



---

**EL DORADO COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM**

---

Date: February 17, 2021

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Rafael Martinez, Director of Transportation

**Subject: Mosquito Bridge “High-Cost Bridge Program” – Legistar 20-0914**

On February 9, 2021, a recommendation from the Department of Transportation to authorize the Director or designee to approve and sign the High-Cost Project Agreement with the California Department of Transportation for the Mosquito Road South Fork American River Project was continued to the February 23, 2021, Board meeting. The reason for the continuance was to provide time to answer and provide clarification regarding the funding for the project. Below are the specific questions that have been raised and the answers to those questions.

- 1) *There is an advocacy group of local agencies working to increase funding to California to keep up with the increasing cost of construction and our deteriorating bridges. The advocacy group states there is a long waiting list to get into this constrained funding program especially for some major urban area bridges.*

**Question:** Does that mean Mosquito Bridge funding is at risk of losing funding to those competing projects?

**Answer:** *The State High-Cost Bridge Project budget is split into separate and protected budgets, On-system and Off-system bridge classifications. On-system bridges consist of arterial and collector road classification types and are mostly found in urban areas. The On-system budget has larger High-Cost Projects and more of them requesting funding; approximately twelve bridges are in the On-system program waiting for construction funding. The Off-system classification consists of smaller local roads, common to rural areas. Mosquito is the only Off-system bridge project currently requesting construction funding authorization with \$75 million in the program waiting for appropriation. Once it is authorized for the High-Cost Program funding it will be a top priority in the Off-system budget and there is no known competing project in that program at this time.*

- 2) On page 2, the report talks about the Federal Transportation Act, stating, *“It is unknown what the State’s authority to commit and/or obligate future HBP funds will be until there is a new act. If there are delays in a new funding act, the County would have the option to delay the Project and be reimbursed for all eligible costs caused by such delay. When a new federal transportation act is*

*programmed, the active projects with funding commitments like this Project are placed on the top of the funding priority list”.*

However, the Local Agency AC Commitment Block 5925 that we are required to sign, states this, *“The Agency understands that work performed prior to federal authorization is ineligible for federal reimbursement and that advertising the construction contract prior to federal authorization will deem the construction and construction phases of work ineligible for federal funds”.*

**Question:** These two things seem in conflict. Can you clarify what would happen if we proceed without a Federal Transportation Act?

**Answer:** *HBP would not authorize funding if the Federal Transportation Act were to stop. The project will not advertise and award without HBP funding authorization. Funding authorization comes once at the beginning of the construction phase. If the Federal Transportation Act was not extended or renewed, no new projections could be authorized until it is reenacted. Any existing projects already authorized would examine the State’s reserves for all transportation funding for each program and decide if they need to stop or temporarily stall the projects.*

- 3) **Question:** Is the HBP Grant for \$8.813M to fund the design and Right of Way dependent on a Transportation Act?

**Answer:** *The HBP funding for design and ROW were authorized and reimbursed under the existing extended FTA.*

- 4) Page 2 of 7 of the State’s DOT letter states, *“.....if federal funds for the initial authorization of the Construction phase...are not obligated in the year programmed, the Agency must use our own funds to make sure the project is fully funded “or the project must be removed from the 4-year element of the FTIP until the next cycle”.*

**Question:** Does this mean we would lose our place in line in the State’s HBP program? If the State is already overextended, would we go further down the list? This could place a tremendous burden on our local transportation dollars!

**Answer:** *If the project does not show any activity for a year it would be considered inactive. If it is inactive and taken off the FTIP the project could lose its place in line. The HBP projects are on the list in ranking order for funding by Caltrans HQ. The projects are prioritized based on the condition of the bridge and safety concerns.*

- 5) **Question:** What happens to the Mosquito Road Bridge if we don’t do this project? Is it likely to fail? What is the timeframe for failure?

**Answer:** *The average life span of a vehicle bridge is 70 years for steel and concrete and 50 years for timber. This timber bridge suspended by steel cables is 82 years old. The State bridge inspection report gave this bridge a score of 0 out of 100. Bridges with a score less than 50 are typically recommended to be*

*replaced. Approximately 35 years ago the bridge was considered unsafe and shut down until it had a complete replacement of all timbers and some steel components. In 1997 and 2010 the bridge was almost taken out by rock slides that are common in this canyon during storm events. The bridge is posted for a restricted size and weight of vehicles. The sign occasionally gets ignored and the bridge gets damaged. I can't say when the bridge will fail; I do believe it is a vulnerable structure.*

- 6) **Question:** How much time do we have until we have to execute this agreement? When is a Transportation Act likely to come?

***Answer:** We received the agreement from Caltrans in November. I would think they have an expectation of it getting executed within a few months. Every April and September Caltrans reviews what projects are expected to move forward and use budgeted funds. Projects that are not ready or do not move forward are at risk of losing budgeted funds to another project that is ready. The FAST Act was extended for one year and expires on September 30, 2021. I anticipate the Feds will decide to extend or pass a new Transportation Act by September.*

- 7) **Question:** How will EDC's road network be impacted if we enter into this Agreement and reimbursement is delayed or cancelled? What other projects in EDC will be impacted? I'd like to see potential scenarios if reimbursement is delayed 2 years...4 years...or more. What is the worst-case scenario?

***Answer:** The staff report proposes to use Tribe, Road Fund, and General Fund for cash-flow while waiting on reimbursements. Tribe funds are budgeted at \$1.3M/yr for DOT Road Maintenance and approximately \$8M for the next three years on several CIP projects listed below. In addition to those budgeted Tribe funds, there is an estimated \$10M in fund balance when Mosquito goes to construction. If HBP funding gets delayed by 2 to 4 years, the County could consider slowing or suspending the construction or getting a transportation project loan like TIFIA.*