



May 21, 2009

Memorandum of Agreement with Historic Preservation Agencies for the Golden Gate Bridge Suicide Project

BACKGROUND

In July 2008, the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (Draft EIR/EA) for the Golden Gate Bridge Physical Suicide Deterrent System Project (Project) was released for public and agency comment. On October 10, 2008, the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District (District) Board of Directors (Board) approved Alternative 3, the Net System, as the Locally Preferred Alternative for the Project. Since then, District staff and consultants have been continuing with the preparation of the Final Environmental Impact Report and Findings of No Significant Impacts (FEIR/FONSI) including responding to public comments received on the Draft EIR/EA, additional avian studies and consultations regarding the adverse effect the Project will have on the Golden Gate Bridge, a property afforded protections under state and federal historic preservation laws.

The Memorandum of Agreement regarding the Project that was discussed on May 22 (see details below) is one step on the way towards the completion of the Final Environmental Impact Report and Findings of No Significant Impacts (FEIR/FONSI) that is currently targeted for release to the public within about one month.

The timing of the construction of the Net is tied to obtaining funding, and there are no funds currently identified. The Board policy is that District toll funds will not be used. We anticipate that it will be a combination of federal sources and private fund raising.

Once construction funding is identified, it will take about 3 years for construction. Adding a Net to the Bridge (an historic property) constitutes an adverse effect under historic preservation law. Golden Gate Bridge has been a property determined to be eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places since 1980. The preliminary cost estimate for the Net has not changed and is still \$40 to \$50 million.

MAY 22, 2009 – STATUS REPORT

At the May 22, 2009, regularly scheduled Board meeting, the Board approved recommending that the District's General Manager be authorized to execute a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) regarding the Project between the District and:

1. California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)

2. California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)
3. Federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP)

As part of the environmental process for the Project, three historical and cultural resources studies were prepared, which are summarized in the Draft EIR/EA, and include:

1. Historic Property Survey Report (HPSR)
2. Historic Resource Evaluation Report (HRER)
3. Finding of Effect (FOE)

These studies determined that the Project will have an adverse effect on the Golden Gate Bridge which has been a property determined to be eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) since 1980. Adding a Net to the Bridge constitutes an adverse effect under historic preservation law. Because the adverse effect has been identified, a MOA is necessary if the Project is to qualify for federal funding.

A MOA has been negotiated pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) with the District, SHPO, ACHP, Caltrans, and interested parties such as the Foundation for San Francisco's Architectural Heritage and Docomomo, Northern California Chapter, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The MOA is one of the last steps in the environmental process and is a necessary element to allow the Project to obtain federal funding, should such funding become available. If the MOA is not approved by the signatory agencies, the Project may face delays while the signatory agencies consult further regarding alternatives to mitigate the visual adverse effect of the Project on an historic property.

Key points identified as part of the consultation process which are memorialized as the mitigations for the adverse effect historic property in the MOA are as follows:

- The horizontal struts that support the netting will be painted international orange, while the marine-grade stainless steel wire rope for the net material will not be painted or coated.
- Along the approximately 300-foot-long North Anchorage Housing (which is a wider portion than other portions of the Bridge sidewalk and more visible from Vista Point), fencing with vertical pickets will be installed in lieu of netting. The fencing will be painted international orange.
- The District will augment the existing Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) of the Golden Gate Bridge with additional documentation. Specifically, large format photographs in accordance with HAER photographic specifications will be prepared, and copies of this documentation will be offered to several libraries specified in the MOA.
- Within one year of implementing the Net Alternative, Caltrans will ensure that the District will complete and submit a National Historic Landmark nomination for the Golden Gate Bridge to the National Historic Landmarks Program at the National Park Service. As the Bridge is a structure eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, the effect of National Historic Landmark status would be that projects

involving federal funds that potentially impact the historic features of the Bridge will involve a slightly more extended review process under the NHPA. The change in status would not affect the daily operation of the Bridge or the treatment of projects under state law.

- An educational brochure will be prepared presenting information on the historic elements of the Bridge being affected by the proposed project, and these brochures will be made available during construction.
- Copies of the Golden Gate Bridge Report of the Chief Engineer, Volume II (2007) will be provided to libraries and repositories named in the MOA.
- During construction, two interpretative signs or display panels will be installed at the Round House Gift Center and Vista Point. The signs will incorporate information from the contextual history prepared for the brochure.
- For the duration of construction, similar to the provisions for the ongoing seismic retrofit work, the District will take steps to protect the historic property and Fort Point from any damage arising from the construction of the Net; and if during the construction of the Net it results in any damage to Fort Point, the District will appropriately repair that damage.

The obligations associated with the proposed MOA are triggered by the construction of the Net alternative, and are included in the cost estimate for the construction of the Net. Per Board policy, this construction would be funded with non-District funds.

Attachment: Memorandum of Agreement