

# Memorandum

To : The Conservancy  
The Advisory Committee

Date: February 28, 2011

  
From : Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item 11: Consideration of resolution confirming a comment letter to Caltrans regarding Mulholland Drive bridge realignment, Sepulveda Pass.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution confirming a comment letter to Caltrans regarding Mulholland Drive bridge realignment, Sepulveda Pass.

Background: Caltrans is the lead agency preparing environmental documents for the I-405 Sepulveda Pass Widening Project, in partnership with Metro and a design-build contractor. The project, which certified its Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in 2008 and is currently under construction, would add a northbound High Occupancy Vehicle (carpool) lane to the freeway through the pass as well as improving lane and shoulder widths up to standards. All freeway overpass bridges in the project area are being reconstructed to accommodate the wider freeway, including Sunset Boulevard, Skirball Center Drive, and Mulholland Drive. Reconstruction of Sunset Boulevard and Skirball Center Drive bridges is underway and the experience thus far has raised questions about similar plans to rebuild in place the Mulholland Drive bridge.

In response to concerns among some community stakeholders about traffic during construction, which would have involved halving the width of Mulholland Drive for 22 months, Caltrans and Metro have proposed to build a new Mulholland Drive bridge on a different alignment that would allow the current bridge to remain open during construction. Due to construction schedule and utility relocation efficiencies, the new alignment is projected to save \$3 to \$4 million over the planned reconstruction in place. Caltrans issued an Environmental Addendum to their certified EIR on February 3, 2011.

As proposed by Caltrans and Metro, the new alignment would make Mulholland Drive discontinuous at a new T-intersection on the east end of the new span. Instead, Skirball Center Drive would become the through movement onto eastbound Mulholland Drive. Original plans also included thousands of feet of retaining wall and 33,000 cubic yards of grading, including 1,400 linear feet of wall along Skirball Center Drive and Mulholland Drive that would have blocked wildlife access to Conservancy-owned open space. Revised plans that reduce or eliminate these retaining wall impacts were mentioned, but have not been released publicly. This project revision is substantially different than the original proposed reconstruction of the

bridge and therefore results in additional unanalyzed impacts beyond those mentioned in previous Conservancy comment letters on the project. The attached letter details these concerns as enumerated to the Mulholland Design Review Board.

The Metro Project Director presented the new alignment at the Mulholland Design Review Board (MDRB) meeting on February 17, 2011 for its recommendation. Under the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan, a public process to realign Mulholland Drive is required. In addition, the MDRB must make a recommendation to the Director of City Planning in favor or opposed to the design of the new bridge. The MDRB voted unanimously to require Metro to return with more firm plans that address concerns raised by the Conservancy and several community groups. The MDRB would approve the new bridge alignment if the following conditions were met by Metro:

1. Modify the T-intersection so that Mulholland Drive is a continuous road, or has the feeling of a continuous road.
2. Retain a design consultant to create an extraordinary design solution to support Mulholland mission.
3. Address or respond to concerns of the February 17, 2011 Conservancy letter.
4. Address or respond to concerns of the February 15, 2011 Bel Air Skycrest Property Owners Association letter
5. Address or respond to concerns of the February 15, 2011 Brentwood Residents Coalition/Canyon Back Alliance letter.
6. Submit all supporting documents requested in a standard Mulholland Design Review Board application.

The resolution would confirm the comment letter sent to the MDRB and authorize a substantially similar letter to Caltrans to be included in the public record for the Environmental Addendum.