



January 21, 2010

January 22, 2010, Final Environmental Impact Report Released for Golden Gate Bridge Physical Suicide Deterrent System Project

February 12, 2010 GGBHTD Board of Directors Acts to Certify FEIR

On **Friday, January 22, 2010**, the Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment and Section 4(F) Evaluation (FEIR/EA) for the Golden Gate Bridge Physical Suicide Deterrent System Project (Project) with Alternative 3, the Net System, as the Preferred Alternative, will be released at approximately 10 am. Also, by approximately 10 am, the FEIR/EA is available on the District's website and on CD by email request to suicidebarrier@goldengate.org.

On **Friday, February 12, 2010**, at the regularly scheduled meeting of the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District (GGBHTD) Board of Directors (Board) at 10 am, the Board will be asked to:

1. Certify that the FEIR/EA complies with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)
2. Adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations for the FEIR certification
3. Approve the Project

Additionally, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), as assigned by the Federal Highway administration (FHWA), approved a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Project on January 19, 2010.

1. **What does it mean when the Board "approves the Project" at their February 12 meeting?**

Under CEQA, it is necessary for the Board to approve the Project in order to make the findings required to complete the environmental review process. However, until sufficient funding is secured to undertake the Project, no construction will commence as a result of the approval.

2. **Is there a public comment period associated with the release of the FEIR/EA?**

The public is welcome to review the FEIR/EA, however there is no formal public comment period associated with the release of the FEIR/EA. If anyone does wish to comment, they may do so via email to suicidebarrier@goldengate.org.

3. **What is the status of funding to build the Net System?**

The cost estimate to finalize the design and construct the Net System is \$50 million. At this time, specific funding has not been identified. The established Board policy states that District toll funds will not be used. We anticipate that funding may be a combination of federal and private fund raising.

4. **Once funding is identified, how long will the Project take to be implemented?**

Once funding is identified for the Project, it will take up to three years to finalize the design, fabricate, and install the Net System on both the east and the west sidewalks of the Bridge.

5. **What new information is included in the FEIR/EA?**

The Draft EIR/EA was released on July 8, 2008, and comments were accepted through August 25, 2008. The Draft EIR/EA evaluated the potential environmental impacts of six different alternatives including five “Build Alternatives” and one “No Build” Alternative. On October 10, 2008, GGBHTD Board of Directors selected the Net System as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA).

Based on the selection of the Net System as the LPA, staff and its consultants prepared the FEIR/EA which includes:

- Written responses to public and agency comments
- Memorandum of Agreement to mitigate the adverse effects the LPA has on the historic property
- Modifications to the Net System design made in response to comments and additional studies. For example, the color of the netting material was re-evaluated resulting in a revised visual assessment and the Net System along the North Anchorage Housing was modified (see more about these modifications under #6 below). An avian impact study was performed and its results included in the FEIR/EA.

6. **What is included in the Memorandum of Agreement?**

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) outlines agreed-upon measures that GGBHTD and Caltrans will take to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the adverse effects of the Project on the Bridge. As part of the EIR/EA process, three historical and cultural resources studies were prepared, which are summarized in the Draft EIR/EA. They include: (1) Historic Property Survey Report (HPSR), (2) Historic Resource Evaluation Report (HRER) and (3) Finding of Effect (FOE). These studies determined that the Project would have an adverse effect on the Bridge, a property determined to be eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), as

adding the Net System would constitute an adverse effect under historic preservation law. Because an adverse effect was identified, a MOA was necessary for the Project to be eligible for any future federal funding.

On May 23, 2009, GGBHTD Board of Directors authorized the General Manager to proceed with the execution of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the Project between the District and California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), Federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP). The MOA was negotiated pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) with the District, SHPO, ACHP, Caltrans, and concurring parties including the Foundation for San Francisco's Architectural Heritage, DOCOMOMO/US Northern California Chapter, and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Key points identified through the consultation process which are memorialized as the mitigations for the adverse effect upon the historic property in the MOA include the following:

- 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 concrete North Anchorage Housing, fencing with vertical pickets will be installed in lieu of netting. The fencing will be painted International Orange.
- GGBHTD 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.
- Within one year of implementing the Net System, Caltrans will ensure that GGBHTD 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.
- 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 System; 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 MOA are triggered by the construction of the Net System and are included in the construction cost estimate.

7. **What was the general nature of the public comments on Draft EIR/EA?**

The District received 5,870 discrete comments from 3,458 individuals, organizations and agencies. Of the 5,870 discrete comments received, 212 (3.6%) were considered comments on the Draft EIR/EA. The remaining comments were not relevant to the Draft EIR/EA.

- 212 (3.6%) comments pertained to the adequacy of the Draft EIR/EA. These comments, in general, stated that either the no-build alternative was not adequately considered or that the commenter supported performing additional bird studies.
- 1,497 (25.5%) comments were general comments which shared personal opinions about suicide. These comments typically either stated that individuals will commit suicide somewhere else if a barrier is built on the Bridge; or they stated that suicide is an impulsive act so a barrier on the Bridge will save lives.
- 2,965 (50.5%) comments which expressed personal opinions about Project Alternatives and typically stated the reasons why the commenter liked or disliked an Alternative, or they presented different ideas for Alternatives.
- 878 (15%) comments pertained to the project cost or alternative uses for that sum of money. These comments typically either suggested that: the project funding should be redirected to mental health counseling; the expenditure of funds on this project was a poor use of public funds; or, the project funding should be spent on the Moveable Median Barrier Project instead of being used to build a suicide deterrent.
- 318 (5.4%) comments were considered as “other.”

8. What is the nature of the response to comments presented in the FEIR/EA?

The responses to comments address environmental issues raised in the comments and explain the nature of the environmental issues, also explaining why some comments were not relevant or considered further. As noted under #5, as a result of comments received, modifications were made to the Net System design and additional studies were undertaken.

9. What was the Project timeline since commencing in 2005?

- March 11, 2005: GGBHTD Board approved proceeding with environmental studies and preliminary design work for development of a potential physical suicide deterrent system on the Bridge, contingent upon receiving outside funding to pay for the studies and design.
- April 22, 2005: GGBHTD Board adopted project criteria to assist in guiding the project.
- June 28, 2006: Metropolitan Transportation Commission provided \$1,850,000 towards the \$2 million required for the preliminary engineering and environmental process; additional funding was provided by the City and County of San Francisco, Marin County and several interested individuals and groups.
- September 22, 2006: Board authorized the hiring of a consultant for this project.
- May 24, 2007: Phase 1 completed – critical *Wind Studies* were completed, report released.
- June 14, 2007: Phase 2 began – Notice of Preparation was issued and environment studies formally commenced.

- July 8, 2008: Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)/Environmental Analysis (EA) was released for public and agency comment through August 25, 2008.
- July 22 and 23, 2008: two public meetings were held on the Draft EIR/EA.
- August 25, 2008: close of public and agency comments.
- October 10, 2008: GGBHTD Board selected the Net Alternative as the Locally Preferred Alternative for the Suicide Deterrent Project.
- October 13, 2008: Preparation of the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) based on the Net Alternative as the LPA commenced.
- May 22, 2009: GGBHTD Board approved the execution a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) regarding the Project between the District and California Department of Transportation (Caltrans); California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and Federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP).
- July 13, 2009: MOA was executed with the State Historic Preservation Officer and the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.
- January 22, 2010: GGBHTD releases the FEIR/EA.
- February 12, 2010: GGBHTD Board will be asked to take action to certify the FEIR.

10. **What are the Suicide Deterrent Project Criteria that were adopted by the GGBHTD Board?**

A potential physical suicide deterrent system for the Bridge must:

- Impede the ability of an individual to jump off the Golden Gate Bridge.
- Not cause safety or nuisance hazards to sidewalk users including pedestrians, bicyclists, District staff, and District contractors or security partners.
- Be able to be maintained as a routine part of the District's on-going Bridge maintenance program and without undue risk of any injury to District employees.
- Not diminish ability to provide adequate security of the Golden Gate Bridge.
- Continue to allow access to the underside of the Bridge for emergency response and maintenance activities.
- Not have a negative impact on the wind stability of the Golden Gate Bridge.
- Satisfy requirements of state and federal historic preservation laws.
- Have minimal visual and aesthetic impacts on the Golden Gate Bridge.
- Be cost effective to construct and maintain.
- Not in and of itself create undue risk of injury to anyone who comes in contact with the suicide deterrent system.
- Must not prevent construction of a moveable median barrier on the Golden Gate Bridge.