



**City Manager's Report**  
**January 26, 2021 City Council Meeting**  
**Prepared by: Rebecca Neves, City Engineer**

**Item #: 15.1**

**Subject:** Receive and file Status update for the Clay Street Bridge Replacement Project, CIP #406171.

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**Purpose:** As requested by City Council, to receive and file a status update on the Clay Street Bridge Replacement Project.

**Background:** The Clay Street Bridge Replacement and Realignment project has been considered by the City for over 50 years and first emerged into planning documents dating back to 1974 in the Master Street Plan and Improvement Program (adopted by City Council in January of 1975), identified in that document as “Project No. 9 – Clay Street”, where Clay Street is identified as a collector and with an acknowledged need to provide better north to south connecting roads to the north residential area through realigning Clay Street, closing the existing connection at Main Street, reorganizing the parking facility, widening Clay Street to 40 feet and construct a new bridge over the creek and widen Clay Street to collector street standards and extend to Pleasant Street. Long range plans identified in that document also cite extending Pleasant Street to Morrene Drive. Since that time, City documents consistently recommend and advocate this much needed project to improve connectivity, emergency access, and safety to all bridge users. In September of 2006, the City received approval for the project to be included into the Highway Bridge Program (HBP) for replacement based on the Bridge Inspection Report (BIR), which notes the structural integrity and functionality of the bridge.

**Discussion:** The HBP's role on this project is serving as the federal funding source that currently funds the environmental, design, right of way, and construction phases of the project. This is funding that is **project specific** justified through the merit and need and cannot be used on any other project. As a requirement of the federal funding source, the project is required to enter into and complete the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process in addition to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process. Caltrans serves as the NEPA delegated oversight of the HBP funds, while the City retains CEQA oversight as the lead agency/owner of the project. Both processes of environmental clearance require assessment of impacts related to traffic, cultural resources, parking, biological impacts, toxic and urban decay impacts, aesthetic impacts, growth inducing impacts, and verifying a lack of inconsistency with area plans and policies.

Bridge Service Life and Condition

The exact age of the Clay Street Bridge, though not firmly known, is generously estimated between 93 to 95 years old. Bridges are designed for a useful service life of 50 years. For a bridge to attain 75 years of age is cautiously commendable, but a structure approaching 100 years old is a bridge failure waiting to happen, making this bridge a definite public safety concern. Something needs to be done soon. The biannual Bridge Inspection Reports note the bridge as functionally obsolete due to its substandard width and impeded functional use. However, the BIRs have now steadily reported a decline in the scoring (sufficiency rating) which focuses on the structural integrity over functional use of the bridge and foundation. The most recent report

provided a rating of 52 out of potential 100 points. The report cites concerns regarding scour (undermining of the substandard bridge foundation), and photos illustrating spalling/localized failure of the soffit and connecting culvert (photo 1) and deteriorating abnormal connection to the Cedar Ravine Culvert (photo 2). Most notable in the most recent report is the beginning stages of deck settlement/failure as demonstrated by the crack and deflection present adjacent to Abutment 1 (Photo 3) which has increased considerably from 2018 to 2020, indicating active local failure of the deck.

PHOTO 1 -Super-Damage/Deterioration



The City has not taken any options off the table to address the impending failure of the structure. In addition to replacement, the City is also exploring rehabilitating the bridge, including widening the bridge to accommodate the adjoining collector

of Clay Street and the connection to the minor arterial at Main Street. Rehabilitation options are being explored in several forms, including keeping the bridge as a functioning traffic bridge through widening, allowing the bridge to remain a one way/southbound bridge while building a parallel structure to serve



PHOTO 2

Span 1 connects to drainage pipe

the northbound traffic, as well as keeping the bridge and changing its use to a pedestrian only bridge connection to the El Dorado Trail. In all of these options, public safety is the chief guiding value and principle to addressing the Clay Street Bridge.

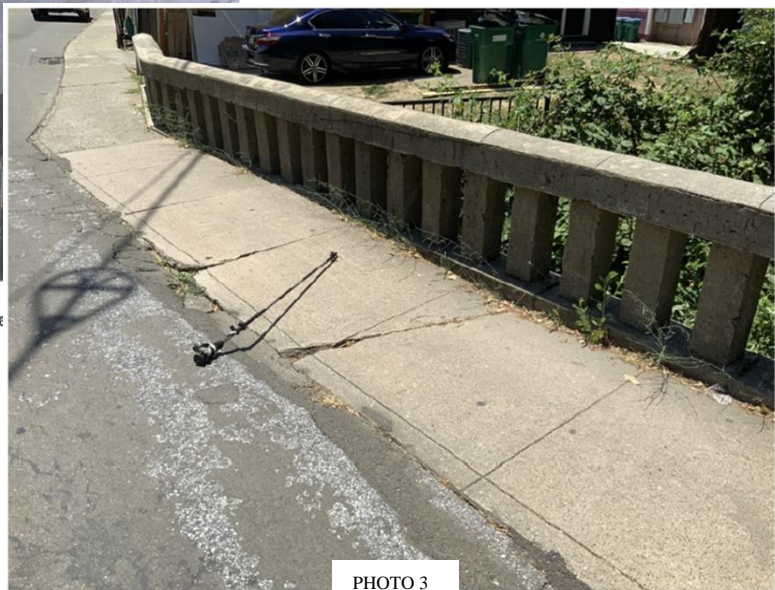
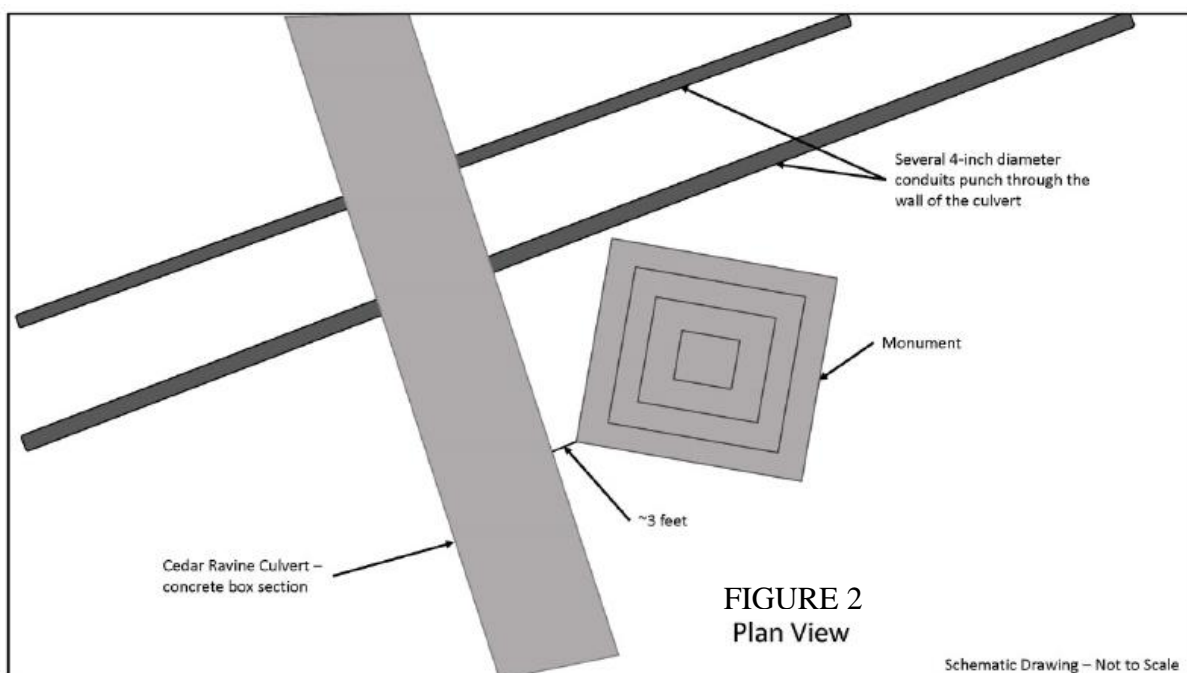
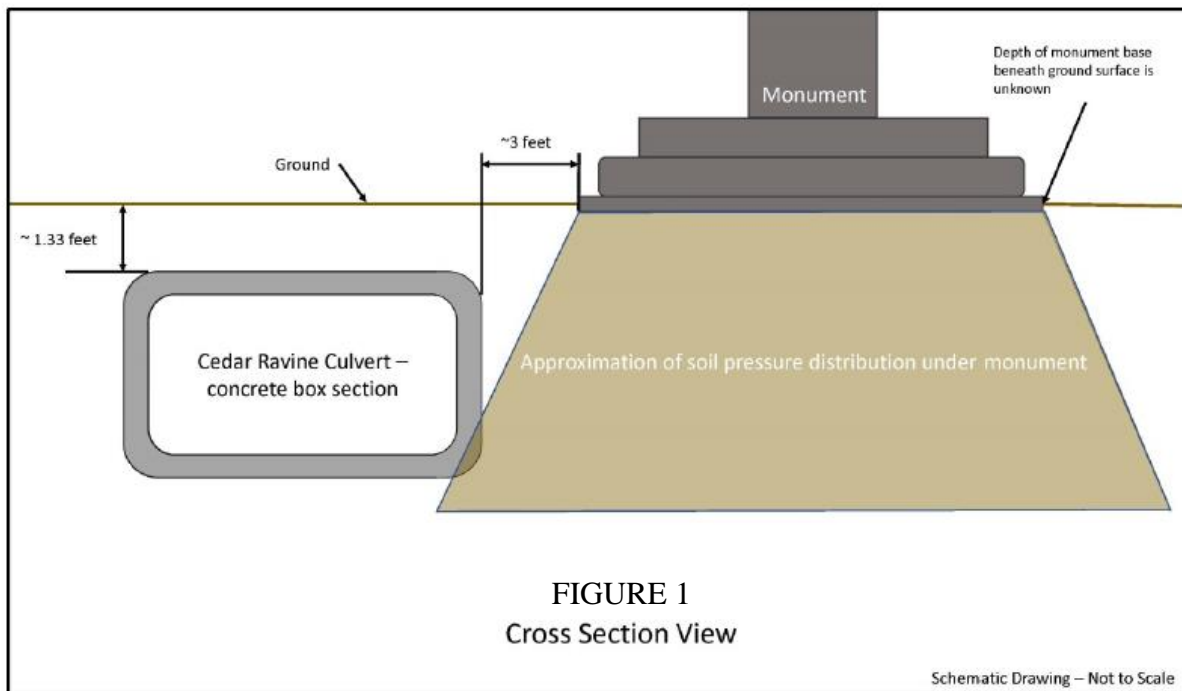


PHOTO 3

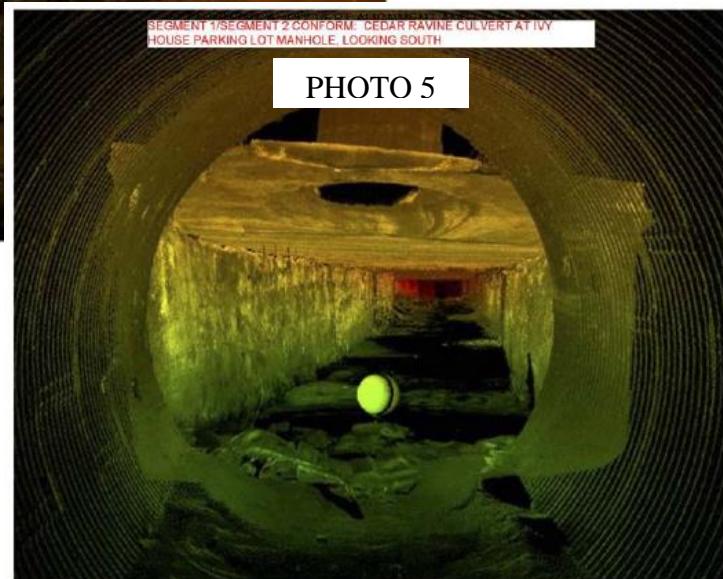
Cracked and settled right sidewalk at Abutment 1.

However, the bridge is not the only structure in the project vicinity that raises deep concerns for public safety. The Cedar Ravine culvert, which spans from Pacific Street to the Clay Street Bridge is showing significant structural decline. The most alarming part of its deterioration is its proximity to the Druid Monument. The Druid Monument is sacred to the community and its protection and preservation is essential. However, based on its nearness to the culvert, should the culvert fail, the monument will tip and fall. Figures 1 and 2 below illustrate the culvert's proximity to the Druid Monument insofar as to the pressure the monument puts on the culvert itself. The culvert has already experienced localized failure and has been repaired over time in various locations, with the most recent failure being in October of 2018 during the Pacific Street Pavement Rehabilitation project. It was the intention of the City to address this issue with the Clay Street Bridge and Realignment project utilizing economies of scale of the mobilized contractor, but the culvert and ultimately protection of the monument may not wait that long.





Staff will be bringing forward the Cedar Ravine Culvert as its own Capital Improvement Project as part of the 2021/2022 Fiscal Year budget adoption process. Please see photos 4 and 5 from the 2016 LiDAR scan conducted within the culvert.



#### Protection of the Druid Monument

Since its placement in 1926, the monument represents community values and the history of our City. Respecting history and preservation of genuinely designated historic structures and features is a value the City holds dear as exhibited by owning and supporting the only 2 National Registered Historic items in town, Historic City Hall and Gold Bug Mine. The Druid Monument is eligible for the National Register and its protection is essential to the character of Placerville. The best way to protect the monument is to 1) address the structurally declining Cedar Ravine Culvert (for reasons previously mentioned) and 2) to pull traffic away from the monument itself. The monument was struck by a truck and repaired once before. The wear and cracking on the foundation steps indicate the steps are driven over regularly by traffic. City staff is reviewing several options, including the installation of bollards at its current location and moving the monument to a protected location, yet maintain the integrity of its presence in the intersection. With the bridge and realignment of Clay Street, consideration of this option has necessitated doing a deeper evaluation of the impacts, through a document known as the Finding of Adverse Effect (FOE) to relocating the monument, be it temporarily or permanently, to another location within the intersection. Contained within the NEPA process is Section 106 consultation and inclusion of interested parties. Among the interested parties the City is working with include Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians as the state and federally recognized tribe, the local Wopumnes Nisenan-Mewuk Tribe as an interested party, Friends of Historic Hangtown/Friends of Clay Street (FOHHCS), and most notable, the United Ancient Order of the Druids (UAOD). The FOE was circulated out and comments were received, including 12 separate emails from the FOHHCS (1 by the comment deadline, 11 accepted after the comment deadline). Comments are currently under review and will be

addressed with the final document, which will support the CEQA and NEPA cultural sections of the respective Environmental Documents.

#### CEQA and NEPA Environmental Processes

Though similar in approach, these two processes do have some distinct differences and consideration, which are illustrated by the need of preparing 2 separate environmental documents. In 2013, the City began the current CEQA document in the form of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The draft EIR was circulated for 45-day public review and comment period on March 2, 2018 and closed on April 18, 2018. Comments were received and a comment response matrix is being developed.

However, during the technical studies portion of the NEPA process, the team decided to take a more aggressive approach to protecting the historical integrity of Placerville by making the generous assumption that Main Street is eligible to be considered a historic district on either the state or national registers. In short, for the purposes of being conservative during evaluation of the project impacts, we have assumed historic eligibility for a district that doesn't exist. In order for eligibility to truly be established, there is yet another process that must be completed and met for both through the [National Register Bulletin](#) and [California Register of Historical Resources](#) as determined by 4 criteria.

Nevertheless, it's important to understand that this is a **public safety project that includes potentially a bridge replacement**, not an effort to create a Historic District. The City operated a [Historical Advisory Committee](#) (HAC) that recommended a prior version of a Draft Downtown Placerville Historic District (adopted by the HAC on June 16, 2012) as a local historic district (not on National or California Registers). However, due to lack of participation, the HAC was suspended in 2015, and due to staff workload and lack of funding, the effort to pursue the district was never completed. Thus, making the generous assumption of eligibility for the nonexistent historic district was the most hypothetical and yet greatest conservative approach the City could legally take to assess the impacts of the project given that the Historic District does not presently exist. Simply put, the Clay Street Bridge project documents assume the HAC had completed the task of creating a local historic district and are evaluating what the impacts would be to that hypothetical nonexistent district. It is this intensive and extensive effort that has been the focus of the project for some time now. Because this is a different approach to the historic resources evaluation than what was presented in the Draft EIR released in March of 2018, several sections of the EIR will be revised and recirculated for consistency to the assumption of eligibility. Recirculation of these select sections is anticipated in June 2021.

The effort related to the historic resources evaluation ties into both the CEQA and NEPA Environmental Documents. As the CEQA process updates the EIR, the NEPA process will complete the Section 106 and Section 4f processes, including a programmatic agreement with the Office of Historic Preservation as well as an Environmental Assessment (EA).

#### Next Steps

Attached to Staff's report is the *Clay Street Bridge Project Delivery Process*. When the project completes the CEQA and NEPA process and both documents are certified, the project will then move into the design phase where further public input will be solicited for items such as aesthetics and functionality of the bridge.

**Cost:** There are no direct costs associated with this item at this time.

**Budget Impact:** There is no budget impact associated with this item at this time.

**Recommendation:** Receive and file status update for the Clay Street Bridge Replacement Project, CIP #406171.



M. Cleve Morris, City Manager



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Attachments:

- A. Clay Street Bridge Project Delivery Process