



# Memorandum

March 4, 2020

To: California Department of Transportation – District 1

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Subject: **Visual Resource Technical Memorandum for the  
Old Arcata Road Improvement Project**

Job no. 11159130

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## 1. Summary

The purpose of this visual resource technical memorandum is to document potential visual changes anticipated from the proposed project. Visual changes and associated effects are demonstrated by identifying visual resources in the project area, measuring the amount of change that would occur as a result of the project.

The Old Arcata Road Improvements Project (project) is a collaborative project between the City of Arcata and the County of Humboldt. The purpose of the project is to improve connectivity and safety for non-motorized and motorized travelers in Bayside, California, and increase the use of active modes of transportation. The project was initially developed during a community-based process for preliminary design concepts (SHN 2017). The Project is being designed in accordance with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition* (2018). In addition, the Project will be designed in accordance to other specific applicable standards, including the *California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (CA MUTCD 2019); the 2010 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards for Accessible Design; the 2016 California Building Code and portions of the Caltrans *Highway Design Manual, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition* (2018).

Aesthetic considerations have been made for the proposed project, and have been presented to the public for consideration and input. Construction is expected to occur over a six to eight month period in 2021.

## 2. Project Description

The project will improve motorized and non-motorized transportation and user safety in Bayside, California. The project will link critical activity centers within the community, including schools, neighborhood facilities, and residential areas. Refer to the Project Description for a full overview of project components (GHD 2019).



The project will repave Old Arcata Road, including bicycle lanes on both sides of the roadway alignment, and improve and extend an existing walkway and sidewalks along the west side of Old Arcata Road. The project is approximately one mile in length, beginning approximately 600 feet south of the Buttermilk Road roundabout and extending south to approximately 400 feet beyond the Jacoby Creek Road intersection.

The project includes intersection and pedestrian safety improvements along Old Arcata Road, including sidewalk and walkway improvements, curb ramps, curbs and gutters, speed humps, and enhanced crosswalks. A new left turn lane will be located at Jacoby Creek Elementary School. New pavement will extend into residential and commercial driveways along Old Arcata Road to ensure smooth transition between existing and new pavement elevations. Construction of a new sidewalk along approximately 375 feet of Hyland Street is also included in the project.

A new roundabout will be constructed near the southern terminus of the project at the intersection of Jacoby Creek Road. Crosswalks, signage, lighting, and paved walkways will be integrated into the roundabout. A new retaining wall will extend along the west side of Old Arcata Road through the proposed Jacoby Creek Roundabout. Modifications and repaving of the roadway that serves the Bayside Post Office will also occur.

The project will terminate approximately 300 feet south of the proposed Jacoby Creek Roundabout along Old Arcata Road. The Jacoby Creek Road pavement improvements will terminate approximately 400 feet east of the proposed roundabout.

The project also includes approximately 1,600 square feet of onsite wetland creation within the roadside right-of-way between Bayside Road and Old Arcata Road near the northern end of the project corridor.

Some project elements will not result in visual change. These elements include:

- Improvements to the underground storm drain infrastructure in discrete locations.
- New and upgraded storm drain catch basins, storm drain piping, and storm drain junction boxes.
- Replacement of sanitary sewer laterals and the installation of cleanouts.
- Replacement of water service connections and resetting/installation of water meters within City/Public right of way.

### **3. Public Outreach**

The project is a direct result of input received from a community design charrette process that occurred in between 2016 and 2017 (SHN 2017). The goals of the process was to develop a community-driven plan for improving multi-modal access and safety along the Old Arcata Road corridor. The charrette consisted of four different public workshops plus an online survey, where the public was asked to help identify challenges and deficiencies to the existing roadway, opportunities for improvement, and feedback on initial design concepts. Feedback received from the public was incorporated into subsequent design concept alternatives. Following completion of the community charrette, the Arcata City Council selected a preferred alternative to move forward into the environmental, permitting, and design phases. Table 1 summarizes the various public outreach meetings and events that have occurred over the last several years.



**Table 1 Public Outreach Summary**

Date	Meeting Type/Topic
September 12, 2016	Community Charrette Event #1 – Kickoff Workshop
September 26, 2016	Community Charrette Event #2 – Walk Audit
October 18, 2016	Community Charrette Event #3 – Pop-Up Demonstration
October 19, 2016	Community Charrette Event #4 – Open House
October 20 - November 4, 2016	Online Community Survey
November 15, 2016	Arcata Transportation Safety Committee Meeting – Project Presentation
December 6, 2017	City Council Meeting – Project Presentation & Selection of Preferred Alternative
August 15, 2019	Community Meeting – Project Update & Preliminary Design

#### **4. Aesthetics/Visual Project Components**

Viewers of the project include the general public traveling the corridor, including pedestrian, cyclists, and vehicle users. Viewers of the project also include local residents living adjacent to or near the project corridor and individuals employed at places of work based in or near the project corridor. Visual changes may be more impactful to local residents and non-vehicular users than vehicle-based users.

The visual quality of the existing corridor will not be significantly altered by the proposed project. Views of local landmarks from the project corridor include an apple orchard, Jacoby Creek Elementary School, the Beachcomber Café, the Bayside Post Office, the Bayside Community Center, the Old Jacoby Creek School building, and Mistwood Center for Education (home-schooling/grammar school combination). Views of and access to these local landmarks are not negatively impacted by the proposed project. The visual quality of viewsheds from local landmarks will change as a result of the project; however, visual quality will not diminish or be inconsistent with the existing visual character of pre-project viewsheds from local landmarks.

The visual character of the proposed project will be compatible with the existing visual character of the corridor. The road cross-section proposed maintains a rural road aesthetic while providing safety improvements to better manage the levels of pedestrian and bicycle traffic the road also experiences. Existing pavement stamping and integral concrete color in use at medians and roundabouts between Union Street and Buttermilk Lane will be replicated in the reach of the project. The separated concrete walkway with landscape strip will also continue the existing design aesthetics.

Residents of Bayside treasure the rural residential character of their community, and the views of forested mountains and Humboldt Bay wetlands. Views along Old Arcata Road include a blend of historic homes and



structures, modern housing, the City of Arcata's municipal pump station, overhead power lines on both sides of the roadway, chain link and wood rail fencing, hedges, and businesses primarily located across from Jacoby Creek Elementary School. Two large gardens are located along the project corridor—one near Jacoby Creek Elementary School and the other near the northern terminus of the project. A U.S. Post Office, private preschool, yoga studio, private housing, and a community center are located adjacent to the Jacoby Creek Road intersection.

Residents appreciate the “laid-back” appearance of Old Arcata Road, with informal walkways, a sometimes winding alignment with hedges, orchards, and trees close to the road's edge. The field of vision while driving shifts from foreground to mid- and background as the road curves, providing a variety of naturalistic views.

The proposed road cross-section maintains a rural road aesthetic while providing safety improvements to better manage the levels of pedestrian and bicycle traffic the road also experiences. Implementation of the project will not block or alter the existing views or the pleasant rural character of project corridor. The existing viewscape will not be impeded or altered by structures or other project elements. The planned retaining walls near the Jacoby Creek intersection will be approximately one foot above road grade. Depending on the final design grades, a fence (approximately four feet tall) may be attached to the top of the retaining wall. The fence will be transparent (most likely vinyl coated black chain link). A fence of similar style will also be installed on the opposite side of Old Arcata Road in front of the City pump station. The retaining wall and fencing will not impede views within or adjacent to the project corridor or otherwise diminish the visual character of the vicinity.

New concrete for the retaining wall and other concrete improvements throughout the project corridor including the roundabout apron, sidewalk, and walkways will include integral color to darken the concrete and provide a “weathered look” designed to blend into the existing community aesthetic and character and avoid a stark visual alteration.

The views of the project itself will be relatively limited as the project consists mostly of a narrow paved surfaces with few vertical features, such as resurfaced roadway, and re-striped lanes and crosswalks. Although some vegetation will be removed to accommodate the project, the remaining existing vegetation and proposed wetland plantings, landscaped buffers, and a vegetated roundabout center will soften visual changes.

The footprint of paved area will increase at the Jacoby Creek intersection to accommodate the roundabout, associated roadway realignment, sidewalks, and walkways. Paved areas throughout the balance of the project corridor will only increase as a result of the trail extension to connect the existing walkway near Jacoby Creek School south to the Jacoby Creek intersection. The width of the roadway will not be significantly altered or be relocated closer to existing structures. Availability of existing road adjacent parking will decrease as a result of the project, however the project will include some new parking areas near the City pump station to offset some of the reduction.

### *Temporary modifications*

Temporary visual impacts result from demolition, clearing and grubbing, vegetation removal, the staging of construction equipment and stockpiling of materials. The sight of construction equipment and traffic control



signage and cones are also temporary impacts. Staging and stockpiling areas will be located at approximately either end of the project corridor and will be visible to the public during construction. These areas will be sited in existing parking areas. Following construction, staging and stockpiling areas will be restored to their pre-construction appearance. These impacts, however, should not obstruct views of the mid- or background features, and are necessary for project implementation.

### *Permanent modifications*

The proposed roundabout at the Jacoby Creek Road intersection will also require realignment of the driveway entrance for Bayside Post Office parking area. These modifications to the access for the Bayside Post Office will result in a minor visual change.

One lane roundabouts exist currently at the intersections of Samoa Boulevard and Union Street and Old Arcata Road and Buttermilk Lane. These roundabouts mark a distinct contrast to the nearby urban street grid of Arcata, with smaller scale intersections and highly developed streets cross-sections. The proposed roundabout at Jacoby Creek Road and Old Arcata Road is a continuation of this design feature that will have the effect of spatially and visually unifying the community as a rural district. These roundabouts also facilitate wayfinding, marking significant intersections and thus acting as gateways to Arcata and Sunny Brae. With the proposed new roundabout, the social and cultural hub of the Bayside Community Center, Post Office, Old Jacoby Creek school building, and the Mistwood School, will also be signified as part of the same community.

Sidewalks integrated into the proposed roundabout along Old Arcata Road and the Jacoby Creek Road intersection will be bordered by landscaped with vegetated buffers with plantings to blend the hardscaped features into the surrounding setting. The center of the roundabout will be mounded to a height of approximately three to five feet above grade and landscaped with appropriate vegetation species. All new plantings will be designed to maximize connectivity with existing landscaping and mature trees. If desired by community members, sculptural pieces may also be installed in the roundabout center, in coordination with the City and other stakeholders. Based on these improvements, the roundabout would contribute to a positive visual change and ultimately a positive visual impact.

New concrete for sidewalks and walkways will be colorized to improve visual connectivity to maintain consistency with the existing rural setting of the community. Stamped and colored concrete will be applied to roadway dividing medians and the roundabout truck apron that will surround the inner landscaped visual focal point. The truck apron will be gently sloped upward toward the center of the roundabout. Dividing medians will be constructed between travel lanes at all three roundabout entrances/exits. New roadway line work will clearly divide travel lanes, indicate yielding in the roundabout, and distinguish roadside bicycle lanes.

Realignment of the Bayside Post Office driveway and parking area will provide improved ingress and egress via either Old Arcata Road or Jacoby Creek Road. Combined with new sidewalks and walkways buffered from the roadway, new crosswalks and signage will significantly increase visibility, safety and usability for pedestrian and bicycle users, improving the walkability of the community for community members. A new crosswalk will provide safe pedestrian access across Jacoby Creek road east of the roundabout, extending from the Bayside Community Center parking area north toward the new sidewalk in front of the U.S. Post



Office. A second new crosswalk will extend from the new sidewalk in front of the U.S. Post Office west across Old Arcata Road. Crosswalks are common visual features throughout the project corridor under existing conditions and directly contribute to safety and functionality for non-vehicular users. New and re-painted existing crosswalks will not result in a detrimental visual impact.

A small number of trees will be removed from the area in front of the Bayside Post Office to accommodate the roundabout and associated roadway realignment, sidewalks, and walkway improvements. Trees removed during construction will be replaced in other nearby locations. All tree plantings associated with the project will include appropriate tree species designed to blend into mature vegetation surrounding the intersection designed to blend into mature vegetation surrounding the project.

Proposed street lighting at the roundabout could change the night-time visual resources by providing additional street lights to the area. Lighting will be designed to protect wildlife and nighttime views, including views of the night sky. Specific design elements that will be applied to project lighting include: fixture types, cut off angles, shields, lamp arm extensions, and pole heights. Specific design preferences include directing light downward and away from other properties, avoiding brightly illuminated vertical surfaces where feasible, such as walls and lamp poles, and directing lighting away from sensitive habitat areas. The addition and/or replacement of roadside signage and lighting throughout the project corridor will be consistent with existing signage and lighting. New materials will use low-chroma and non-glare construction materials will minimize the effects of the improvements on along the project corridor.

Onsite wetland creation will occur between Old Arcata Road and Bayside Road near the northern terminus of the project through the incorporation of native plantings. This will result in aesthetic continuity along the roadside shoulder, maintaining a desirable pedestrian walkway and bicycle user experience.

Permanent modifications described above will not result in negative visual impacts and will generally result in positive visual improvements throughout the project corridor designed to blend into the existing visual character absent visual obstruction or substantial alteration to the project's visual setting. Exhibit 1 and Exhibit 2 below present the existing conditions and a simulation of the future conditions of Old Arcata Road planned along the project corridor. Under existing conditions, pavement and striping are deteriorated. There is currently no pedestrian walkway between Hyland Street and Jacoby Creek Road. Under future proposed conditions, the roadway will be resurfaced and crowned for drainage. The pavement will be restriped and bicycle lanes will be clearly designated. A vegetated stormwater infiltration area will separate an extended pedestrian walkway from Old Arcata Road vehicular travel lanes.

Exhibit 3 and Exhibit 4 shows the existing condition and a rendering of the proposed future roundabout at Jacoby Creek Road. The rendering shows sidewalks or pedestrian walkways along all three edges of the roundabout, crosswalks for improved pedestrian interface and safety, street lights, a center vegetated infiltration feature, and directional and safety signage. The rendering also shows the proposed realignment of the Bayside Post Office driveway and parking area.

Photographs from various locations along the proposed project alignment, beginning at the southern end of the project corridor in Bayside, California and extending north toward Sunny Brae, California are presented below in Exhibit 5 – Exhibit 17. Exhibit 5– Exhibit 17 indicate visual components of the project in annotations on each photograph.



### *Summary of regulatory context*

Old Arcata Road and Jacoby Creek Road do not include any special roadway designations. A portion of the project is located in the Coastal Zone under the appeal jurisdiction of both the City and Humboldt County. Additional information related to the regulatory context of aesthetic resources pursuant to State and local policies can be found in Section 3.1 of the project's CEQA document.

### *Visual Impacts to Cultural and Historic Resources*

Initial evaluations of historic properties concluded the project will not cause an adverse effect to built environment historic properties located within the vicinity; significant visual impacts to historic properties is not anticipated. A Historic Resources Report completed by JRP Historical Consulting LLC (2020) concluded the project will not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of any known or potential built environment historic resource. The report further concluded that while built historic properties exist along the project corridor, the individual properties do not appear to constitute a historic district along the route. The report also found the project will not diminish the historic integrity of any historical resources present (JRP 2020).

Potential impacts to historic and cultural resources investigations were also assessed in a Historic Property Survey Report and an Archaeological Survey Report (William Rich & Associates 2020a, William Rich & Associates 2020b), which included consideration of two extended Phase 1 studies (subsurface investigations) at cultural resources sites. Cultural resources known or with potential to exist on or near the project corridor exist below grade and would not be visually impacted by the project. The Historic Property Survey Report and Archaeology Survey Report found the undertaking as a whole would have an Adverse Effect under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (William Rich & Associates 2020a, William Rich & Associates 2020b). Cultural resource investigations further concluded that, with the implementation of mitigation measures, the effect under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) would be reduced to less than significant. No visual impacts to archaeological resources would occur, given those resources are buried and not otherwise visible.





**Exhibit 1: General Existing Conditions of the Old Arcata Road Streetscape Showing Deteriorated Paving, Striping, and Bicycle Lanes.**



**Exhibit 2: Comparative Rendering of Future Conditions of the Old Arcata Road Streetscape Showing Resurfaced Roadway, New Striping and Designated Bicycle Lanes, Stormwater Buffer, and Extended Pedestrian Walkway.**





**Exhibit 3: Existing Conditions at the intersection of Old Arcata Road and Jacoby Creek Road.**

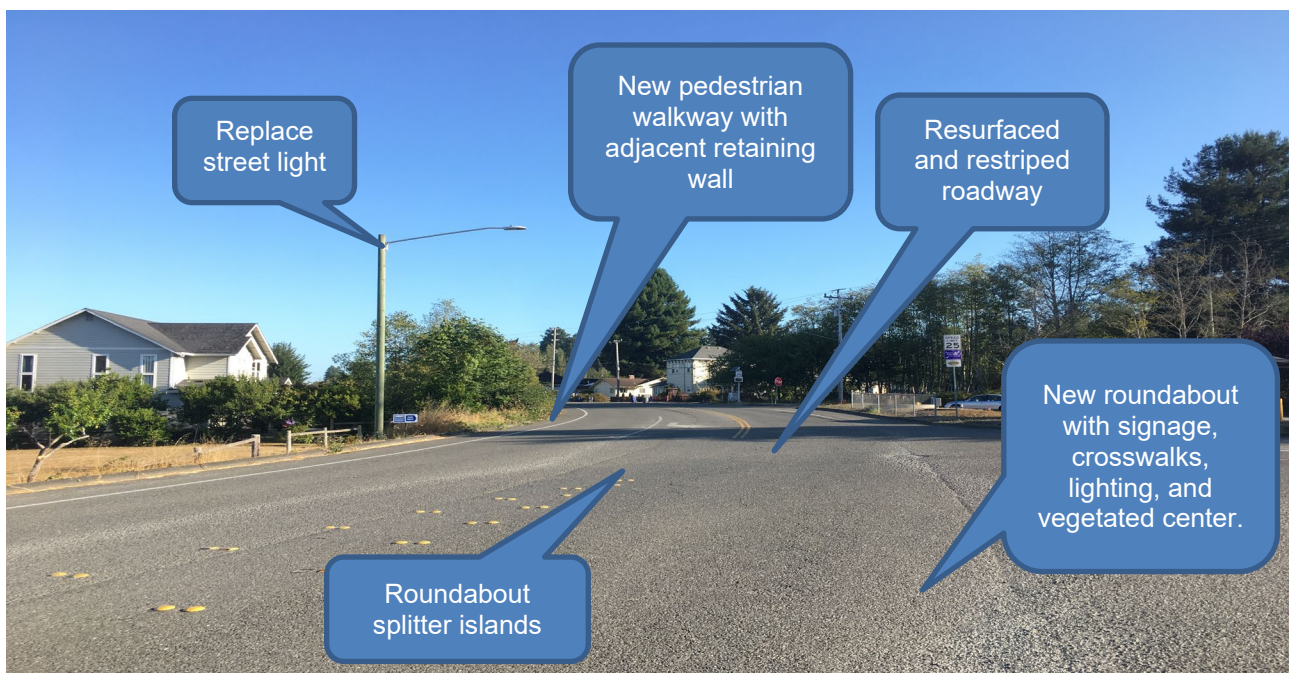


**Exhibit 4: Rendering of Future Proposed Roundabout at the intersection of Old Arcata Road and Jacoby Creek Road.**



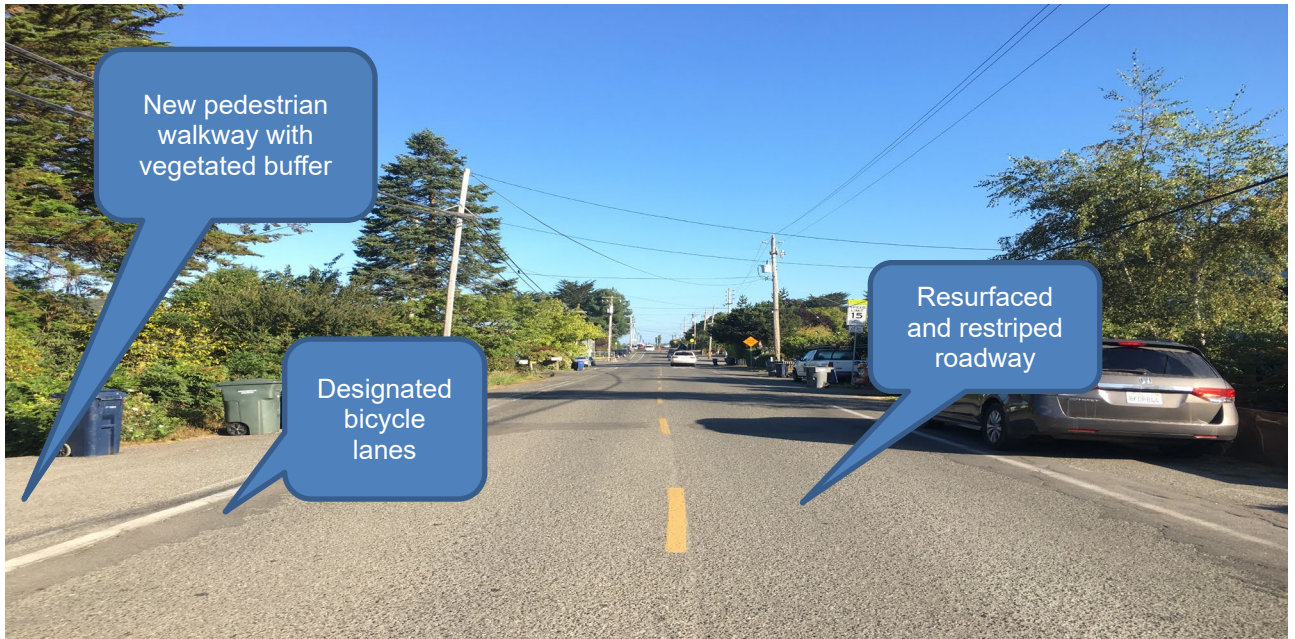


**Exhibit 5: Existing Conditions and Proposed Visual Modifications at the Southern Terminus of the Project, looking South from the Jacoby Creek Road Intersection.**



**Exhibit 6: Existing Conditions and Proposed Visual Modifications at the Old Arcata Road - Jacoby Creek Road Intersection Looking North.**





**Exhibit 7: Existing Conditions and Proposed Visual Modifications at the Golf Course Road Intersection Looking North.**



**Exhibit 8: Existing Conditions and Proposed Visual Modifications South of Jacoby Creek Elementary School Looking North.**



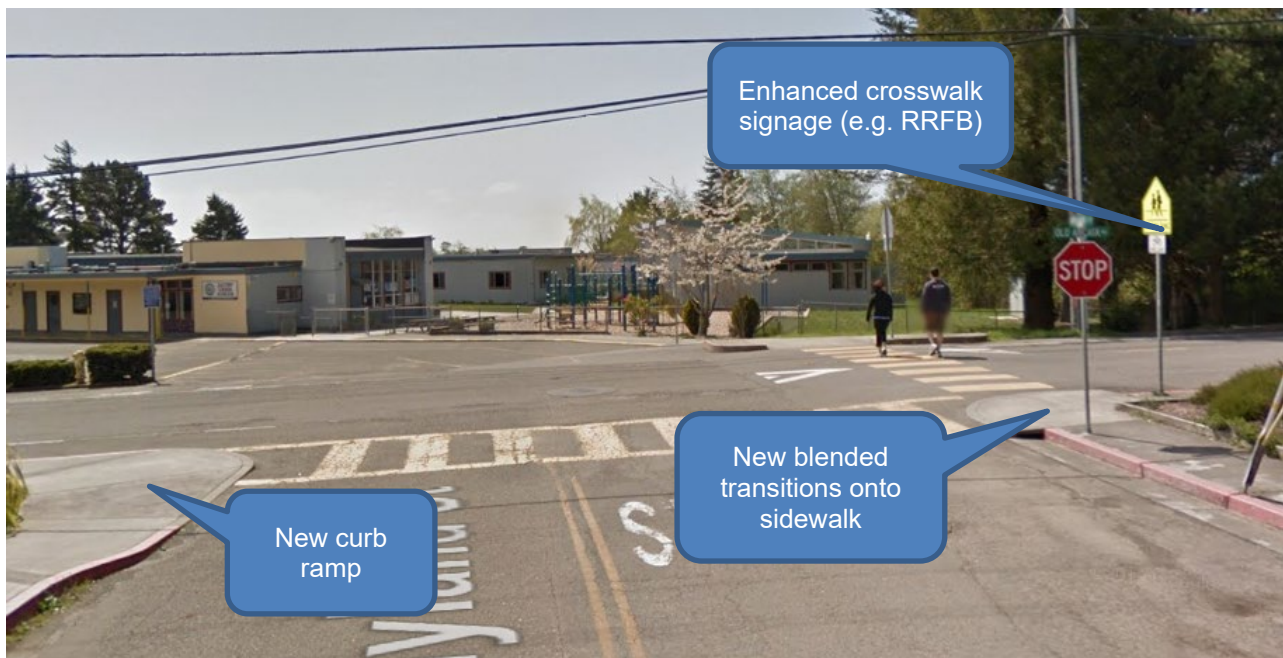


**Exhibit 9: Existing Conditions and Proposed Visual Modifications North of Jacoby Creek Elementary School at the Hyland Street Intersection Looking South.**

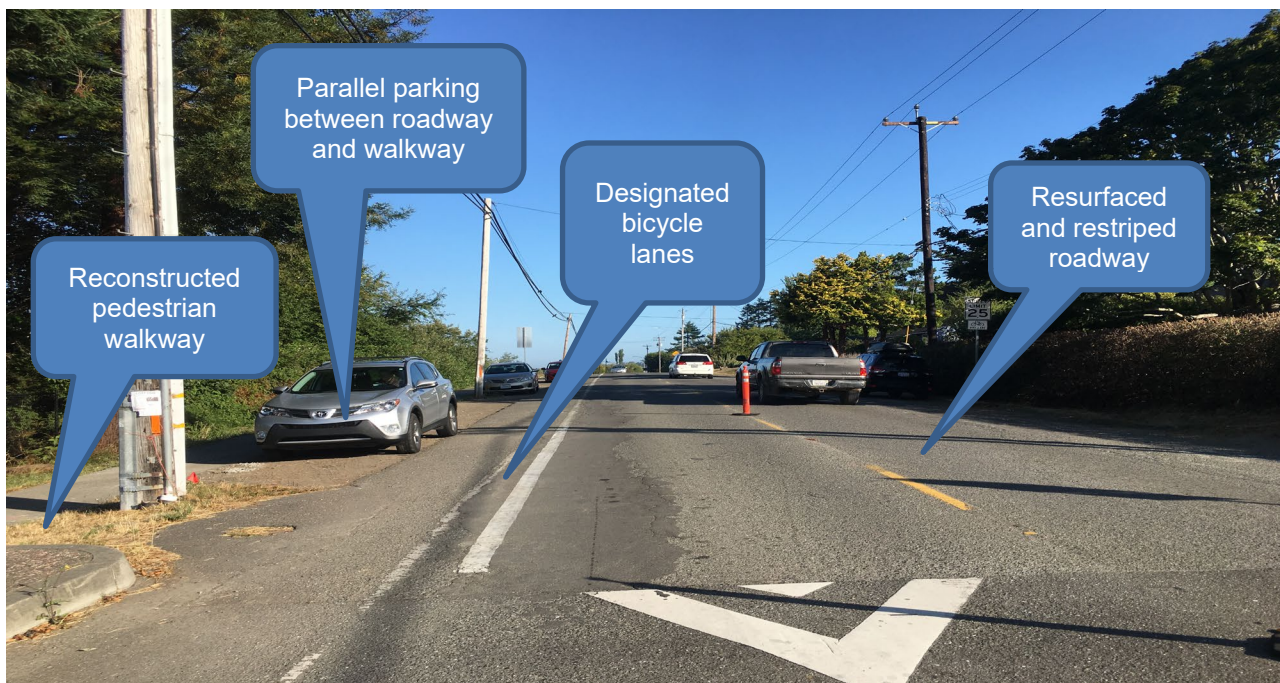


**Exhibit 10: Existing Conditions and Proposed Visual Modifications Looking East on Hyland Street from Old Arcata Road.**



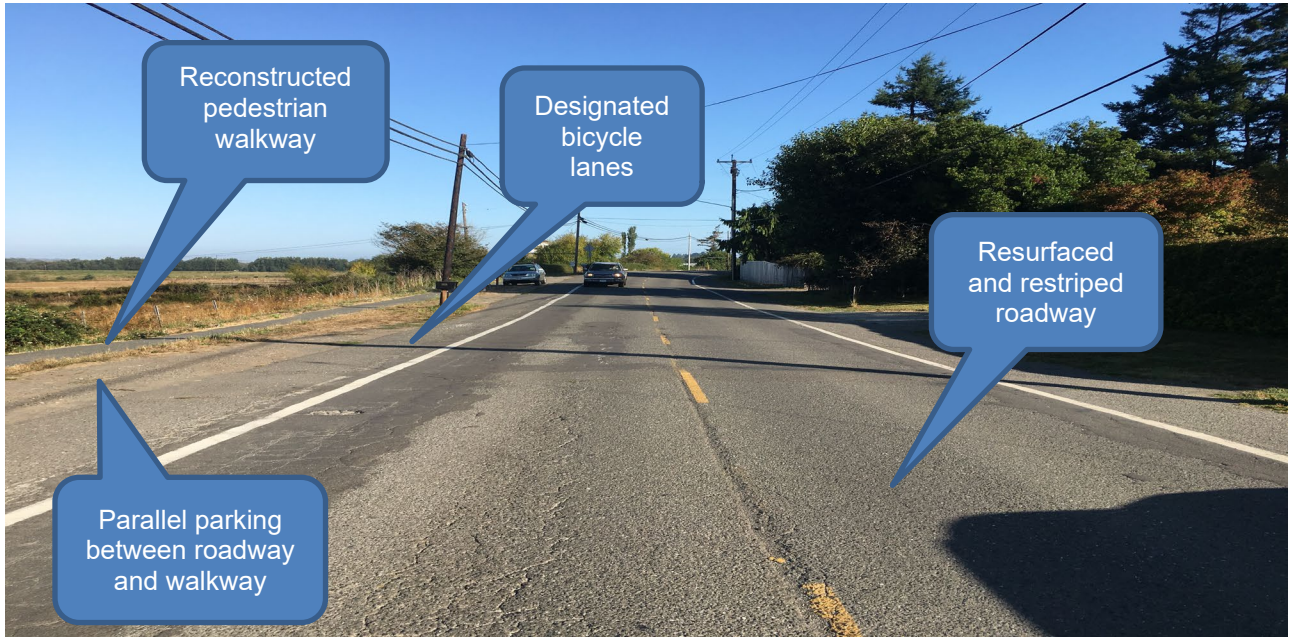


**Exhibit 11: Existing Conditions and Proposed Visual Modifications at the Hyland/Old Arcata Road Intersection.**



**Exhibit 12: Existing Conditions and Proposed Visual Modifications at the Hyland Street Intersection Looking North on Old Arcata Road.**



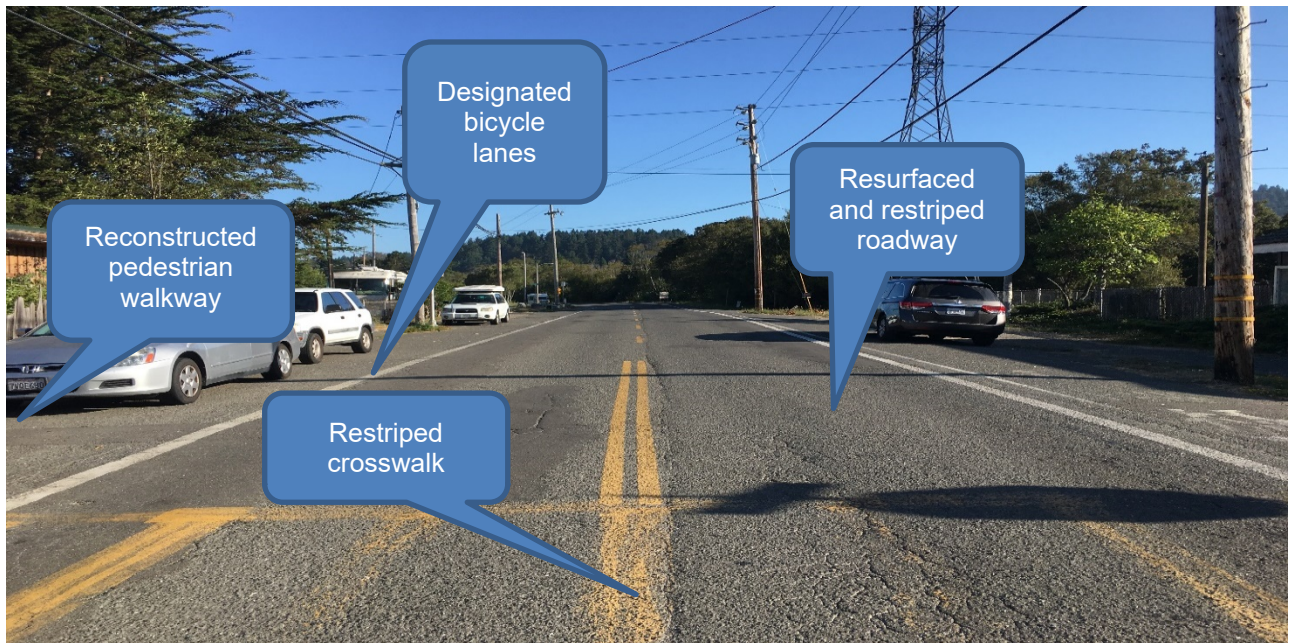


**Exhibit 13: Existing Conditions and Proposed Visual Modifications at Old Arcata Road near Station 24+00 Looking North.**

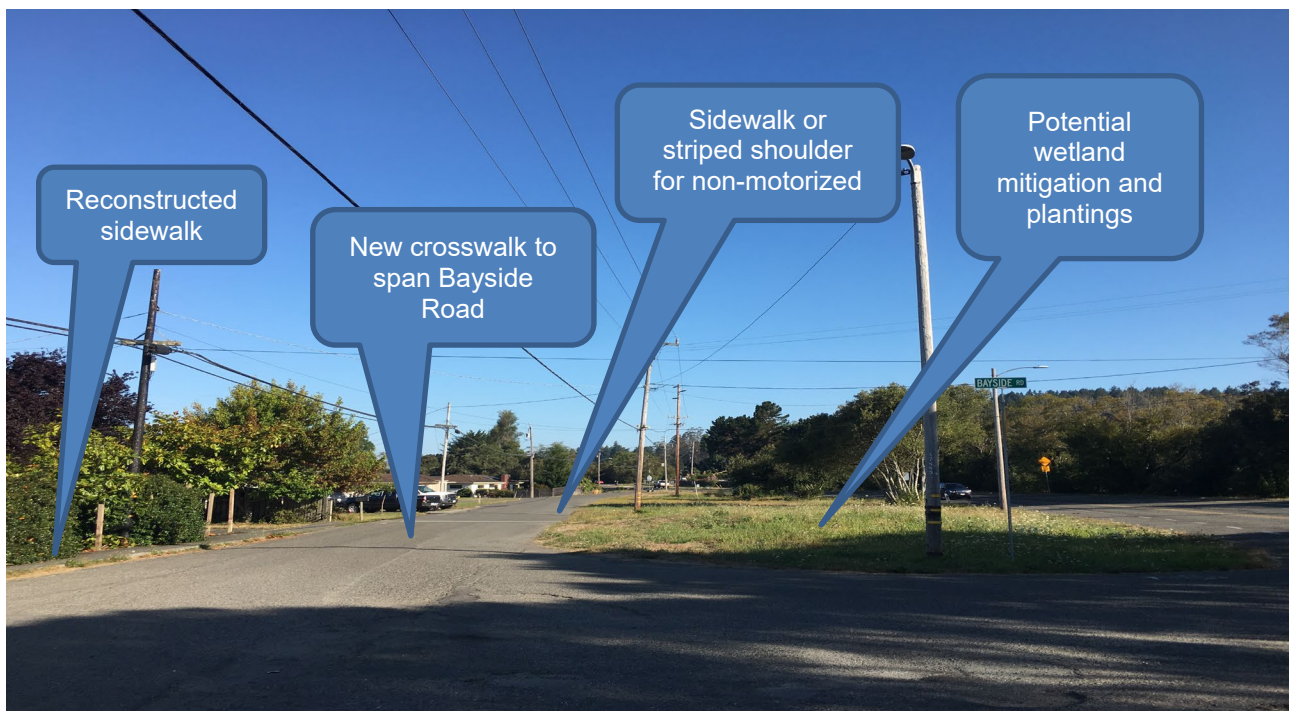


**Exhibit 14: Existing Conditions and Proposed Visual Modifications at the Anvick Road Intersection Looking North.**





**Exhibit 15: Existing Conditions and Proposed Visual Modifications at the Anderson Lane Intersection Looking North.**



**Exhibit 16: Existing Conditions and Proposed Visual Modifications at the Bayside Road Intersection Looking North toward Old Arcata Road.**



**Exhibit 17: Existing Conditions and Proposed Visual Modifications at the Bayside Road Intersection Looking North Toward the Terminus of the Project.**

## 5. Conclusion

The proposed project has been developed in consideration of public input from a community design charrette process that occurred in between 2016 and 2017 (SHN 2017). The goals of the process was to develop a community-driven plan for improving multi-modal access and safety along the Old Arcata Road corridor. The resulting project is intended to address the needs of the community for roadway, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities improvements along Old Arcata Road, Hyland Street, and the Jacoby Creek Road intersection.

Project design elements such as stamped concrete, colored concrete, landscape vegetation, and buffered bicycle lanes and pathways have been incorporated into the project to ensure that project features will blend with the surrounding environment and therefore will have no significant visual impact and will visually improve the project corridor overall. The existing rural residential character will not be altered by the proposed project, and the existing viewscape of historic and modern homes, Jacoby Creek Elementary School, roadside gardens, small businesses, and distant views of bottom lands and coastal mountain forest hillsides will remain unimpeded. Allowable traffic speeds and traffic volumes will not increase as a result of the project. Tall or larger structures that could impede the viewshed of the project corridor or otherwise result in a significant visual change are not included in the project. Significant vegetation and tree removal will not occur. Residences, businesses, and structures adjacent to the project corridor will not be altered.

The project will not block or alter the existing views of the rural character of project corridor. The existing viewscape will not be impeded or altered by structures or other project elements. The views of the project itself will be relatively limited as the project consists mostly of a narrow paved surfaces with few vertical





features, such as resurfaced roadway, and re-stripped lanes and crosswalks. Although some vegetation will be removed to accommodate the project, the remaining existing vegetation and proposed wetland plantings, stormwater buffer strips, and a vegetated roundabout center will soften visual changes. Throughout the project corridor, new concrete for sidewalk and walkways will include integral color to darken the concrete and provide a “weathered look” designed to blend into the existing community aesthetic and character and avoid a stark visual alteration. Neighbors and users of the road will not be negatively impacted by the views of the proposed project.

Walkable communities are highly desirable and visually integral to the surrounding viewscape. By significantly improving pedestrian walkways and sidewalks and upgrading bicycle lanes, walkability throughout and across the project corridor will be vastly improved. Safety will also be substantially improved for non-motorized users. These upgrades will result in an improvement in community character and desirability by improving community connectivity, overall safety, and public health (by creating opportunities for increased physical activities). It is anticipated that improvements in walkability and bikeability could reduce motorized transit within the corridor, which will reduce traffic congestion, vehicle miles traveled, roadside parking congestion, traffic noise, fuel consumption, and greenhouse gas emissions. Walkability and bikeability improvements will thus result in a positive visual change throughout the project corridor.

Project improvements adjacent to Jacoby Creek School, including new and upgrade crosswalks, an extended pedestrian walkway, speed humps, signage, and a new turn lane will improve the connectivity between the school campus and greater Bayside community, as many residents walk or bicycle with their children to and from school via the surrounding neighborhood. Project improvements will help ease congestion associated with peak drop-off and pick-up hours, improving safety for children and families and reducing traffic-related user impacts. Improvements to reduce congestion and increase safety will thus result in a positive visual change throughout the project corridor.

An increased emphasis on alternative non-motorized transportation will also benefit the character of the affected community, and reductions in motorized transit will also improve the visual character of the project corridor by reducing the number of vehicles traveling on the roadway and parked alongside the roadway. The road adjacent vegetated stormwater buffer strip between Old Arcata Road and the pedestrian walkway will increase safety for non-motorized users and generally improve the aesthetic of the project corridor by integrating highly-desirable greenscaping into an otherwise traditional, pavement-only roadway.

## **6. References**

American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). 2018. *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition.

California Building Standards Commission. 2016. 2016 California Building Code, Title 24, Part 2, Volume 1 of 2.

Caltrans. 2018. *Highway Design Manual*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition.

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William Rich & Associates. 2020b. Historic Property Survey Report for Old Arcata Road Improvements Project, Bayside, Humboldt County, California, Federal Project # RPSTPL – 5021 (023). Prepared for the City of Arcata.