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**COUNTY OF MENDOCINO**  
**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

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April 29, 2026

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors  
501 Low Gap Road, Room 1090  
Ukiah, CA 95482

RE: DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE DIRECTION REGARDING RIGHT OF WAY ACQUISITION STRATEGY FOR THE WILDERNESS LODGE ROAD BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT OVER DUTCH CHARLIE CREEK, COUNTY ROAD 320 AT MILEPOST 0.72 (LAYTONVILLE AREA)

Honorable Board of Supervisors:

The existing bridge on Wilderness Lodge Road crossing Dutch Charlie Creek is a single-lane, dual railroad flatcar, timber-deck bridge on concrete abutments, built in 1969. Wilderness Lodge Road is classified as a Local Road per the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Functional Classification System and has an Average Daily Traffic (ADT) of approximately 150 vehicles per day. The existing bridge is currently classified as Functionally Obsolete with a sufficiency rating of 48.5 out of 100 and is eligible for replacement under the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Highway Bridge Program (HBP) administered by Caltrans. The existing bridge no longer meets the safety and functional needs of the public, including that oversized loads cannot currently cross the bridge due to the weight limit restrictions. DOT proposes to replace the bridge (No. 10C-0073) on Wilderness Lodge Road and construct the necessary roadway approach improvements. The bridge replacement project is 100% funded through the FHWA HBP. The new bridge will meet current design standards of Mendocino County, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, and Caltrans.

The proposed new bridge will be a single-span reinforced concrete structure, 60 feet long and a clear width of 24 feet (two 10 foot lanes and two 2 foot shoulders). The roadway approaches on both sides of the bridge will be widened to accommodate the widened bridge lanes. Construction of a longer bridge span will reduce the channel constriction and steep channel slopes improving channel hydraulics. The new single-span bridge will also minimize environmental impacts on Dutch Charlie Creek by avoiding the need to construct bridge supports inside the active channel.

This road is the sole access for the residents on Wilderness Lodge Road and is essential for critical services and emergency access. A temporary detour road and bridge will be built upstream to allow access for these services and residents.

The project requires acquisition of R/W from two properties, one of which is owned by Wildlands, LLC. R/W negotiations are nearing completion with the other property owner, and MCDOT anticipates bringing an item to the Board for acceptance of the grant deed shortly. MCDOT, in coordination with its R/W consultant, Bender Rosenthal, has been actively engaged with the property owner since November 2025 in an effort to negotiate acquisition in good faith. During this time, the property owner has indicated a willingness to participate in regular coordination meetings with the County's right of way agent. However, despite these commitments, the property owner has not consistently participated in scheduled meetings, limiting progress toward a negotiated agreement.

Complicating this effort, according to the property owner, the subject property is currently in the process of being sold to a third party. This pending transaction creates urgency for the County to secure the required right of way in order to avoid further project delays, potential increased costs, and complications associated with negotiating with a new property owner.

Given the lack of meaningful progress to date and the time-sensitive nature of the acquisition, the County is prepared to initiate condemnation proceedings if necessary to secure the required property interests. MCDOT, along with Bender Rosenthal, will provide a presentation to the Board summarizing the current status of negotiations, project implications, and available options moving forward. Staff is seeking Board direction on whether to proceed with condemnation or continue efforts toward a negotiated settlement in order to prevent delay of construction on this important bridge replacement project.

I will, of course, respond to any questions that the Board may have.

Respectfully submitted,



HOWARD N. DASHIELL  
Director of Transportation

Enclosures

cc: DOT Project File B1201