

3.14 Transportation

This section evaluates the potential impacts to transportation during construction, invasive plant management and maintenance of the proposed Project. Construction activities include the earthwork involved in the estuarine restoration and infrastructure improvement portions of the Project. Invasive plant management activities include the removal of dense-flowered cordgrass (*Spartina densiflora*), European beachgrass (*Ammophila arenaria*), and dwarf eelgrass (*Zostera japonica*) using any one or a combination of the methods described in Section 2.5 (Proposed Invasive Plant Management). Maintenance activities include periodic repairs and improvements to the non-motorized boat put-in, trails, parking lots and road within the Project Area, and also include monitoring activities. Potential impacts on transportation from public access are also considered in this section. The study area for this section includes the Project Area and roadways that provide access to the Project Area from the nearest state highway (i.e., Table Bluff Road east to the intersection with Hookton Road, and Hookton Road east to U.S. Highway 101).

3.14.1 Setting

The following information discusses the transportation-related context in which the proposed Project would occur, including a description of the roadway network and public transit, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities in the Project vicinity.

Roadways

U.S. Highway 101 is the only State Highway that provides regional access to the Project vicinity. Hookton Road is an arterial rural two-lane roadway that diverges from U.S. Highway 101 and terminates at the intersection with Table Bluff Road. Table Bluff Road is a two-lane rural road that provides the only roadway access to the Project Area. Both Hookton and Table Bluff Road are county roadways that provide access to farms, residences, Table Bluff County Park and the South Jetty recreational area (South Jetty Road). The current intersection of Hookton Road and Table Bluff Road is an unsignalized, three-leg intersection with a stop-sign at northbound Table Bluff Road on to Hookton Road/Table Bluff Road. Hookton Road becomes Table Bluff Road west of this intersection.

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) measures the traffic volume for U.S. Highway 101 and reports the Annual Average Daily Traffic (Annual ADT) in a report issued by the Caltrans Traffic Census Program. The Annual ADT is the total traffic volume for the year divided by 365 days. The latest Annual ADT report issued by Caltrans was issued in 2016 (Caltrans 2016).

The 2016 Annual ADT reported for U.S. Highway 101 at Hookton Road ranged from 21,600 to 22,900. The 2016 Annual ADT for U.S. Highway 101 at Loleta Drive (approximately 2.3 miles [3.7 kilometers] south of Hookton Road) ranged from 22,800 to 22,900. The 2016 Annual ADT for U.S. Highway 101 at Fields Landing Overhead (approximately 2.4 miles [3.8 kilometers] north of Hookton Road) ranged from 21,600 to 24,800 (Caltrans 2016). According to the 2017 Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG) Regional Transportation Plan, highways in

Humboldt County currently provide adequate facilities and level of service (HCAOG 2017).

Hookton Road and Table Bluff Road have a low volume of use. Traffic counts have not been collected, but would be expected to be low along Table Bluff Road within the Project vicinity, as the segment of Table Bluff Road adjacent to the Project Area terminates just north of the Project Area into South Jetty Road at the Table Bluff County Park. South Jetty Road terminates in a dead end at the northern extent of the South Jetty.

The nearest residential community to the Project Area is the 88-acre (36 hectares) Table Bluff Reservation. The Wiyot Table Bluff Reservation currently is home to over 100 residents. The Humboldt County General Plan Draft EIR, Section 3.5.1, states that 64.3 percent of Wiyot Table Bluff Reservation residents use cars alone for transportation, while 28.6 percent walk (Humboldt County 2017a).

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

As specified in the Humboldt County Regional Transportation Plan, all streets, roadways, and highways in Humboldt County are open to bicycle use (HCAOG 2018). Humboldt County's bikeways are generally classified according to Caltrans' definitions for Class I, II, and III bikeways, as defined below.

Class I “Bike Path”: A separated, surfaced right-of-way designated exclusively for non-motorized use (can be solely for bicyclists, or can be shared with pedestrians and/or equestrians). The minimum width for each direction is 8 feet (2.4 meters), with a 15 foot (4.7 meters) minimum width for a bi-directional path.

Class II “Bike Lane”: Within the roadway, a lane for preferential bicycle use, at least 4 feet (1.2 meters) wide or 5 feet (1.5 meters) when next to a gutter or parking. Established by a white stripe (on roadway) and “Bike Lane” signs. Adjacent vehicle parking and motorist crossflow is allowed. On a two-way road, a bike lane is required on both sides.

Class III “Bike Route”: A roadway that does not have a Class I or II bikeway, where bicyclists share a travel lane with motorists. Sometimes created to connect other bikeways. Can be established by a “Bike Route” sign, but not required.

Unclassified bikeway: Streets, roadways, and highways without features to qualify as Class I, II, or III.

No Class I, II, or III bikeways or trails are presently located on or adjacent to the Project Area. Additionally, no pedestrian improvements, including sidewalks, are located at the Project Area or along local roadways in the Project vicinity. Neither Hookton Road or Table Bluff Road have demarcated bicycle lanes or fog line striping.

Public Transit

Public transit in Humboldt County is primarily provided by the Humboldt Transit Authority (HTA), a joint powers authority established in 1975 between Humboldt County and the cities of Arcata, Eureka, Fortuna, Rio Dell, and Trinidad. HTA operates and maintains the Redwood Transit System (RTS), as well as numerous small regional transportation systems, including: the Tish Non Village Transit, the

Willow Creek Transit Service, and the Southern Humboldt Local and Intercity Transit Systems. HTA also operates and maintains under contract the Eureka Transit System, and provides paratransit administrative services for the region. Several community and social service organizations throughout Humboldt County also provide transportation services aside from public transit and paratransit.

Public transit service and facilities are not presently provided at or near the Project Area. There are no public transit connections located along Table Bluff Road or Hookton Road. The nearest public transit point of connection is the RTS/Tish Non Village bus stop (RTS Stop ID 1249) located at Scenic Drive and Loleta Drive in the town of Loleta. Additionally, the Humboldt County Regional Transportation Plan does not identify unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet for the Project vicinity and does not include plans for future additional transit facilities within the Project vicinity (HCAOG 2017).

Airports

Of the nine public use airports in Humboldt County, the closest public airport to the Project Area is Samoa Field, located on the Samoa Peninsula approximately 6.5 aerial miles (10.5 kilometers) north-northeast from the northern boundary of the Project Area. The second closest airport is Rohnerville Airport, located south of the City of Fortuna, approximately 11 aerial miles (17.7 kilometers) southeast of the Project Area. The Project Area is not located within land use compatibility zones around Samoa Field or Rohnerville Airport. There are no private airfields in the Project vicinity.

3.14.2 Regulatory Framework

Federal

There are no federal regulations that apply to the proposed Project specific to transportation.

State

California Department of Transportation

Caltrans has discretionary authority with respect to highways under its jurisdiction. State highways in Humboldt County are under the jurisdiction of Caltrans District 1. Caltrans issues encroachment permits and permits to operate the movement of oversized or excessive load vehicles on State roadways, such as U.S. Highway 101. Caltrans also requires a Transportation Management Plan for any traffic restrictions and detours that could affect the highway system. Transportation Management Plans must be prepared in accordance with the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

California Coastal Act

The California Coastal Act of 1976 (Coastal Act) set policies related to numerous natural resource categories, including transportation, and permanently established the California Coastal Commission (CCC). The CCC has the authority to plan and regulate resources within the Coastal Zone, including the use of land and water. The policies of the Coastal Act constitute the statutory standards applied to planning

and regulatory decisions made by the CCC and by local governments, pursuant to the Coastal Act (CCC 2018).

Regional and Local

Lands within the Project Area are owned by CDFW or are under the jurisdiction of the State Lands Commission, and therefore will not require a Conditional Use Permit from Humboldt County nor adherence to the Humboldt County General Plan or the Local Coastal Program Eel River Area Plan. Potential impacts within each resource category extending beyond the Project Area boundary, such as use of county roadways providing access to the Project Area, are analyzed utilizing local regulatory documents such as the Humboldt County General Plan and the Local Coastal Program Eel River Area Plan. Therefore local and regional regulatory policies are included in this analysis.

Humboldt County General Plan

The following goals from the Humboldt County General Plan (2017) are applicable to the Project with regard to transportation:

C-G1. Circulation System Safety and Functionality

A safe, efficient, accessible and convenient circulation system in and between cities, communities, neighborhoods, hamlets, and adjoining regions taking into consideration the context-specific needs of all users, consistent with urban, suburban, rural or remote community character.

C-G2. Diverse Transportation Opportunities

A transportation system that provides the availability of options among modes of travel by considering the needs of all users in a context sensitive manner that is appropriate to urban, suburban, rural or remote community character.

C-G4. Access to Active Transportation

Improved access to non-motorized modes of transportation, including walking, bicycling, horseback riding and hiking.

Humboldt County Association of Governments Regional Transportation Plan

The HCAOG is a joint powers authority comprising the County of Humboldt and the seven incorporated cities, each with a seat on the Board of Directors. Under its authority as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency for Humboldt County, HCAOG adopts and submits an updated Regional Transportation Plan to the California Transportation Commission and Caltrans every five years. The HCAOG 20-Year Regional Transportation Plan is a long-range transportation planning document for Humboldt County. The most recent five-year update of the Regional Transportation Plan was adopted in 2017 (HCAOG 2017). The Regional Transportation Plan does not currently establish vehicular level of service criteria for county roadways in the Project vicinity.

Humboldt County Regional Bicycle Plan

The Humboldt Regional Bicycle Plan is a planning document that is updated every five years. The primary goal stated in the 2018 Update of the Regional Bicycle Plan is to create the safest conditions for bicyclists by providing bikeways and improving

roadways to eliminate barriers to bicycle travel (HCAOG 2018). Projects identified as priorities in the current Regional Bicycle Plan are anticipated to be implemented over a five-year period.

No bicycle facility projects are identified in the HCAOG 2018 Humboldt Regional Bicycle Plan for the Project Area, adjacent lands, or the arterial roadways accessing the Project Area. The nearest potential bicycle facilities projects identified in the 2018 Humboldt Regional Bicycle Plan are: Park Street (Loleta Drive to Franklin Avenue), Loleta Drive (Main Street to Franklin Avenue), and Franklin Avenue (Park Street to Loleta Drive) in Loleta (HCAOG 2018). The Park Street, Loleta Drive and Franklin Avenue segments are identified in the 2018 Humboldt Regional Bicycle Plan as potential future Class II bicycle routes.

3.14.3 Evaluation Criteria and Significance Thresholds

The Project would cause a significant impact related to transportation, as defined by the CEQA Guidelines (Appendix G), if it would:

- Conflict with program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, taking into account all modes of transportation including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities;
- Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b);
- Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment); or
- Result in inadequate emergency access.

3.14.4 Methodology

As described above, the study area for this section is defined as the roadways that provide access to the Project Area from the nearest state highway, including Table Bluff Road from the Project Area east to the intersection with Hookton Road, and Hookton Road from Table Bluff Road intersection east to U.S. Highway 101.

This impact analysis evaluates the potential for the Project to conflict with State transportation regulations, as well as the County's adopted plans and applicable policies related to traffic circulation, including the General Plan, Regional Transportation Plan, and Regional Bicycle Plan. The analysis also evaluates the potential for the Project to have short-term or long-term impacts on roadways, emergency access, or on the safety of vehicular traffic, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

3.14.5 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Impact TR-1: Would the Project conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities?

Construction

Construction of the Project would result in a short-term increase in construction-related vehicle trips on U.S. Highway 101, Hookton Road, and Table Bluff Road. Increased traffic would be associated with vehicle trips by construction workers and haul-truck trips for delivery of construction materials to the Project Area, as well truck trips associated with limited disposal of materials that may not be reused onsite (e.g., derelict tide gates). The number of construction-related vehicles traveling to and from the Project Area would vary on a daily basis; however, it is not expected that traffic control would be required because the number of construction worker vehicles accessing the Project Area on a daily basis would not exceed 20 and construction equipment would remain staged in the Project Area once it is mobilized. Moreover, all material appropriate for reuse on-site (i.e., soil) would remain within the Project Area, so truck trips to dispose of sediment offsite would not be required.

Construction vehicles and workers would utilize County highways and roadways to travel to the Project Area. Construction activity would not, however, require any excavation or other work within a Caltrans or County right-of-way of local highways and roadways, and would not require the closure or restriction of a highway or roadway during construction.

As required by the Caltrans, Project work that requires the movement of oversized or excessive load vehicles on State roadways, such as U.S. Highway 101, would require a transportation permit issued by Caltrans. Additionally, a Transportation Management Plan would be required for any traffic restrictions and detours that could affect the highway system, which would be prepared in accordance with the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. The Project would not require encroachment onto a Caltrans or County right-of-way, nor the need for traffic restrictions or detours. With required compliance with the Caltrans permit for movement of any oversized or excessive load vehicles, the temporary impact of haul-trucks on the circulation system would be less than significant.

There are no existing public transit routes, bicycle routes or pedestrian facilities located along the access routes to the Project Area, including Table Bluff Road or Hookton Road. The nearest public transit point of connection is the RTS bus stop located at Scenic Drive and Loleta Drive in Loleta. Project construction activities would, therefore, not impact the performance or safety of such routes or facilities. The construction phase of the Project would have a less-than-significant impact on transit, pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

Invasive Plant Management

Trips to the Project Area to conduct invasive plant management activities are anticipated to occur seasonally for up to ten years, or as long as needed to achieve control and/or eradication of targeted species. After the initial treatment of dense-

flowered cordgrass and European beachgrass in the Project Area, CDFW would remove regrowth of up to 10 acres of dense-flowered cordgrass and European beachgrass (for a total of 20 acres or more) per year, as needed. Vehicle trips to the Project Area would be necessary to carry out this work, however the trips would be limited to short periods of time and would not require traffic control.

Vehicle trips to support invasive plant management, in combination with vehicle trips for maintenance and public access activities, are expected to result in a total of up to 30 to 40 additional vehicles visiting the site per week compared to existing conditions. These activities would not require a change to the existing roadway network, would not change the configuration or capacity of any roadways or intersections, and would not affect existing speed limits. Therefore, the low to moderate increase in use of the Project Area for invasive plant management activities would not adversely affect access, infrastructure, or travel to/from the Project Area. Due to the seasonality and small number of anticipated trips to the Project Area to conduct invasive plant management activities, a less-than-significant impact on transit, pedestrian and bicycle facilities would occur.

Maintenance

Following Project implementation, relatively infrequent trips to the Project Area would take place for monitoring activities and maintenance and repair. Trips to carry out maintenance activities, in combination with invasive plant management and anticipated recreational uses, are expected to result in a total of up to 30-40 additional vehicle trips to the site per week compared to existing conditions. As noted above, these activities would not require a change to the existing roadway network, would not change the configuration or capacity of any roadways or intersections, and would not affect existing speed limits. Therefore, the low increase in use of the Project Area to carry out maintenance would not adversely affect access, infrastructure, or travel to/from the Project Area. Due to the small amount of anticipated trips, maintenance activities would have a less-than-significant impact on transit, pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

Public Access

The Circulation Element (Chapter 7) of the 2017 Humboldt County General Plan seeks to develop, operate and maintain a well-coordinated, balanced, circulation system that is safe, efficient and provides good access to all cities, communities, neighborhoods, recreational facilities and adjoining regions. The Humboldt County General Plan establishes a target level of service of C (LOS C) for County roadways in the Project vicinity (Humboldt County 2017).

Access to the Project Area would remain from Table Bluff Road via Hookton Road. It is anticipated certain recreational uses, such as hiking and bird watching, may increase under the Project due to improved public access and infrastructure (parking, trails, non-motorized boat put-in). Trips resulting from public access recreational uses, in combination with trips for invasive plant management and maintenance, are expected to result in up to 30 to 40 additional vehicles visiting the site per week compared to existing conditions. This increase in Project trips equates to approximately four to six additional vehicle trips per day. As noted above, additional recreational use of the Project Area by the public would not require

changes to the existing roadway network, would not change the configuration or capacity of any roadways or intersections, and would not affect existing speed limits. Therefore, the low to moderate increase in recreational use in the Project Area would not adversely affect access, infrastructure, or travel to/from the Project Area. Accordingly, the Project would not conflict with the goals outlined in Chapter 7.4 of the Humboldt County General Plan.

The Humboldt County Regional Transportation Plan (HCAOG 2017) does not include plans for additional public transportation facilities in the study area, and the Humboldt Regional Bicycle Plan (HCAOG 2018) does not include plans for bicycle improvements within the study area. Because the Project would not alter the configuration of Hookton Road or Table Bluff Road, it would not preclude the future establishment of public transit connections or bicycle routes in the area. Because only 30 to 40 additional vehicles per week may visit the Project Area after the Project is complete, the Project is not anticipated to result in increases to motor vehicle speeds or queuing of traffic onto Hookton Road, and would not substantially increase exposure of bicyclists and pedestrians to vehicle conflict areas.

The Project would not conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, therefore the impact of the Project on this evaluation criteria would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation is necessary.

Level of Significance: Less than significant.

Impact TR-2: Would the Project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?

Section 15064.3, subdivision (b), of the CEQA Guidelines lists the criteria for analyzing transportation impacts from proposed projects. The criteria are broken up into four categories, including land use projects, transportation projects, qualitative analysis, and methodology. The Project would restore and enhance saltmarsh and dune habitats within the Project Area, as well as provide additional recreational amenities. As the Project is not creating a new land use or altering roadways within the Project Area, the Project would not be considered a land use project, nor would it be considered a transportation project. Therefore, those criteria do not apply.

The qualitative analysis criterion states if there are no models or methods available to estimate the vehicle miles traveled (VMT), a qualitative analysis may be utilized, and that it may be appropriate to evaluate construction traffic as well as traffic associated with other activities, such as invasive plant management, maintenance and public access. Humboldt County does not have an applicable method or model to determine or evaluate the amount of VMT expected to occur from implementation of the Project, therefore, a qualitative analysis is deemed appropriate and included below.

During construction, the number of construction-related vehicles traveling to and from the Project Area would vary on a daily basis; however, it is not expected that traffic control would be required because the number of construction worker vehicles accessing the Project Area on a daily basis would not exceed 20, and construction equipment would remain staged in the Project Area once it is mobilized. Moreover,

all material appropriate for reuse on-site (i.e., soil) would remain within the Project Area, so truck trips to dispose of sediment offsite would not be required. Due to the limited duration of the construction phase and minimal number of trips anticipated to be needed to complete the Project, it is not anticipated the Project would generate a significant amount of VMT. A less than significant transportation impact would occur during the construction phase.

Following construction, it is anticipated that invasive plant management, maintenance and public access activities combined would result in approximately 30 to 40 additional vehicles visiting the Project Area per week compared to existing conditions. This increase in Project trips would equate to approximately four to six additional vehicles per day. Per the Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA, projects generating fewer than 110 trips per day are generally assumed to cause a less-than-significant impact (OPR 2017). Therefore, the Project would have a less-than-significant impact regarding post-Project implementation VMT.

The final criterion, methodology, states that the lead agency has discretion to choose how to evaluate a project's VMT, as well the ability to adjust a model based on professional judgement as long as the adjustments are based on substantial evidence and any assumptions used are documented and explained. As Humboldt County has not developed a model or method to analyze VMT to date, CDFW has determined a qualitative approach is the preferred method of analysis. Therefore, the Project would not conflict with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3. A less-than-significant impact would occur.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation is necessary.

Level of Significance: Less than significant.

Impact TR-3 Would the Project substantially increase hazards due to geometric design features or incompatible use?

The Project would generate a temporary increase in traffic on local roadways related to the transport of materials and construction workers to and from the Project Area during a two-year construction period. The Project would not require the temporary closure or alteration of a roadway, or construction work within the right-of-way of roadways. Vehicles would access the Project Area from Table Bluff Road via Hookton Road. The intersection of these roadways would not be altered from existing conditions, and speed limits along the roadways would not be changed. Following construction, the approximately 30 to 40 additional vehicles that may visit the Project Area per week for recreation, invasive plant management or maintenance activities would not result in queuing of traffic onto Table Bluff Road, Hookton Road or other roadways. Therefore, the potential for Project construction, invasive plant management, maintenance activities or increased public access to increase hazards due to a geometric design feature or incompatible use would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation is necessary.

Level of Significance: Less than significant.

Impact TR-4: Would the Project result in inadequate emergency access?

Construction, invasive plant management, and maintenance of the Project would not require roadway closures or construction activities within the right-of-way of local roadways, including Hookton Road or Table Bluff Road. Implementation of the Project would not prevent emergency access to the Project Area or to adjacent land uses along Hookton Road or Table Bluff Road.

As described above, invasive plant management, maintenance and public access of the Project may result in 30 to 40 additional vehicles visiting the site per week compared to existing conditions. This increase in visitor trips to the Project Area equates to approximately four to six additional vehicles per day. Such a minimal increase in traffic along roadways would not substantially affect fire protection services or emergency response times to the Project Area or surrounding residences in the Project vicinity. The impact on emergency access would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation is necessary.

Level of Significance: Less than significant.

3.14.6 Cumulative Impacts**Impact TR-C-1: Would the Project contribute to a cumulatively significant impact related to transportation?**

The geographic scope for the analysis of cumulative impacts on transportation and circulation consists of the areas that use the same roadways as the Project.

As discussed in Impacts TR-1 through TR-4, Project construction, invasive plant management and maintenance activities as well as increased public access would have less-than-significant impacts related to conflicts with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system (TR-1); conflicts with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3 subdivision (b) (TR-2); increased hazards due to design feature or incompatible uses (TR-3); or emergency access (TR-4).

Similar to the Project, implementation of the cumulative projects identified in Table 3-1 (Projects Considered for Cumulative Impacts) may result in construction traffic and low to moderate increases in recreational use and related vehicle trips. Construction of the Project may potentially overlap with cumulative projects that would be under construction or would be reasonably foreseeable in the Project vicinity. However, given the locations of the cumulative projects in relation to each other, local haul truck routes would likely utilize different roadways. Additionally, overlapping construction traffic and moderate increases in invasive plant management, maintenance and public access trips would not be expected to cause a significant cumulative impact relative to traffic congestion, because intersections and roadways in the area operate acceptably in general and overlapping construction would be temporary. None of the cumulative projects would affect on-site circulation and queuing of cars at the Project Area, increase hazards due to design feature or incompatible uses, or impact bicycle and pedestrian trips in or around the Project Area. Therefore, cumulative impacts relative to transportation and circulation would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation is necessary.

Level of Significance: Less than significant.

3.14.7 References

California Coastal Commission (CCC). 2018. Website: Our Mission, Overview. Accessed on October 30, 2018 via: <https://www.coastal.ca.gov/whoweare.html>.

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