 170 | 370 |
| Northbound U.S. Route 101 to westbound State Route 156 | 3,750 | 4,167 | 243 | 380 |
| Southbound U.S. Route 101 to westbound State Route 156 | 9,219 | 9,896 | 885 | 1,230 |
| Eastbound State Route 156 east of Cathedral Oaks | 27,400 | 40,200 | 1,382 | 2,050 |
| Westbound State Route 156 east of Cathedral Oaks | 56,779 | 71,142 | 1,348 | 1,810 |

Source: California Department of Transportation Traffic Operational Analysis 2008

STATE ROUTE 156 MULTIMODAL CORRIDOR PLAN

The next table showcases existing and future (projected) level of service values along the mainlines of State Route 156 and U.S. Route 101. Existing weekday morning traffic operates at a level of service D to a level of service E on State Route 156. Existing evening traffic operates at a level of service E to a level of service F on State Route 156. This traffic represents the commuting traffic from residential areas along State Route 156 to employment centers in Salinas and the Bay Area. Projected weekday morning traffic in 2036 would operate at a level of service E to level of service F on State Route 156. Projected weekday evening traffic in 2036 would operate at a level of service F on State Route 156.

Weekend recreational traffic to and from the Monterey Peninsula influences Friday evening and Sunday afternoon peak level of service values. Existing Friday evening traffic operates at a level of service E to a level of service F on State Route 156. Existing Sunday afternoon traffic operates at a level of service F on State Route 156. Projected Friday evening and Sunday afternoon peak traffic in 2036 would operate at a level of service F on State Route 156.

Evening northbound and southbound U.S. Route 101 peak morning and evening operates at a level of service B to level of service C. Existing Friday afternoon and Sunday evening traffic on southbound U.S. Route 101 operates at a level of service B to level of service C. Existing northbound U.S. Route 101 operates at a level of service C for Friday evening and level of service C to level of service D for Sunday afternoon. Projected weekday morning and evening and Sunday afternoon 2036 traffic would operate at a level of service C to level of service D on southbound U.S. Route 101. Projected Friday evening 2036 traffic would operate a level of service D to level of service E on southbound U.S. Route 101. Projected weekday morning traffic would operate at a level of service C, and weekday evening traffic would operate at a level of service C to level of service D on northbound U.S. Route 101. Projected 2036 Friday evening traffic would operate at a level of service D and Sunday afternoon 2036 traffic would operate at a level of service E.

Existing and No-Build Mainline Level of Service

| Location | Mainline Level of Service | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| | Existing 2006 | | | | No-Build Alternative 2036 | | | |
| | Peak Weekday Morning | Peak Weekday Evening | Peak Friday Evening | Peak Sunday Afternoon | Peak Weekday Morning | Peak Weekday Evening | Peak Friday Evening | Peak Sunday Afternoon |
| State Route 156 | D to E | E to F | E to F | F | F | F | F | F |
| Northbound U.S. Route 101 | B to C | B to C | C | C to D | C | C to D | D | E |
| Southbound U.S. Route 101 | B to C | B to C | B to C | B to C | C to D | C to D | D to E | C to D |

Source: California Department of Transportation Traffic Operational Analysis 2008

Existing and No-Build Intersection Level of Service

| Location | Intersection Level of Service | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| | Existing 2006 | | | | No-Build Alternative 2036 | | | |
| | Peak Weekday Morning | Peak Weekday Evening | Peak Friday Evening | Peak Sunday Afternoon | Peak Weekday Morning | Peak Weekday Evening | Peak Friday Evening | Peak Sunday Afternoon |
| Monte del Lago/ State Route 156 | E | F | F | F | F | F | F | F |
| Cathedral Oak Road / State Route 156 | F | F | F | F | F | F | F | F |
| Oak Hills Road / State Route 156 | F | F | F | F | F | F | F | F |
| Meridian Road / State Route 156 | F | F | F | F | F | F | F | F |
| McGuffie Road / State Route 156 | F | F | F | F | F | F | F | F |

Source: California Department of Transportation Traffic Operational Analysis 2008



Approximately 2 miles of backup from Castroville Interchange

4.2 Alternatives

In the Environmental Impact Report, Caltrans evaluated reasonable alternatives that would feasibly attain the objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any significant environmental effects from the project. Evaluation criteria included project cost, environmental impacts, level of service and other traffic data.

Proposed Action

Caltrans proposes to widen State Route 156 between U.S. Route 101 and west of Castroville Boulevard and rebuild the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange in Monterey County.

Two build alternatives – Alternatives 11 and 12 – and a No-Build Alternative were proposed for the project. Both alternatives included new interchanges at US 101 and Castroville Boulevard. The key difference between the alternatives is Alternative 11 would add two new lanes in both eastbound and westbound directions, while the existing highway would essentially function as a frontage road. Alternative 12 would use the existing highway for part of the alignment and would add two new lanes south of the existing highway. After the environmental process was completed, public input and environmental analysis led to Alternative 11 being selected as the preferred alternative for the State Route 156 project.

A thorough review of the differences between Alternatives 11, 12 and the No-Build Alternative can be reviewed in the **Route 156 West Corridor Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment with Findings of No Significant Impact**, which was certified in 2013.

4.3 Route 156 Corridor Goals

The State Route 156 West Corridor Project is identified in Monterey County's 2018 Regional Transportation Plan and aligns with the plan's goals and policy objectives. The Transportation Agency's **2018 Regional Transportation Plan** identified the following goals: Access & Mobility, Safety & Health, Environmental Stewardship, Social Equity and Economic Benefit.

Specific to the State Route 156 West Corridor, the project's goals, building off of the Regional Transportation Plan goals and the purpose and need for the corridor include:

These goals build off of the Environmental Document's identified Purpose and Need section about the project.

1. **Safety:** Safety is the primary goal of the project, located at one of the highest collision sites in the county. By removing the signal at Castroville Boulevard and constructing a new interchange, this project will immediately make it safer for local residents traveling home, visitors traveling to the Monterey Peninsula, or parents taking their kids to school.
2. **Support active transportation:** Through a new, safer route to connect the Castroville Bridge to the Castroville Boulevard path, the project will make it safer for children to bike or walk to North Monterey County High School.

3. **Foster access to low-income housing and nearby communities:** By realigning Castroville Boulevard, the project increases the available land for the proposed low-income housing project to be constructed by the Community Housing Improvement Systems and Planning Association, Inc. (CHISPA), the largest private, nonprofit housing developer based in Monterey County. In addition, the transition of the existing Route 156 alignment into a frontage road will support local neighborhood connectivity.
4. **Support freight travel:** The project will support the movement of goods through the construction of the new interchange and conversion of the 2-lane highway into a 4-lane expressway. Furthermore, in a separate but related project, the County of Monterey will use local Measure X sales tax funds to extend Castroville Boulevard over the interchange to connect to the largest distribution center in the region. This new connection to Highway 156 will not only facilitate goods movement and interregional flow of traffic, but it will also remove a significant number of trucks from downtown Castroville.
5. **Congestion Relief:** Congestion relief is the long-term goal for the corridor. The Route 156 Castroville Boulevard interchange is the first segment of the Route 156 West Corridor Project, designed to improve safety and relieve congestion on Highway 156, provide better local road access, support the visitor-serving economy and facilitate goods movement.

5. Stakeholder and Community Outreach

This section of the hybrid plan discusses stakeholder and community outreach conducted in three major categories: the project’s environmental process (Environmental Impact Report), stakeholder groups, and TAMC-specific public outreach. Included are the summary of comments and coordination from the Route 156 West Corridor project’s Environmental Impact Report, comments on the Tolling Traffic and Revenue Study, and comments from the Transportation Agency’s 2019 survey on Defining Regional Transportation Priorities, completed as part of the Regional Transportation Plan process.

5.1 Environmental Impact Report – Comments and Coordination

Early and continuing coordination with the general public and appropriate public agencies is an essential part of the environmental process. Agency consultation and public participation for the Route 156 West Corridor project was accomplished through a variety of formal and information methods, including meetings of the project development team, a community advisory group, an interagency coordination group, and public presentations. **Chapter 4** of the **Final Environmental Impact Report / Environmental Assessment with Finding of No Significant Impact** for the Route 156 West Corridor provides a summary of the results of Caltrans’ efforts to identify, address and resolve project-related issues through early and continuing coordination.

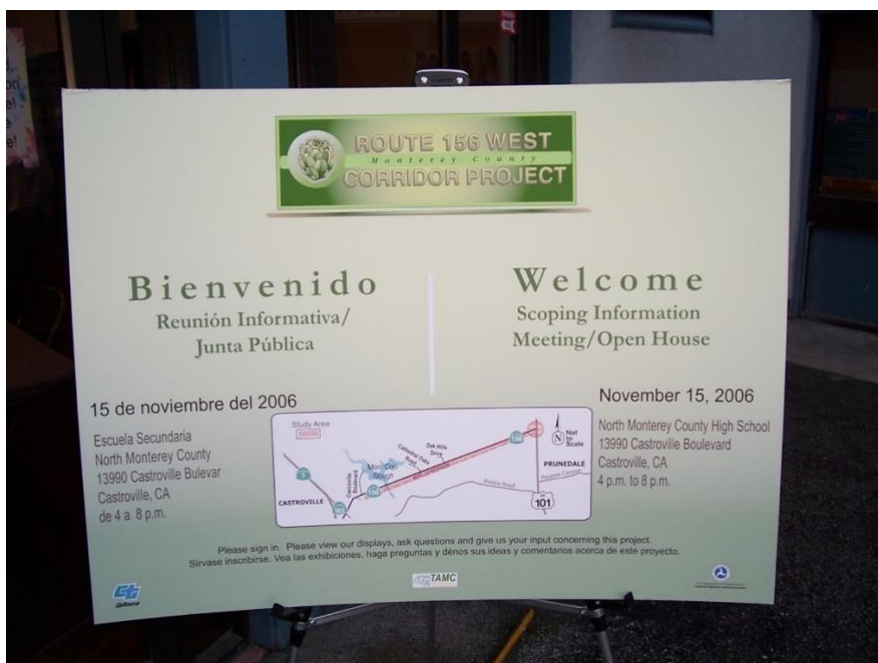
The Transportation Agency for Monterey County and the County of Monterey have been active participants in the planning, development and funding of the proposed project.

The following public coordination activities occurred as part of the development of the Environmental Impact Report:

- **Community Open Houses:** Several open houses were held to get community input throughout the development of the project alternatives. The largest was a Scoping Information Meeting / Open House was held from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on November 15, 2006 at the North Monterey County High School in Castroville, attended by about 155 people. Notices were printed in local newspapers, and invitations were mailed to interested parties, businesses and government agencies. During the open house, attendees could view display boards and maps, obtain handouts, and ask questions of the project team. A Spanish language interpreter was available during the meeting. The public submitted comment cards at the meeting. Some of the main concerns expressed related to safety, traffic, noise and community character and access to local roads and businesses.
- **Community Advisory Group.** A Community Advisory Group was set up in February 2007 to allow people in the community to study the alternatives in a more in-depth format. The Community Advisory Group is discussed explicitly in the next section of this Chapter (5.2 *Community Advisory Group*).
- **Highway Safety Task Force:** In 2007, the Monterey County District 2 County Supervisor created a group called the Highway 156 Safety Task Force, composed of staff from TAMC, County public works, Caltrans, local residents from various parts of the corridor, and

businesses. This group was charged with examining short- and medium-range safety improvements within the State Route 156 corridor. The group evaluated rumble strips in the median, no-passing zones, improved yield signs at the U.S. Route 101 / State Route 156 junction, traffic signals and tree trimming. Evaluation of a “back exit” along Meridian Road was explored but found to be too expensive and diverted too much traffic to local roads. Since that time, many of the other short-term improvements have been implemented.

- Native American Coordination: A Caltrans cultural resource specialist coordinated with Native American representatives from the Rumsien Ohlone, Mutsun Ohlone, Trina Marine Ruano, Ahmah Mutsun Tribal Band, Mutsun Tribal Band, Indian Canyon Mutsun Band of Costanoan, Ohlone/Costanoan-Esselen Nation, and Coastanoan Runsen Carmel tribes about the Route 156 West Corridor project.³



Welcome sign at State Route 156 public meeting

The public hearing included an informal open house component and a formal presentation with comments and questions from attendees. Informational display boards with maps, aerial photographs were located around the room. Representatives from Caltrans, TAMC and consulting partners were available throughout the room to explain the displays, answer questions, and receive public input. Attendees were encouraged to submit written comments at the meeting or to mail them to Caltrans at a later date. A court reporter also documented oral comments made by attendees for the record of the public hearing. About 140 people attended the public hearing.

³ Full details of information on the contacts can be found on pg. 221 of the Environmental Impact Report.

Comments in the form of email, comment cards and letters were received during the draft EIR's public circulation period (from June 30, 2009 to August 17, 2009). Comments and Caltrans' response to the comments are provided in a separately bound document titled *Route 156 West Corridor Comments and Responses from Circulation of the Draft Environmental Document, Volume II of II*.

5.2 Community Advisory Group

A Route 156 Corridor Project Community Advisory Group was established in 2007 to provide input to the environmental review process from a range of local perspectives.^x The group's assigned role was to:

- Advise the Project Development Team of issues to be studied in the environmental analysis;
- Articulate key community design principles to be considered in the project;
- Review information provided in the technical studies;
- Identify recommended strategies for addressing community concerns regarding the project; and,
- Serve as a communication conduit from the project team back to the community.

The Group included representatives from local businesses, homeowners' associations, agriculture, and community advocacy organizations primarily based in the Castroville – Prunedale area surrounding Route 156. Starting in May 2008, the Group met at least seven times from 2007 through 2008. The following key themes summarize their concerns and hopes for the project:

Circulation and Traffic

- Use this project to address congestion for residents and visitors to the Peninsula.
- Ensure circulation and access for commercial facilities and residential properties along the new facility and during the construction process.

Growth

- Mitigate growth impacts from new or expanded transportation facilities; ensure an equitable approach to growth.
- Consider how the proposed Castroville Rail project will impact growth in the area.

Safety

- Improve safety along the corridor.
- Reduce the number of fatalities.

Other

- Minimize project footprint and impacts on farmland, local plants and animals.
- Coordinate planning efforts with the California Coastal Commission.

- Address concern regarding sediment flow from culverts and its effect on farmland.
- Explore bike access and lanes along the facility.
- Develop a cost-benefit analysis of investment in this project.
- Conduct a noise study that includes readings over a continuous seven-day period.

5.3 Level 2 Tolling Traffic and Revenue Study – Route 156 Corridor

The Transportation Agency conducted a series of outreach meetings regarding the 2017 Tolling Study and received a great deal of feedback from the public. Most people understood the safety concerns and congestion along Route 156 and supported the need for the project, but they raised concerns that with tolling the local population would bear a disproportionate cost for the project.

North County residents expressed concern that they would have to pay the toll every day. The study assumed the local community would use the parallel frontage road that would be toll-free. Residents were also concerned about additional traffic on alternative routes from travelers diverting to avoid paying the toll. The study indicated tolling will result in a diversion of traffic primarily onto the SR 156 frontage road, Castroville Boulevard, and Blackie Road. This diversion will cause congestion at intersections primarily on Castroville Boulevard and Blackie Road during peak travel hours. Traffic analysis forecast these intersections will also be congested in 2035 even if the new facility is not built.

Businesses operating out of the large commercial trucking center at the west end of the corridor raised concerns that a toll would make their business location uncompetitive. Providing an annual toll pass for local truckers was one idea that the trucking community was receptive to.

There was generally support for tolling visitors from outside of the region, including support from the hospitality industry, which believed they could bundle toll cards with the sale of hotels or rental cars.

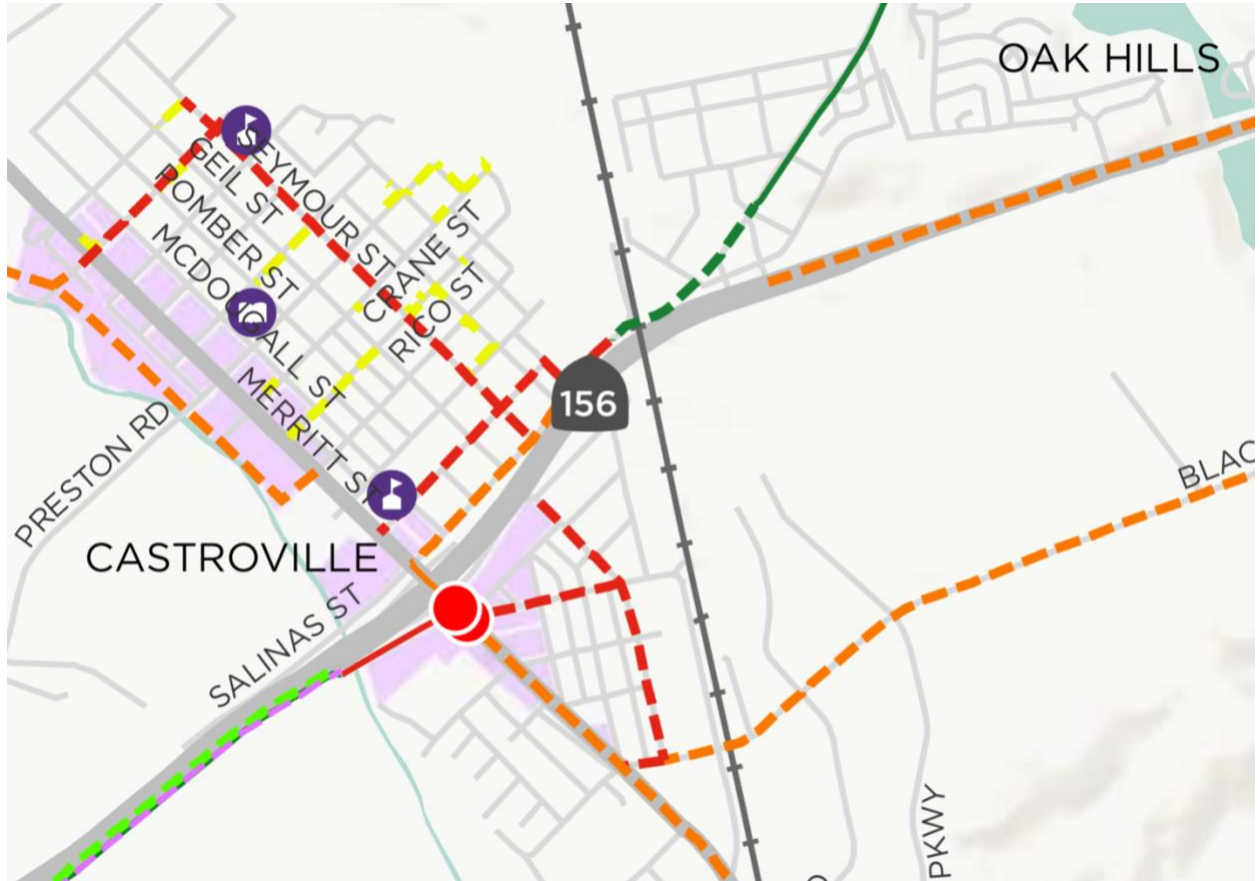
The financial analysis indicated that a funding shortfall would exist after implementing tolling on the corridor. Tolling was determined to be a viable option as part of a diverse strategy to fund the full project. However, since the tolling study was completed, State legislation that allows for project implementation through this model of public-private partnerships has lapsed. Without resolution to these issues the TAMC Board directed staff to pursue the current strategy of building the project in phases starting with the interchange at Castroville Boulevard.

5.4 TAMC's 2018 Active Transportation Plan

To develop the Active Transportation Plan, Agency staff consulted with TAMC's Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Advisory Committee, which is composed of volunteer representatives from each supervisorial district and city in Monterey County as well as representatives from public agencies and a bicycle/pedestrian interest group, as appointed by the TAMC Board of Directors, and TAMC's Technical Advisory Committee, composed of public works representatives from each of the twelve cities in Monterey County, Monterey County Public Works, Caltrans, Monterey-

Salinas Transit, the Fort Ord Reuse Authority, the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District, and the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments.

TAMC staff developed a project-specific Active Transportation Plan page on the TAMC website. Draft documents were posted on this site. Approximately 447 people submitted 446 comments via the public participation Wikimapping tool.



Active Transportation Plan

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Proposed Pedestrian Improvements | Proposed Bikeway Improvements |
| Guardrail | Class I Shared Use Path |
| Sidewalk | Class II Bike Lane |
| Intersection | Class III Bike Route |
| Land Use | Fort Ord Rec Trail and Greenway |
| Park/Open Space | Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail |
| Commercial Area | |

5.5 Transportation Safety and Investment Plan (Measure X)

In 2015, the Transportation Agency developed and implemented a strategic outreach plan to increase public awareness and understanding of countywide transportation needs and funding challenges. The plan's focus was to identify countywide transportation needs, explain those needs in the context of the shortfalls in state & federal funding.



To help identify and assist with prioritizing county-wide transportation needs, TAMC organized a 40-member “Keep Monterey County Moving” committee. The committee members were community leaders who represented diverse interests and diverse regions of Monterey County including from Castroville/Prunedale in North County. The committee’s role was to assist the Agency in developing the Transportation Safety & Investment, which became Measure X on the November 4, 2016 election ballot.

The outreach plan took place over nearly two years, and included the following outreach efforts:

- 80-100 presentations to a broad range of community groups, business organizations, chambers of commerce’s, city councils, school superintendents, service clubs, trade & professional organizations, educational & medical institutions, taxpayer associations, LULAC, Ag Industry, Hospitality Industry and the Board of Supervisors.
- Print & broadcast interviews with local newspaper, radio and television media outlets.
- Commentaries and op-ed pieces to the local newspapers
- Interviews with Editorial Boards of the Monterey County Weekly and Monterey Herald
- Public input via surveys, comments, focus groups, stakeholders’ interviews, TAMC website and social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter
- Information about the outreach plan and Transportation Safety & Investment Plan were posted on the TAMC website.
- Developed informational fact sheets, targeted “special interest” fact sheets and individualized city/county fact sheets, a Transportation Safety & Investment Plan document, a “Policies & Project Descriptions” document for the Transportation Safety & Investment Plan.

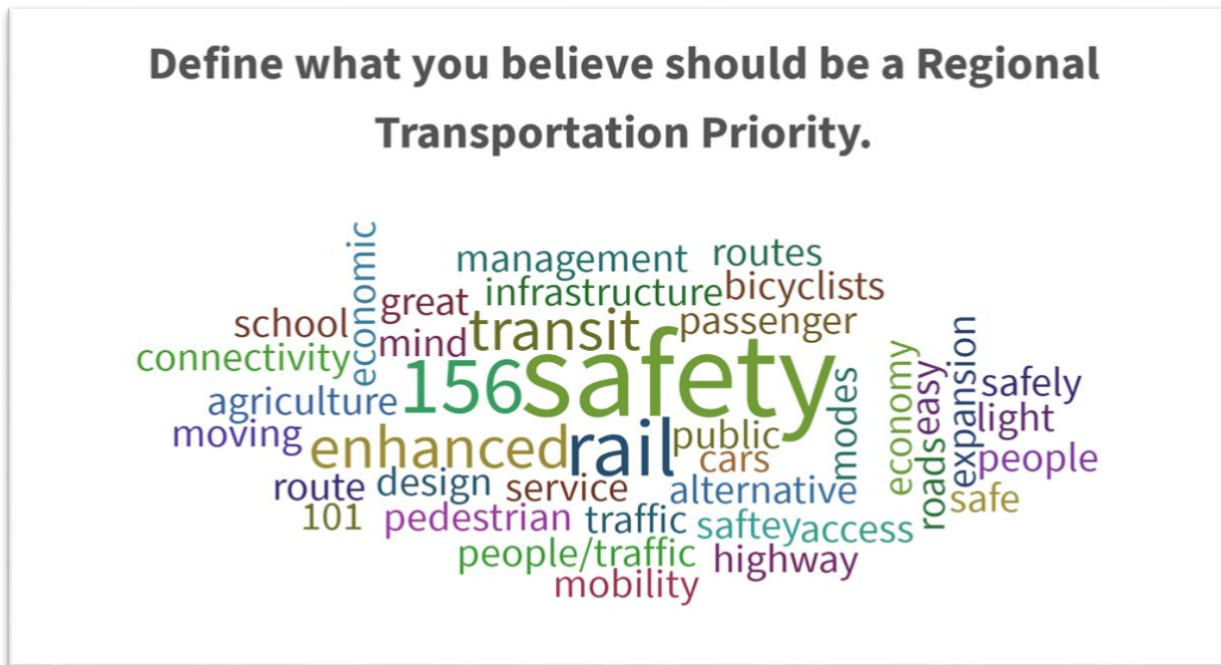
Ultimately, the Transportation Safety & Investment Plan was endorsed by each city and the County, as well as, all 5 County Supervisors and 38 community groups, thanks in large part to the robust community outreach and the engagement of the “Keep Monterey County Moving” Committee. One of the projects deemed essential was the 156 Castroville Boulevard Interchange.

Measure X was approved with 67.7% approval from Monterey County voters. The revenue from the sales tax measure will be used to fund transportation safety and mobility projects in Monterey County, including the regional project referred to as the State Route 156/Castroville Boulevard Interchange, which has \$30 million invested local funds.

5.6 Monterey County’s Regional Transportation Plan

Outreach conducted for the adopted 2018 Monterey County Regional Transportation Plan is fully discussed in Appendix A of the 2018 Regional Transportation Plan document. The Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments *Monterey Bay Area Public Participation Plan* served as a guide for structuring public outreach into the long-range planning process and identifies a menu of strategies to be employed to solicit public feedback. The adopted 2018 Regional Transportation Plan identifies the State Route 156 project on the constrained project list as MYC147, CT022, CT036.

Public outreach conducted in the format of a public survey to inform the development of the 2022 Regional Transportation Plan continues to highlight the importance of the State Route 156 Corridor for the Monterey County region – and beyond. Approximately 15% of the survey’s 242 respondents identified State Route 156 as a number-one priority for the region, alongside more general visions for a safer transportation network, more accessible roadways and investment in alternative modes of transportation. Staff asked the same questions directly to the Agency’s Board of Directors and results further highlighted State Route 156 as a key regional priority for the 2022 Regional Transportation Plan. The following graphic portrays the results of an open-ended question asked at the Agency’s Board of Directors meeting on October 23, 2019.



Defining regional priorities survey results

The 2022 Regional Transportation Plan is under development. Adoption of the 2022 Regional Transportation Plan for Monterey County is scheduled for June 2022.

6. Strategy for Corridor Improvements

The strategy for corridor improvements combines biking, walking and transit connections with a safer highway and enhanced local access. Reconstructing the interchange at Castroville Boulevard and State Route 156 will remove a traffic signal from this fast-moving highway, and create a new grade-separated interchange, with roundabouts at the approach roads. Construction of a new 4-lane alignment south of Route 156 and converting the existing road into a frontage road with bike lanes will accommodate increased volumes truck traffic and visitors, while providing safer, multimodal access to the Oak Hills community. Construction of a new interchange at US 101 will separate local, interregional and regional traffic to allow smoother and safer of traffic movements. Monterey County’s future Blackie Road extension project will connect with Castroville Boulevard interchange and reroute agricultural trucks around downtown Castroville and provide access to the planned Castroville Rail Station. Future rail service to the Castroville Station will connect passengers to the planned SURF Bus Rapid Transit service that will go to the Monterey Peninsula. New walking and bicycling infrastructure will create shorter bicycle/pedestrian crossings and slow traffic at new roundabouts, improving connections from the Castroville Bridge to low income housing and the high school. This suite of corridor improvements will help meet the safety, congestion relief, access and multimodal goals discussed throughout this corridor plan.



Monterey County’s future Blackie Road extension project will connect with Castroville Boulevard interchange and reroute agricultural trucks around downtown Castroville and provide access to the planned Castroville Rail Station. Future rail service to the Castroville Station will connect passengers to the planned SURF Bus Rapid Transit service that will go to the Monterey Peninsula. New walking and bicycling infrastructure will create shorter bicycle/pedestrian crossings and slow traffic at new roundabouts, improving connections from the Castroville Bridge to low income housing and the high school. This suite of corridor improvements will help meet the safety, congestion relief, access and multimodal goals discussed throughout this corridor plan.

6.1 Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements

A completed aspect of the bicycle and pedestrian corridor improvements is the Castroville Bicycle and Pedestrian bridge. The Castroville bicycle and pedestrian bridge goes over the Union Pacific Railroad and a provides a path to Castroville Boulevard. This project, opened to the public in 2018, closed a gap in which an active rail corridor separated residents from safely accessing North County High School.



Castroville Bike/Ped Bridge

Bicycle and Pedestrian improvements will be constructed in coordination with Segments 1 and 2 of the Route 156 highway improvements. Bicycle connections planned as part of the Route 156 Castroville Boulevard Interchange project (segment 1) includes connections from the Castroville Bicycle and Pedestrian bridge across Castroville Road to the North Monterey County High School and the Moro Coho low income housing. Segment 1 includes the installation of a multi-use bicycle and pedestrian path and shorted pedestrian crossings at new roundabouts. Segment 2 of the Route 156 highway improvements includes the addition of bicycle lanes alongside the frontage road, after the new alignment of Route 156 is constructed.

The western connection from the bridge across 183 to the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic trail (MBSST) is a longer-term active transportation improvement in the corridor. The Monterey County Active Transportation Plan Identified the need for improved crossings at Merritt Street and Salinas Street, improved crossing for bike lanes and pedestrians around Highway 156 to the Sanctuary Scenic Trail, and improved connections between the new bridge and the path to the High School over Castroville Boulevard.

As part of a multimodal pilot project in the State Highway Operations and Protection Program (SHOPP) Caltrans has designated additional pedestrian improvements that will connect to the corridor. The project includes traditional SHOPP improvements such as rehabilitation of pavement and bridge repair, *and* pedestrian improvements including the installation of American with Disabilities Act (ADA) features. These improvements are in Castroville from Del Monte Avenue to Washington Street. Construction of this project is anticipated to begin in fall 2022 with a total project cost of \$31,000,000.

6.2 Blackie Road Extension

The Blackie Road Extension project will construct a new road that connecting the southwest end of the planned Route 156 interchange at Castroville Boulevard to Blackie Road in southern Castroville. By providing a new connection from the largest distribution center in the County to State Route 156, truck traffic will be able to avoid traveling on busy State Route 183/Merritt Street through town. This County road project will provide traffic congestion relief, improve safety for local travelers, remove a conflict point between bicyclists and trucks where the Sanctuary Scenic Trail intersects with Merritt Street, and facilitate movement of valuable agricultural goods to market. The estimated cost of the Blackie Road Extension project is \$6.5 million, with construction slated to begin in the year 2023.

6.3 Castroville Station and the Rail Extension to Salinas

The Castroville Multimodal Station will serve as a connection point for passengers coming from the Monterey Peninsula to board new passenger rail service on the Coast mainline tracks between Salinas and the San Francisco Bay Area. There will be a cross-platform transfer between the regional rail service and planned local SURF! bus rapid transit and over the longer-term, light rail. The proposed station is located in an industrial area that is walkable distance for residents and can be accessed via the new Blackie Road extension as well. Revitalizing this underutilized part of Castroville will transform the neighborhood and give the eastern part of town a community gathering place. The Castroville Station is Phase 3 of the Monterey County Rail Extension project and has an estimated cost of \$27 million.



Rendering of Castroville Station

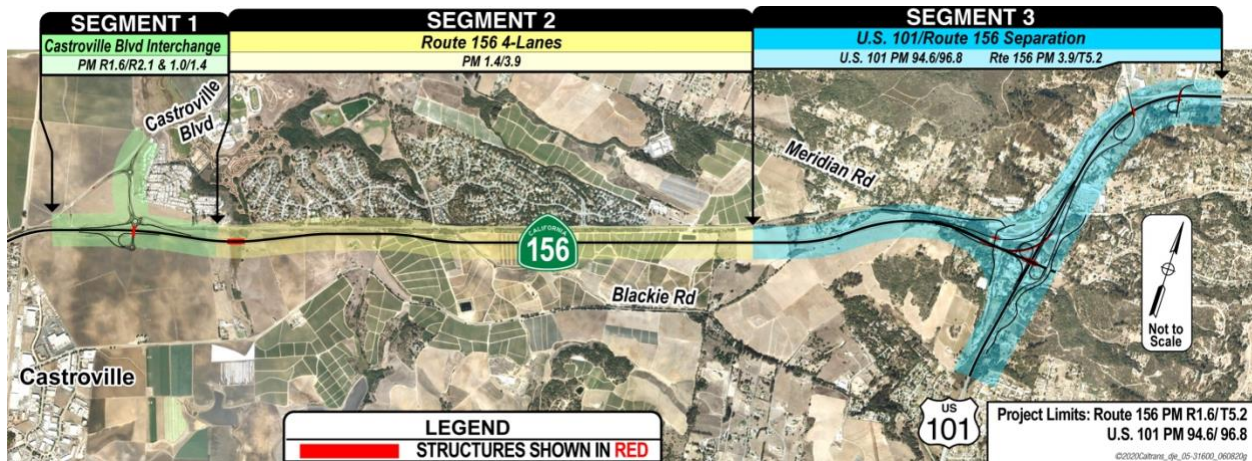
6.4 SURF! Busway and Bus Rapid Transit Project

The Highway 1 Busway Project, recently branded as SURF! Busway and Bus Rapid Transit project, is part of a larger effort to reduce regional congestion along Highway 1 and enhance transit connections within the Monterey Peninsula. The first phase of the SURF! project is proposed as bus-only corridor along the Monterey Branch Line right-of-way, from Marina through Sand City and Seaside. The total length of the project is approximately 6 miles. Future extension of the SURF! Busway envisions a connection north to the Castroville Station. The Marina to Seaside phase of the SURF! Busway and Bus Rapid Transit Project is under environmental review and is

anticipated to start construction in 2023 with service beginning by 2027. The project is estimated to cost a total of \$52 million.

6.5 State Route 156 West Corridor Project

The 156 West Corridor project was developed through an extensive public outreach process and is envisioned to be implemented incrementally over time. The phases of the project are slated to be constructed from west to east, with the 1st segment building the Castroville Interchange at Route 156, and the last segment reconstructing the US 101 Interchange at Route 156 and rerouting the connection to San Miguel Canyon Road. The middle segment is the construction of a new 4-lane Route 156 to the south, and designation of the existing alignment as a frontage road with bike lanes for use by the residents in the surrounding Oak Hills community.



Segment map - 156 West Corridor Project

During 2020, the project team has optimized the interchange roundabout layouts and completed 30% design of Segment 1 of the 156 West Corridor Project. The team will be finalizing the engineering design and right-of-way acquisition for the project over the next year. The project team is scheduled to meet the upcoming project milestones, as noted in the following chart.

| State Route 156 Castroville Boulevard Interchange - Project Schedule | |
|--|----------------|
| Milestone | Date |
| Approved Environmental Document | 1/31/2013 |
| Complete Environmental Revalidation Process | Fall 2020 |
| Submit Project to Office Engineer | October 2021 |
| Right of Way Certification | September 2021 |
| Project Ready for Bids | March 2022 |
| Begin Construction | October 2022 |
| End Construction | July 2024 |

6.5.1 Segment 1: State Route 156 at Castroville Boulevard Interchange

The State Route 156 at Castroville Boulevard Interchange will address one of the top collision locations in Monterey County, by providing safety and operational improvements. This segment is included in the Castroville Community Plan and accommodates the County’s future connection to Blackie Road.

The State Route 156 Castroville Boulevard Interchange project will remove the existing signalized intersection on Route 156 at Castroville Boulevard and construct a new grade-separated interchange east of the existing intersection. Residents of the low-income Monte del Lago mobile home park can access Route 156 via the traffic signal, but when traveling to east to Prunedale or west to Castroville for shopping, services, medical appointments and jobs they are in competition with fast-moving recreational, truck, and commuter traffic that unfortunately does not always stop at the red light.



Segment 1 - Castroville Boulevard Interchange

The initial concept for the Route 156/ Castroville Boulevard Interchange project included a bridge over the highway, plus traffic signal controls at each of the new ramp intersections and the intersection of the realigned new Castroville Boulevard and the old alignment of Castroville Boulevard. The current design concept will utilize roundabouts instead of traffic signals at the ramp intersections, which will allow the proposed bridge over State Route 156 to be narrower, thereby reducing construction costs. Roundabouts will also perform better (in terms of safety and traffic flow) than traffic signals, have a longer design life, and use less energy. Roundabouts

will also allow the Castroville Boulevard interchange to have full independent utility, will accommodate Segment 2 of the State Route 156 West Corridor project, and will operate well with the future Blackie Road connection. The roundabout proposed at the intersection of the realigned new Castroville Boulevard and the old alignment of Castroville Boulevard also offers a safer pedestrian and bike crossing between North County High School and the recently completed bicycle and pedestrian bridge into Castroville.

Segment 1 is estimated by Caltrans to cost \$55,200,000. Funding for this segment of the project is programmed from several sources, including the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (State funds), local Measure X revenues, and regional development impact fees. In addition, the Transportation Agency is preparing to submit a SB 1 (state gas taxes and fees) competitive grant applications for \$20 million. Construction for this segment is anticipated to begin in October 2022 and be completed in July 2024.

6.5.2 Segment 2: State Route 156 – Widening to Four Lanes

Segment 2 of the State Route 156 project involves the transition of the existing Route 156 into a frontage road for the nearby communities, and the development of a new, four-lane Route 156 directly south of the existing corridor. This segment is crucial for accommodating safety enhancements, local and regional travel, and freight movement; furthermore, it includes the integration of bicycle lanes on the frontage road to support active transportation.

The construction of a new alignment for State Route 156 will divert interregional traffic away from the Oak Hills and Simonville residential communities adjacent to the highway. Currently, residents or visitors to Oak Hills from the Monterey Peninsula must turn left, crossing in front of oncoming traffic, in order to enter the development, and exiting residents traveling US 101 must do the same. These turning movements result in entry/exit conflicts during lower traffic periods when speeds are faster, and trap residents in the community when there are high traffic volumes, which occurs during the summer, vacation and harvest seasons, and during peak weekday commuting hours.

Simonville is a small collection houses that are located directly off of Route 156, between Oak Hills and Castroville. Access is via a rural road without an acceleration or deceleration lane, making for a heart-stopping entry and exit. The widening of Route 156 and transition of the existing alignment into a frontage road will slow down traffic immediately adjacent to this community. Segment 2 will not only allow uninterrupted traffic flow for recreational travelers to the Monterey Peninsula, but will also provide safer local access to the Oak Hills and Simonville residential communities.

6.5.3 Segment 3: State Route 101 / Route 156 Interchange

The third segment of the State Route 156 project is the complete reconstruction of US Route 101 at State Route 156 Interchange. This segment includes construction of the following: a new freeway to freeway flyover between eastbound State Route 156 and northbound US 1010; a new modified partial-cloverleaf interchange at US Route 101 and State Route 156, and a new frontage

road system connecting San Miguel Canyon Road to Vierra Canyon Road. Segment 3 will also convert US Route 101 from a four-lane expressway to a four-lane freeway within the project limits. Segment three will further enhance local connectivity by building an overcrossing at Messick Road for access to residential properties across US 101, thus separating local trips from heavy highway through traffic.

Segment three includes the installation of additional technological and environmental features including cross culverts and drainage improvements, intelligent transportation systems (such as changeable message signs and highway advisories), maintenance vehicle pullouts, radio and surveillance loops, and soundwalls for noise abatement.

7. Conclusion

State Route 156 is a major east-west route in Monterey County, beginning at Highway 1 in Castroville and extending eastward through Prunedale and into San Benito County. This Multimodal Corridor Plan defines a package of multimodal safety improvements, congestion relief and local road access enhancements that were developed by Caltrans, the Transportation Agency and the County of Monterey, in consultation with the businesses and residents of the local community and the Monterey Bay region. The corridor plan presents outcomes that will benefit local, regional and interregional travelers. Proposed solutions will provide improved access for local traffic surrounding the Oak Hills area. Reduced congestion, injury and fatality rates along the corridor will enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors of Monterey County, while enhancing the economic opportunities of the County.

ⁱ California Freight Action Plan (2014)

ⁱⁱ Wikipedia, California State Route 156: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California_State_Route_156

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2017).

^{iv} Monterey County, North County Land Use Map:
<https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/home/showdocument?id=45972>

^v Healthy Places Index (2019).

^{vi} Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments, Salinas Valley Truck to Rail Intermodal Feasibility Study (2014)

^{vii} Caltrans, Coordination with District 5 Active Transportation Coordinator (11/18/19)

^{viii} Transportation Injury Mapping System, State Route 156. (2013-2018)

^{ix} Artichoke Advisory Board, electronic communications (2020)

^x Community Advisory Group Charge