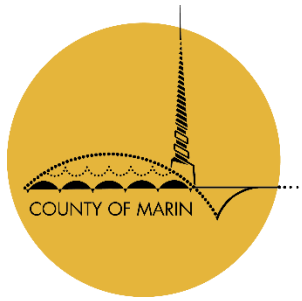




## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

**AGENDA DATE:** October 20, 2026

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Rachel Calvert, P.E., Senior Civil Engineer, Public Works

**REVIEWED BY:** Christopher Blunk, P.E., Director of Public Works

**SUBJECT:** Request from Department of Public Works to Adopt the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) and Approve the Muir Woods Road Project as described and evaluated in the IS/MND

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1) Adopt the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for the Muir Woods Road Project after considering the entire administrative record and all comments received during the public review period; and 2) Approve the Muir Woods Road Project as described and evaluated in the IS/MND.

**SUMMARY:** In 2015, improvements to Muir Woods Road were programmed through the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP), with local matching funds provided by the County of Marin. FLAP supplements state and local resources to improve transportation facilities that provide access to federal lands, with an emphasis on high-use federal recreation sites. The Muir Woods Road Project was programmed through FLAP to improve access to Muir Woods National Monument while addressing the condition, safety, drainage, and stability of the County-maintained roadway.

The project is being delivered by the Federal Highway Administration – Central Federal Lands Highway Division (FHWA-CFLHD), in cooperation with the County, National Park Service, and California Department of Parks and Recreation. The County owns and maintains Muir Woods Road and is serving as the lead agency for environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), while FHWA-CFLHD is the federal lead agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The Muir Woods Road Project proposes improvements to approximately 2.4 miles of Muir Woods Road, from the Muir Woods National Monument entrance to State Route 1. The

project will rehabilitate the existing roadway, replace and realign the existing bridge over Redwood Creek, repair or replace approximately 36 culverts, and repair and stabilize up to 10 areas of roadway slope failure. These improvements will address deteriorated pavement and failing drainage infrastructure, improve roadway safety and reliability, and reduce erosion and sediment entering Redwood Creek from the roadway and failing embankments.

The County has completed its CEQA review of the project through preparation of an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND). The Draft IS/MND was circulated for public review, and the County received and considered comments and prepared responses.

Staff recommends that the Board adopt the IS/MND and approve the Muir Woods Road Project as described and evaluated in the IS/MND.

**DISCUSSION / BACKGROUND:** Muir Woods Road, also known as Frank Valley Road, is a County-owned and maintained rural roadway that provides access between State Route 1 and Muir Woods National Monument, as well as Mount Tamalpais State Park and other recreational lands. The existing roadway varies from approximately 18 to 24 feet in width and has deteriorated pavement, damaged drainage facilities, and vulnerable roadway embankments. The project will also replace the existing 1946 bridge, where the narrow structure constricts the roadway and Redwood Creek. The new bridge will meet current standards, improve hydraulic function, remove hardened abutments from the creek banks, and restore a more natural stream crossing. All 36 existing culverts within the project corridor have been identified as performing inadequately. Scour from Redwood Creek has contributed to roadway embankment failures at several locations, and slope instability has required lane closures along portions of the corridor.

In 2015, improvements to Muir Woods Road were programmed through the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP). FHWA-CFLHD has since advanced the project in coordination with the County, National Park Service, California Department of Parks and Recreation, and federal and state resource agencies. Project development has included engineering, environmental studies, biological consultation, and coordination regarding roadway drainage, slope and streambank stabilization, the Redwood Creek bridge, and sensitive biological resources within the corridor.

The project represents an approximate \$18 million capital investment in Muir Woods Road. Approximately \$12 million is programmed for roadway rehabilitation through FLAP, with an 11.47 percent local match provided by the County, and approximately \$6 million is programmed for replacement of the Redwood Creek bridge through the Highway Bridge Program. FHWA-CFLHD is delivering federally funded improvements, while the County will retain ownership and long-term maintenance responsibility for the roadway and bridge.

The proposed project would rehabilitate approximately 2.4 miles of roadway and generally provide a consistent 22-foot paved roadway consisting of two 10-foot-wide travel lanes and 1-foot-wide shoulders. The roadway width is designed to improve safety and roadway

function while minimizing impacts within the constrained and environmentally sensitive Redwood Creek corridor. The project also includes repair or replacement of approximately 36 culverts, stabilization of up to 10 areas of roadway slope failure, replacement and realignment of the existing Redwood Creek bridge, drainage and erosion-control improvements, guardrail and barrier improvements, pedestrian and trail connections, and signing and striping.

An important benefit of the project is that many of the roadway repairs directly address existing sources of erosion and sediment entering Redwood Creek. Repairing and stabilizing roadway embankments, improving roadside drainage, replacing deficient culverts, and reconstructing degraded streambanks using biotechnical stabilization methods are expected to significantly reduce ongoing erosion and sediment delivery into Redwood Creek. The project therefore addresses existing transportation deficiencies while providing substantial benefits to water quality in the creek corridor. Redwood Creek is an environmentally sensitive watershed that supports a range of aquatic and riparian resources and is particularly important as habitat for salmonids. The creek provides important freshwater habitat and migration and rearing conditions for salmon, making protection of water quality, stream flows, riparian habitat, and other ecological functions critical to maintaining these fisheries resources.

FHWA-CFLHD is responsible for project delivery, including design, federal environmental review, and construction administration, and serves as the lead federal agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The County is the facility owner and project partner and serves as the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The project includes substantial environmental commitments to protect the sensitive Redwood Creek corridor, including seasonal restrictions on in-water work, measures to protect sensitive species and habitat, restoration of temporarily disturbed areas, and compensatory mitigation for identified permanent habitat impacts.

Adoption of the IS/MND and approval of the project as described and evaluated in the IS/MND will complete the County's current CEQA review.

Construction funding for the roadway and bridge improvements is programmed for federal fiscal year 2027. FHWA-CFLHD is working toward completion of 100 percent plans, specifications, and estimate (PS&E) and obligation of construction funding by the end of August 2027, with regulatory permit applications anticipated to be submitted in November 2026. Completion of the County's CEQA action at this time will allow FHWA-CFLHD to proceed with final design and permitting and provides a strong opportunity to meet the current federal funding schedule. Maintaining this schedule is important to preserving the project's current funding position, avoiding the potential need to reprogram the project and await a later federal funding opportunity, and allowing the identified erosion, roadway stability, and safety improvements to be addressed sooner.

**POLICY FRAMEWORK:** The Muir Woods Road Project supports County goals for maintaining safe, reliable, and resilient transportation infrastructure while protecting sensitive natural resources. The project addresses deteriorated pavement, failing

drainage infrastructure, and unstable roadway embankments; improves access to Muir Woods National Monument and surrounding public lands; and reduces road-related erosion and sediment delivery to Redwood Creek.

The project is consistent with the objectives of the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP), which provides federal investment in transportation facilities that improve access to federal lands. The project leverages this federal investment to rehabilitate County-owned infrastructure that will remain under County ownership and maintenance following construction.

Adoption of the IS/MND and approval of the project as described and evaluated in the IS/MND fulfills the County's current environmental review responsibilities and allows the project to continue advancing consistent with the environmental commitments identified in the IS/MND.

**EQUITY IMPACT SUMMARY:** The project will improve the safety and reliability of a County-maintained roadway that provides access to West Marin communities, Muir Woods National Monument, Mount Tamalpais State Park, and surrounding public lands. The project does not change land uses or access eligibility and will maintain public roadway access following construction.

**COMMUNICATIONS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** The Draft IS/MND was circulated for public review in accordance with CEQA. The County received comments from three public agencies and three private organizations and prepared written responses, which are included in the Draft IS/MND. Comments addressed biological and aquatic resources, permitting and mitigation, roadway and drainage design, and the conceptual Muir Beach water-system intertie.

Project development has also included ongoing coordination among the County, FHWA-CFLHD, National Park Service, California Department of Parks and Recreation, and federal and state resource agencies.

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES:** Current project milestones include submission of regulatory permit applications in November 2026 and completion of 100 percent PS&E and obligation of construction funding by the end of August 2027.

**CONTRACT RENEWALS / PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES:** This section is not applicable to this staff report.

**CONTRACT RISKS:** This section is not applicable to this staff report.

**CEQA ANALYSIS:** Marin County is the lead agency for the Project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code section 21000 et seq.). In accordance with CEQA, including Public Resources Code sections 21064.5 and 21080(c), and State CEQA Guidelines sections 15063 and 15070, the County prepared an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) to evaluate the potential environmental effects of the Muir Woods Road Project. The Initial Study determined that the Project could result in potentially significant environmental effects; however, revisions

to the Project and implementation of identified avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures would reduce those effects to less-than-significant levels.

Consistent with CEQA's public review requirements, the Draft IS/MND was circulated for public review and comment pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines sections 15072 and 15073. The County reviewed and considered the comments received during the public review period and prepared responses, as appropriate. The comments included issues related to biological and aquatic resources, permitting and mitigation, roadway and drainage design, and the conceptual Muir Beach water-system intertie. The responses clarify the environmental analysis and project requirements and do not identify a new significant environmental impact requiring preparation of an Environmental Impact Report. With respect to the conceptual Muir Beach water-system intertie, the responses explain that it is a separate undeveloped proposal, is not a component of the Muir Woods Road Project, and is currently too speculative to be considered a reasonably foreseeable project for purposes of CEQA. Prior to adopting the IS/MND, the County must consider the proposed IS/MND together with any comments received during the public review process and determine, based on the whole record, that there is no substantial evidence that the Project, as revised and mitigated, may have a significant effect on the environment, and that the IS/MND reflects the County's independent judgment and analysis, consistent with State CEQA Guidelines section 15074.

Based on the Initial Study, the proposed IS/MND, comments received and responses, and the entire administrative record, staff recommends that the County adopt the IS/MND and approve the Project as described and evaluated in the IS/MND.

**FISCAL, FACILITY & STAFFING ANALYSIS:** There will be no increase to the General Fund net county costs as a result of this action. The Muir Woods Road Project represents an approximate \$18 million capital investment. Approximately \$12 million is programmed for roadway rehabilitation through the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP), with an 11.47 percent local match provided by the County, and approximately \$6 million is programmed for the Redwood Creek bridge replacement through the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Highway Bridge Program.

The recommended action does not require a budget adjustment or staffing action. FHWA-CFLHD is delivering the federally funded improvements. The County owns Muir Woods Road and will retain ownership and long-term maintenance responsibility for the roadway and replacement bridge following construction.

**ALTERNATIVES:** The Board could elect not to adopt the IS/MND or approve the project as described and evaluated in the IS/MND at this time. This would delay completion of the County's CEQA process and FHWA-CFLHD's ability to proceed with final design and permitting on the current schedule. A delay would affect the project's ability to meet the current federal fiscal year 2027 funding schedule and require the project to seek a later federal funding allocation. A future funding allocation sufficient to address continued cost escalation is not guaranteed.

Delaying the project could also prolong the existing roadway deficiencies. Deteriorated pavement and drainage facilities would remain, unstable roadway embankments would continue to require maintenance and monitoring, and ongoing erosion and sediment delivery from the roadway corridor into Redwood Creek would continue until the improvements can be constructed.

**ESTIMATED TIME (in minutes):** N/A

**ATTACHMENTS:**

**Attachment 1 -** [Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration \(IS/MND\)](#)