

# Vegetation Management in Caltrans Highway 1 right-of-way in Montara

Midcoast Community Council

March 14, 2018

Desired outcome: Affirm community priorities to preserve and enhance **public ocean views** and **bike/pedestrian safety and mobility** on Highway 1 in Montara, including a list of **Caltrans vegetation maintenance tasks** to further these goals.

Priorities:

- Bike/pedestrian comfort, safety & trail connectivity
- Active transportation -- reduce traffic congestion & CO2 emissions
- Preserve & enhance public coastal views
- Control invasive weeds that spread along the hwy corridor.

CA Coastal Trail route through Montara:

- Main St route planned, crossing highway at 16<sup>th</sup> (lighthouse) & 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- Coastal Trail on Main St or west shoulder of Hwy 1? -- BOTH !!!

Montara Coast – why walk the west side of Hwy 1? – next 6 slides.

- Spectacular rocky shoreline not seen from Main St.
- Bike/ped destinations -- no significant parking available west side.
- West side access is reason for proposed 7<sup>th</sup> St crossing with refuge island.

Lighthouse hostel and cove from Hwy 1 at Montara Creek ravine



Lighthouse cove beach, from end of 14<sup>th</sup> St.



Beach access is from the lighthouse via steep informal trail.

View from Hwy 1 at 10<sup>th</sup> St



9<sup>th</sup> is a paper street with informal public trail out to the point.





8<sup>th</sup> is a paper street, west of Hwy 1.

On the north side of the ravine, thru the trees, a steep informal trail in the 8<sup>th</sup> St right-of-way leads down to the granitic beach.

From 8<sup>th</sup> St it is possible to walk north along the shoreline as far as Seacliff (6<sup>th</sup>).

Cliffs and shoreline in this area belong to State Parks.





Seacliff (6<sup>th</sup>)

7<sup>th</sup> St.

County street-end viewpoints on 7<sup>th</sup> and Seacliff are a short peaceful block away from the highway. These small quiet coastal refuges merit the **addition of viewing benches**.

MCC successfully lobbied 2012-2015 for the County to remove private fencing that had closed off the ends of these neighborhood streets, blocking public coastal views.





## Caltrans Hwy 1 vegetation maintenance in Montara

- Immediate low-cost safety & mobility improvement by maintaining existing level shoulder area (paved or not) clear of landscape encroachments that impede walking or biking.
- Caltrans shoulder width standard is 8-10 ft.
- Caltrans Strategic Mgmt Plan 2015-2020 has target goal to double the number of pedestrian trips by 2020.
- If vegetation is maintained, west side shoulder is walkable through Montara except perhaps for 1-1/2 blocks along the road cut between 4<sup>th</sup> St and Montara Beach parking lot.  
See Slide 11 for longer-term consideration for that segment.

### General practices:

- Maintain open sight line 10 ft from hwy. Prune lower tree branches back to trunk to clear the shoulder area and avoid regrowth or unsightly dead branch stubs.
- Remove tree seedlings that volunteer at road edge to avoid expensive future maintenance of large trees in unsuitable locations. Monterey cypress, a 40x40 ft tree, should be no closer than 20 ft to hwy.

See following slides for details.



4<sup>th</sup> to Montara State Beach lot

Prune lower cypress branches off at trunk.



Remove ice plant encroaching into shoulder area – difficult to walk on.



## 4<sup>th</sup> to Montara State Beach lot



At 4<sup>th</sup> St, remove *Arundo donax* (giant reed) -- spreading, invasive weed

**Longer term consideration:** Avoid this narrow shoulder segment and bring hikers up to the ocean view, by grading pedestrian trail access at 4<sup>th</sup>, and pruning lower cypress branches along top of road cut, to connect trail to Montara Beach parking lot. Would involve State Parks and DPW in addition to Caltrans.



5<sup>th</sup> to Seacliff (6<sup>th</sup>)



Dense cypress tree planting in front of tall masonry wall is encroaching into the Caltrans gravel shoulder.

Prune off lower branches at trunks for long-term solution to keeping the wide shoulder clear for pedestrians.



## 8<sup>th</sup> St

Remove recently planted cypress trees in 8<sup>th</sup> St view corridor.  
Landscaping is development – these trees require a CDP.

Remove young willow at 8<sup>th</sup> St arrow sign – fast-growing shrub/tree will block ocean view & require frequent pruning to keep shoulder clear.

Remove wire fencing from Caltrans ROW, both 2015 construction fencing at 8<sup>th</sup>, and new chicken wire along the road bank above the house.





between 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup>



- Recently planted row of cypress trees (within the existing roadside canopy but only 10 ft from fog line) will require removal of all lower branches on the highway side.
- More suitable long-term screening would be achieved with shade-tolerant shrubs near the house where they were removed in 2015 for access to 8<sup>th</sup> St landslide repairs.
- Caltrans ROW extends down the road bank to within ~3 feet of the house.
- Pedestrian comfort and safety are higher priority than landscaping encroachments such as this hedge taking up space in the 8-10 ft level hwy shoulder area.
- Cut back hedge width off level ground.
- Lower hedge height in view corridor above driveway to 3 ft maximum to open the ocean view to travelers on the scenic highway.

Just south of 9<sup>th</sup>



- Prune cypress branches back to trunks.
- Prune back & maintain shrubs even with fire hydrant -- makes level unpaved shoulder area available for pedestrians, fire truck, and driveway sight distance.
- See next slide for maintenance history at this location.



Maintenance requests just south of 9<sup>th</sup> St:

Nov 2012: hazardous condition reported

Jan 2013: maintenance pruning cut back to minimum width for shoulder trail

Jan 2018: hazardous condition reported





## 10<sup>th</sup> St. maintenance

Remove 3 small dead staked cypress trees from view corridor.



Prune encroaching lower cypress branches off at the trunk, instead of stub cuts, which quickly regrow, or die and look unsightly.

11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>

Remove cypress tree seedlings at road edge to avoid long-term maintenance issue.

Consider that cypress trees naturally grow to 40 ft high & wide.





14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup>

Who is responsible for landscape pruning for hostel sign visibility?



Remove weeds and ice plant from asphalt shoulder, back to guard rail.



Remove 2 staked cypress trees from road bank near 14<sup>th</sup> St intersection in view corridor.



14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup>

Remove dead cypress branch stubs sticking out into paved shoulder area at about eye level.

Remove overhead broken branches before they fall.

Here's a good example of lower roadside branches pruned off at trunk, avoiding ongoing maintenance, opening the coastal view, and providing greater clearance and sight distance.



## 14-16<sup>th</sup> east side

East side unpaved shoulder across Montara Creek ravine, is critical trail connection between Montara and Moss Beach.

After 2012 highway widening for center turn lane, a citizen tree pruning effort regained lost trail space.

Rather than continuing the vigilante approach, would Caltrans step in and remove all lower branches that encroach on level ground for the trail?



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Priorities:

- Bike/pedestrian comfort, safety & trail connectivity
- Active transportation -- reduce traffic congestion & CO2 emissions
- Preservation & enhancement of public coastal views
- Control of invasive weeds that spread along the highway corridor
  
- The spectacular rocky Montara shoreline is a bike/pedestrian journey and valued local destination.
- Maintain west side Hwy 1 ROW vegetation for a clear 10 ft shoulder, where there is existing level ground, for pedestrian comfort and safety.