

DRAFT

May XX, 2021

The Honorable Alex Padilla
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Humboldt County Hammond Trail Bridge Replacement Project

Dear Senator Padilla:

On behalf of the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, I'm writing to urge you to support our County's request for \$6,250,000 in Congressionally Directed Funding for the Hammond Trail Bridge Replacement Project.

Funding for this project would be used to replace the Hammond Trail Bridge, which provides an active transportation route across the Mad River between Arcata and McKinleyville, the second and third largest communities in Humboldt County. The Hammond Trail Bridge is a former railroad bridge that was re-purposed for bicycle and pedestrian use in 1983 but must be replaced because the steel trusses have suffered significant rust and deterioration, making rehabilitation prohibitive.

The project is an appropriate use of taxpayer dollars and is anticipated to yield significant community benefits by ensuring active transportation services in the area and continued public safety by replacing the deteriorating existing bridge. The project would provide local, regional, and statewide benefits by preserving a key link of the California Coastal Trail and U.S. Bicycle Route 95 and ensuring a nonmotorized route alternative to Highway 101 between McKinleyville, Arcata, and Humboldt Bay.

Again, Humboldt County strongly supports this project and we urge you to seek fiscal year 2022 appropriations to help fund this important work.

Sincerely,

Virginia Bass, Chair
Humboldt County Board of Supervisors

Project Name

Hammond Trail Bridge Replacement Project

Is the Project on the National Highway System?

No

Total estimated cost of project and breakdown of funding sources (Detail all local, state and/or private funds. Are these funds secured, expected, or you are still seeking?)

Total estimated cost is \$6,750,000. Expected state funding is \$400,000. Secured local funding is \$100,000.

Federal Funding Amount Requested:

\$6,250,000

Identify the specific segment for which project funding is being sought, including terminus points

The project would replace an approximately 550-foot long bridge across the Mad River that provides a critical connection for non-motorized, multi-modal transportation between Fischer Road in McKinleyville and Mad River Road in the Arcata Bottoms.

Description of the Project

The project would replace the iconic Hammond Trail Bridge which provides an active transportation route across the Mad River between Arcata and McKinleyville, the second and third largest communities in Humboldt County. The Hammond Trail Bridge is a former railroad bridge that was re-purposed for bicycle and pedestrian use in 1983 but has reached the end of its useful life. The bridge must be replaced because the steel trusses have suffered significant rust and deterioration in the marine air along the coast, making rehabilitation prohibitive. The bridge is situated within a pastoral setting of dairy farms, beaches and dunes, and the Mad River. The bridge connects the five-mile Hammond Trail in McKinleyville with low-volume rural roads in the Arcata Bottoms and the Humboldt Bay Trail, which starting in 2022 will provide 14 miles of separated multi-use paths that connect to the largest city (Eureka) in Humboldt County. The project will construct an approximately 550-foot long concrete box girder bridge with a projected lifetime greater than 75 years.

Project Justification

The Hammond Trail Bridge provides a critical connection in the Humboldt Bay region's active transportation network by bypassing State Highway 101 between Arcata and McKinleyville. The freeway speeds (65 miles per hour posted speed limit) and complicated on-ramps and off-ramps for the Highway 101 bridge over the Mad River contain multiple conflict points and present a barrier to non-motorized transportation between Arcata and McKinleyville. The Hammond Trail is the most highly used active transportation facility in Humboldt County and represents the backbone of the California Coastal Trail in Humboldt County. The Hammond Trail is also a key link in the U.S. Bicycle Route 95 which is a developing network of bicycle routes connecting urban and rural communities along the Pacific Coast. The project will ensure mobility for a wide range of non-motorized users accessing key destinations such as employment centers, Humboldt State University, Mad River Hospital, public services, parks, and beaches without requiring dependence on a motorized vehicle. The project is urgently needed due to the imminent risk of closure due to the existing bridge's deteriorated condition.

Is the project part of the State's long-range plan?

No.

Is the project included in the metropolitan and/or State Transportation Improvement Program?

Yes, the project is included in the Regional Transportation Plan of the Humboldt County Association of Governments.

A description of the process that has been or will be followed to provide an opportunity for public comment on the project.

A user survey was issued in 2016 to assess public opinion on the importance of the bridge. The future environmental study describing the proposed design, environmental impacts, and mitigation measures will be circulated for public comment.

Describe the economic, environmental, congestion mitigation and safety benefits associated with the completion of the project. Describe the public benefit.

The project would enhance mobility, reduce vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions, improve transportation safety, and preserve coastal access for recreation. The project would provide local, regional, and statewide benefits by preserving a key link of the California Coastal Trail and U.S. Bicycle Route 95 and ensuring a non-motorized route alternative to Highway 101 between Arcata and McKinleyville.

What is the proposed schedule and status of work on the project? What is the current stage of development of the project? (planning, final design, construction). Will the requested funding for the project be obligated within the next six years?

Technical studies and preliminary design have been completed. Funds to complete environmental review and permitting, final design, and construction are requested. Environmental review and design will require 2-4 years. Construction would be completed within 4-6 years.

Has the project already received funding through the State's federal-aid highway or transit formula apportionments or from other Federal, state, local or private funds? If yes, how much and from what source?

Yes, the project received \$150,000 of federal Transportation Enhancement funding and \$100,000 of local funds.

Has the project received funding in previous federal legislation? If so, please cite the act(s), and amount(s) authorized.

No

NEPA category of action (e.g. Categorical Exclusion, Environmental Assessment, Environmental Impact Statement)

Categorical Exclusion

Status of environmental review

NEPA environmental review was started but is incomplete. Consultation under the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 is complete. Environmental review under state law needs to be completed.

If the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure chose to fund this project, please provide a very short legal description of the project as you would like it to appear in the bill. For example, "Highway 101 road improvements from Main Street to First Street, Everytown, CA."

"Hammond Trail Bridge Replacement, Mad River, Humboldt County"