

Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) Report to MCCMC¹

March 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The BCDC Commission did not meet in March. However, there is an all-day meeting on April 3, 2025 focusing on changing the use the right-hand shoulder of the eastbound lower deck on the San Rafael/Richmond Bridge as a part-time travel lane during peak hours on a permanent basis and continue the multi-use pathway pilot project on the westbound upper deck shoulder for two years with modifications. Here is the link to the agenda item: [Application Summary](#)

APPLICATION TO CHANGE USE OF RIGHT-HAND SHOULDER OF THE EASTBOUND LOWER DECK ON THE SAN RAFAEL/RICHMOND BRIDGE:

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) submitted a permit application to the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) to change the use of the right-hand shoulder of the eastbound lower deck as a part-time travel lane during peak hours on a permanent basis and continue the multi-use pathway pilot project on the westbound upper deck shoulder for two years with modifications, including reducing availability of the path to the period between Thursday afternoon and Sunday evening, converting the path back to an emergency shoulder at all other times, and providing a free bicycle shuttle Mondays through Thursdays.

Caltrans' application would amend their existing permit to modify the San Rafael Bridge Public Pathway Pilot Project in coordination with the Bay Area Toll Authority (BATA), which is a subsidiary agency under the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) created to administer tolls on the Bay Area's state-owned bridges. The bridge is approximately 4 miles long and consists of an upper deck for traffic westbound to Marin County, and a lower deck for traffic eastbound to Contra Costa County. **On September 20, 2016, BCDC issued the permit amendment authorizing a four-year pilot project** to evaluate the use of a separated Class I public pathway on the shoulder of the westbound upper deck of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge and use of the shoulder of the eastbound lower deck as a part-time vehicular travel lane during PM peak hours only.

Since the lower deck pilot improvements opened on April 20, 2018 and the upper deck pilot improvements opened on November 18, 2019, the original authorization for the pilot project components expired on April 20, 2022 and November 18, 2023, respectively. To allow time to conclude the Pilot evaluation, determine appropriate next steps, and complete the permit amendment process with BCDC, Caltrans requested and was granted an amendment to the permit to temporarily extend the authorization of the Pilot through December 31, 2025.

Caltrans contracted with California PATH (Partners for Advanced Transportation Technology) to evaluate the Pilot Project. The contractor prepared a "Before" study in 2018 that described conditions existing in 2015-2016 before the Pilot was implemented, as well as an "After" study that was documented in two phases. The Phase I report was published in 2022 and was presented to the Commission at a briefing on May 2, 2024. The Phase II report was completed on May 8, 2024, and updated the Phase I analysis with data gathered since

¹ Marin County Council of Mayors and Councilmembers (MCCMC)

2022 as well as a discussion of modifications made to an existing bike path connecting the bridge to Sir Francis Drake Boulevard in Marin County outside of the Commission's jurisdiction. The Phase II report is currently the main source of data about the project used by the applicants and Commission staff. The report can be accessed by clicking the following link: [After Study for the Richmond - San Rafael Bridge \(Phase II\)](#)

In summary, the proposed amendment request proposes the following modifications to the Pilot Project:

1. Westbound Upper Deck. On the upper deck and westbound approach, continue to pilot the multi-use path for an additional two years with a modified schedule that would reduce the availability of the public pathway to only the period from 2:00pm on Thursdays through 11:00pm on Sundays, with some additional availability around holidays. At all other times, the movable barrier separating the pathway would be removed and the path would revert to an emergency shoulder and breakdown lane. A shuttle would operate between 6:00am and 8:00pm on days where the path is closed to transport cyclists across the bridge (on Thursdays, the shuttle would run until the path reopens). The shuttle would run between the Tewksbury Avenue bus stop in Richmond and the Vista Point parking lot in San Rafael and involve the placement of informational signage. These modifications are illustrated in Figure 3.

2. Eastbound Lower Deck. On the lower deck and eastbound approach, conclude the pilot phase and continue, on a permanent basis, the use of the shoulder as a vehicle travel lane during the peak commute hours of 2:00pm to 7:00pm each day. At the eastbound approach to the bridge in the 100-foot shoreline band, the Pilot also converts a 0.65-mile-long segment of the I-580 shoulder for use as a vehicle travel lane.

Caltrans' objectives in piloting these uses of the bridge shoulders were to seek a means of reducing congestion and travel time in the eastbound direction and to provide pedestrian and bicycle facilities across the bridge, the latter of which is related to the provision of public access contemplated in the findings of the original permit issuance from 1997. Caltrans intended to evaluate the performance and use of these improvements to determine whether they could feasibly be made permanent.

The modifications would be implemented as soon as Spring 2025 and would be in place for two years, including an 18-month study period and up to 6 months for decision-making following the study. The estimated total project cost is approximately \$200,000 for capital and support costs (this amount does not include operations and maintenance costs).

The BCDC Commission had two workshops on the permit amendment where numerous questions were raised. The BCDC staff has prepared a memorandum responding to the questions previously raised. That document can be accessed by this link: bcdc.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/354/2024/12/2025-03-20-Summary-of-Commissioner-Questions-and-Answers.pdf

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