Item G3

Staff Report

TO: Board of Harbor Commissioners

FROM: James B. Pruett, General Manager

DATE: November 19, 2025

SUBJECT: Pillar Point Surfers Beach Safe Parking Project

Issue:
Preferred Option for the Pillar Point Surfers Beach Safe Parking Project, formally known as the Burnham Strip Parking Project

Recommended Motion:
Motion: The preferred option for the Pillar Point Surfers Beach Safe Parking Project is Option 4 located on the Launch Ramp Properties, APNs of 047-252-390, 047-252-360, 047-252-220, 047-252-230, and 047-252-240.

Fiscal:
The Harbor Board has already approved the Professional Service Agreement with CSWST2 for an amount not to exceed $500,794 for design, engineering, and permitting of the Burnham Strip Parking Project, now called the Pillar Point Surfers Beach Safe Parking Project.

Option 4 includes 15 RV spaces with a potential income to the Harbor District of $410,625 to $615,937 per year.

The Harbor District does have the authority to charge a cleaning and maintenance fee to commercial establishments that use the lot for their customers. If Sam's Chowder House uses the parking area for their customers, the District may require a cleaning/maintenance fee.

Option 1, 2, and 3 have no potential income opportunities as proposed.

Funding:
As provided in the initial briefing to the Board on December 18, 2024 "…the District does not have the funding to add an additional capital improvement project without additional outside funding."

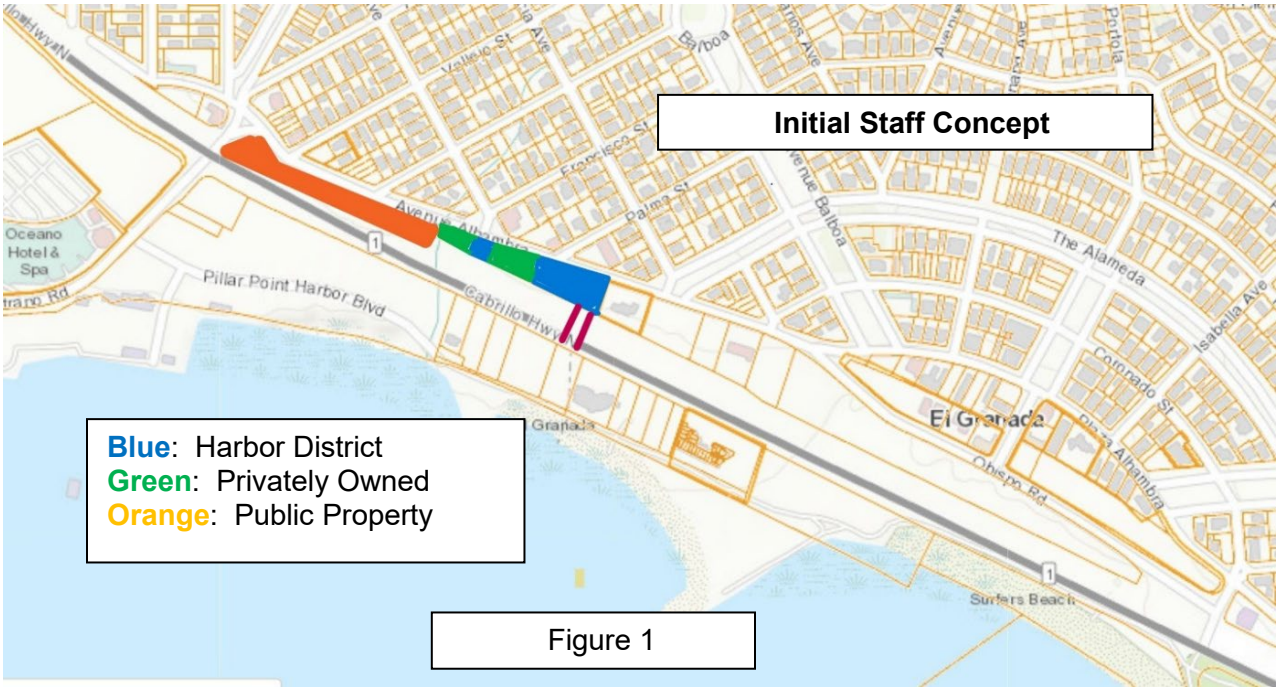
If the Coastal Commission accepts the Piller Point Surfers Beach Safe Parking Project as the required parking mitigation for the Caltrans State Route 1 Multi-Asset Roadway Rehabilitation Project which is to provide 75 public parking spaces in support of Surfers Beach, and if the Harbor District agrees with a memorandum of understanding with Caltrans, Caltrans will fund a portion of the construction costs. Currently suggested by Caltrans at $150,000.

Project History/Outreach:

Multiple times per year (Crab Opener, Salmon Opener, Holidays, nice weather weekends, special events), the parking capacity of Pillar Point Harbor is exceeded. On these occasions, the shoulder of Hwy 1 is used as an unofficial overflow parking area. This practice is both illegal[1] and unsafe[2].

Staff, with the intent of identifying additional parking to eliminate the need to park on the shoulder of Hwy 1, identified an opportunity for the District to improve safety and increase the number of parking spaces at Pillar Point Harbor.

In general terms, Staff recommended to the Harbor Board that a parking area be constructed on parcels owned by the Harbor District (APN 047-251-040/047-251-140) located on the northern end of Burnham Strip. (See Figure 1).



The initial concept proposed by Staff included a recommendation for the Harbor District to work with Caltrans, San Mateo County, and two private landowners, to transform a

[1] Cal. Veh Code 22500.1. "In addition to Section 22500, no person shall stop, park, or leave standing any vehicle, whether attended or unattended, except when necessary to avoid conflict with other traffic or in compliance with the directions of a peace officer or official traffic control device along the edge of any highway, …."

[2] https://www.cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/chp-cruiser-hits-kills-pedestrian-in-half-moon-bay/. A 74 year old male killed while crossing Hwy 1 when struck by a California Highway Parol Vehicle.

portion of the northern Burnham Strip into a parking area and walking park. Staff believed a new parking area would complement the park project being proposed by the Granada Community Service District on the south Burnham Strip and provide much-needed parking for the Coastside in support of Pillar Point Harbor, Perch Beach, Hotel Beach, Launch Ramp, Surfers Beach, Coastal Trail, and Sam's Chowder House.[1]

On November 19, 2024, Staff issued an informational email to the Midcoast Community Council and Granada Community Services Council with respect to the initial idea of the Burnham Strip Parking Project. This email was copied to Supervisor Mueller, San Mateo County Planning Office, City of Half Moon Bay, and Sam's Chowder House. (See attached). The email opened with the following:

> "To ensure your awareness, I wanted to provide information on an idea the Harbor District staff has been considering with respect to parking on the Burnham Strip and informally discussing with Caltrans. The District needs additional parking to handle overflow parking 4 or 5 time per year (Crab or Salmon openers) to remove cars that use Hwy 1 as their overflow parking area. This idea has not been finalized, submitted for public comment, or approved by the Harbor Board as of this date."

The email was intended to raise awareness of a potential solution the SMCHD Staff was considering, taking advantage of any partnership opportunities that would result from the Coastal Commission permitting process.

On November 26, 2024, the Harbor District issued a letter to the Coastal Commission under Appeal A-2SMC-24_0010/A-2-HMB-24-0025, informing the Commission of the level of cooperation between Caltrans and the District with respect to parking on the Coastside. The letter stressed the fact that the concept of using Burnham Strip as parking has not been presented or approved by the Harbor Board:

> "If, after public comment is taken, the Harbor Board concurs with staff's proposal to pursue the construction of a public parking area, the Harbor District will require the support and partnership of Caltrans, County of San Mateo, El Granada Community Services District, SAM's Charter House, and the Pillar Point RV Park lessee. While the Harbor District may elect to construct a public parking area, the Harbor District does not have the funding at this time to make it a reality."

Time was of the essence to issue this letter to take advantage of any potential partnership with Caltrans in funding the Harbor District project.

On December 18, 2024, Staff presented the above concept to the Harbor Board and requested further direction from the Board. The Board concurred with Staff and directed Staff to continue planning for the parking project. Several questions and concerns were raised to include:

[1] It is estimated that Sam's Chowder House is the second largest tax generator for the City of Half Moon Bay.

From the Board:

- Concerns about project cost and the impact on the District's finances.
- What other agencies, organizations, or businesses are participating in covering the cost of the project?
- Whatever shared funding agreements are made; the District will be the sole owner of the parking area.
- Who will maintain the area, trash, landscaping, lighting?
- Compliance with the American with Disability Act.

From the Public:

- There are other alternatives for parking including converting the Pillar
- Point Harbor RV Park at Surfers Beach to a public parking lot. (Several members of the public believe the RV park should be removed and replaced by public parking.)
- The issue of lack of parking was caused by Caltrans, and it is a Caltrans issue.
- Bike lanes are a bad idea, should consider a reduced speed zone.
- Very strongly against putting a parking lot on Burnham Strip.
- A crosswalk, as proposed, is "pure madness. Traffic is clogged, adding a crosswalk would make it worse."
- A commercial entity controlling public parking is a bad idea.
- Impact on blue herons, gophers, and other animals.
- An extra entry and exit on Avenue Alhambra will bring increased traffic.
- How will a parking lot impact Deer Creek?
- More asphalt would mean more stormwater issues.

See attached Staff Report dated December 18, 2024.

On February 18, 2025, Staff went to the Harbor Board requesting permission to issue a Request for Proposal for the design, engineering, and permitting of the Burnham Strip Parking Project. Staff report attached.

The questions and concerns raised in the December Regular Board Meeting were addressed in this staff report dated February 18, 2025.

The Board approved the following motion: "Authorize the General Manager to issue a Request for Proposal for design, engineering, and permitting of a project to construct a parking lot and greenspace on the Burnham Strip to include parcels owned by the Harbor District, privately owned parcels, and areas owned by Caltrans and San Mateo County."

On March 12, 2025, the Harbor District General Manager updated the Midcoast Community Council on the efforts and initiatives of the District. The update included the concept of using Burnham Strip as a parking area to support Pillar Point.

On June 30, 2025, the District received a letter from Supervisor Mueller's Office requesting the District involve the Mid-Coast Community Council and the Granada

Community Services District in all future meetings respecting the Burnham Strip Parking Project. (attached) This letter did add some confusion given the District has been engaged with both agencies since November 19, 2024. (See Attachment 01)

On July 23, 2025 the Harbor District issued the attached letter, responding to the draft letter published by the Midcoast Community Council with the July 23, 2025 agenda.. The letter documents the extensive outreach and coordination the Harbor District has engaged in to date. (See attached)

On August 13, 2025, the Mid-Coast Community Council approved a letter regarding what they defined as "critical issue that lies in the jurisdiction of multiple governmental agencies." See attached. No input from the District's July 23, 2025, letter was considered or incorporated. In fact, the Chair of the Midcoast acknowledged the letter from the District and noted the letter read "blah, blah, blah", and simply appeared to disregard the entire letter and its enclosures.[1]

On August 20, 2025, at the regularly scheduled public meeting, the Harbor Board approved the following motion:

> Pursuant to a publicly advertised Request for Proposal (RFP), authorize the General Manager to enter into an Agreement with the firm found to be best qualified, CSWST2 engineering firm, for the Burnham Strip Overflow Parking Lot and Greenspace Project, for an amount not to exceed $455,267, with a 10% contingency in the event there is a need for change orders due to unforeseen challenges or additional work found needed, and authorize the General Manager to issue change orders up to the contingency amount, and approve an increase in Capital Expenditure Appropriations of $500,794, to be funded by available working capital.

See attached Staff Report dated August 20, 2025.

On October 27, 2025, the Harbor District was invited by Senator Becker's Office and Supervisor Mueller's Office to make a presentation on the Burnham Strip Parking Project (now the Pillar Point Surfers Beach Safe Parking Project), at a public listening session. The General Manager agreed to participate and was the only presenter at the event. The presentation was preapproved by the Board of Harbor Commissioners on that same date. See attached staff report dated October 27, 2025. Both the slide show presentation and script are attached to this staff report.

Though this meeting was advertised as a 'listening session' for both the Caltrans State Route 1 Project (bike lanes) and the Pillar Point Surfers Beach Safe Parking Project, the District was the sole presenter.

[1] The interagency meeting being proposed by the MCC letter still has not been scheduled. Further, the meeting being developed and proposed will be closed to the public and only involve agency representatives and two members of the MCC. If the meeting remains closed to the public, the Harbor District should not participate.

The Harbor District email was listed on the announcements for written public comments. See attached Listening Session Flyer.

Commenters at the listening session were primarily residents living in El Granada (21 of 37 commenters). Remarks focused on:

- No need for parking
- Historical nature of Burnham Strip
- Traffic
- Residential traffic and parking
- Safety and keeping “those people” out of El Granada neighborhoods
- Evacuation route safety
- No parking studies done

Many of the attendees supported the general idea of a parking solution on the west side of Highway 1.

Another interesting issue that was noted was the fact that public comment did not pertain to what the District was actually proposing. Based on the public comments received at the listening session and in writing, there are a lot of rumors and false information being spread throughout the community with respect to the project. It is “rumored” the Burnham Strip Parking Area would:

- be turned into an RV lot,
- allow large commercial trucks/semi-trucks,
- allow tour/school buses,
- be open and active 24 hrs per day,
- require access from Avenue Alhambra,
- not comply with Dark Skies International,
- allow the unhoused to take up residence,
- bring “those people” (non-El Granada Residents) into El Granada
- have no security,
- be full of trash,
- be made from non-permeable asphalt,
- not be maintained,
- not take public comment into consideration

Not one of the issues raised above is true.

Independent Parking Study by Jean Knight, El Granada Resident:

On October 28, 2025, the District received a draft copy of a parking study conducted by a resident of El Granada, Jean Knight. As stated in the report “The lot was surveyed for 24 weeks, from February 22 through April 30 and July 14 through October 16, at least twice a week, often 3 or 4 times. The lot was photographed on 37 days to provide visual documentation of normal weekdays and weekends and normal peak summer weekends (i.e., no holidays or special events) and of special events (holidays, fishing events). For

special events, multiple photographs documented each event. Utilization rates were estimated from the photographs. The findings focus on the two main proposed uses, harbor overflow parking and Surfer's Beach parking, and apply to both proposed parking lot locations."

The study is attached for your reference. Jean Knight's main observations included:

- Harbor overflow parking was related to truck and boat trailer overflow during three key fishing events, for a total of five days.
- No car overflow was observed from the harbor lot. Although cars were observed parking on highway 1, the parking appeared primarily related to Surfer's Beach, the fishing pier, businesses south of the harbor, and people pulling over for the view. Even when highway 1 was observed densely parked in, the harbor lot often had ample parking available.
- The harbor parking lots are not visible from highway 1 in either direction, even though the lot is immediately adjacent to the highway. No sign at the entrance at Capistrano Road alerts drivers to the existence of the lot. A "Public Parking" sign that also indicates access to the coastal trail could draw more drivers into the lot and possibly reduce some of the parking along highway 1.
- Both proposed parking lot locations are 0.5 to 0.7 miles from Surfer's Beach, a long distance for pedestrians to walk when carrying beach gear, surfboards, fishing gear, coolers, and children. If a lot at either proposed location is accepted to fulfill Caltrans' obligation for providing Surfer's Beach parking, it could paradoxically eliminate the possibility of meaningful Surfer's Beach parking.

The study is attached for your reference.

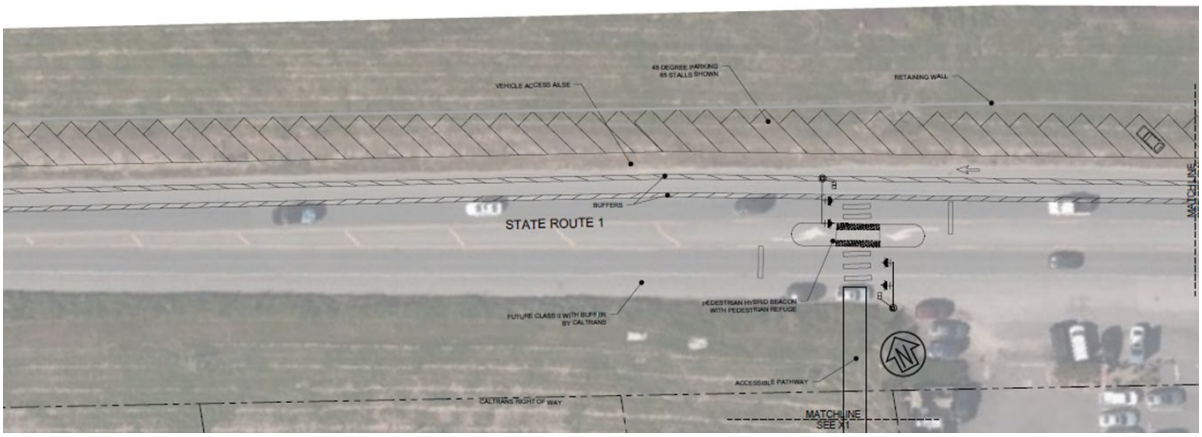
The General Manager is very appreciative of Jean Knight in taking the initiative in conducting this survey and sharing the results with the District.

Options:

Working with CSWST2, the consultant contracted by the Harbor District, four options have been developed for consideration by the Harbor Board. Two involve District property on the Burnham Strip, one involves district owned properties on the west side of Highway 1, and one option, which is not recommended, involves property located wholly within the Caltrans right of way on the north bound side of the highway.

Option 1: Highway 1 Shoulder:
Not a viable option for the Harbor District.

This option involves constructing diagonal parking along the shoulder of Hwy 1, outside the planned bike lanes. This option is not realistic given it cannot accommodate oversized parking spaces (10' by 40') for truck and trailer parking, the main purpose of the Pillar Point Surfers Beach Safe Parking Project.



The other significant issue associated with Option 1 is safety. Option 1 still places pedestrians on the shoulder of Highway 1 and requires pedestrians to cross Highway 1. In addition, the property is not owned by the Harbor District.

Staff does not recommend this option.

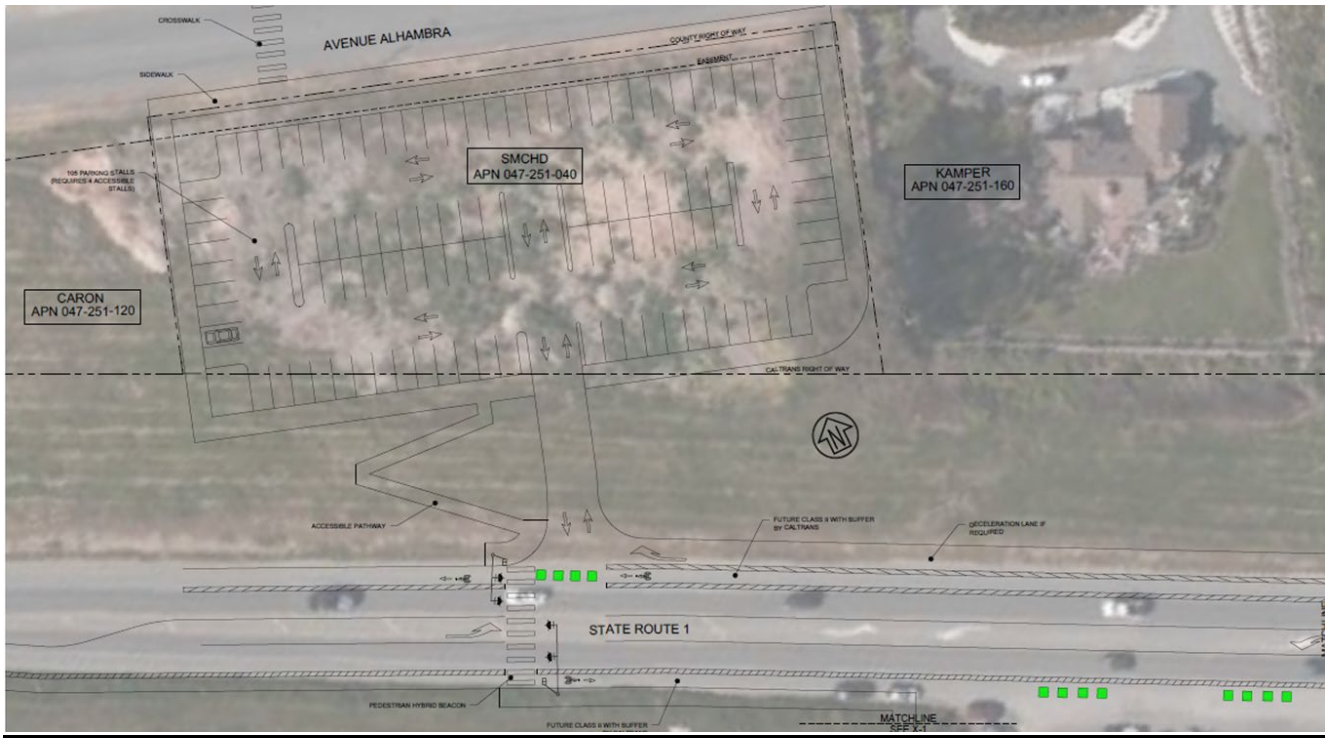
Option 2: Burnham Strip with access from Avenue Alhambra

A viable option.



Option 3: Burnham Strip with access from Highway 1

A viable option.



The original concept as proposed by Staff for the Burnham Parking Area included the use of both parcels owned by the District, and two additional parcels that would need to be acquired. As staff researched the market value of the private lots, the lot between the two District parcels listed at four times the price the District paid for the adjoining lots, making it unrealistic for purchase, limiting the size of the lot on the Burnham Strip.

The Harbor District has received strongly opinionated public comments opposing the parking project on the Burnham Strip. This included the public comment received at the listening session. Several of the public comments received by the District are attached.

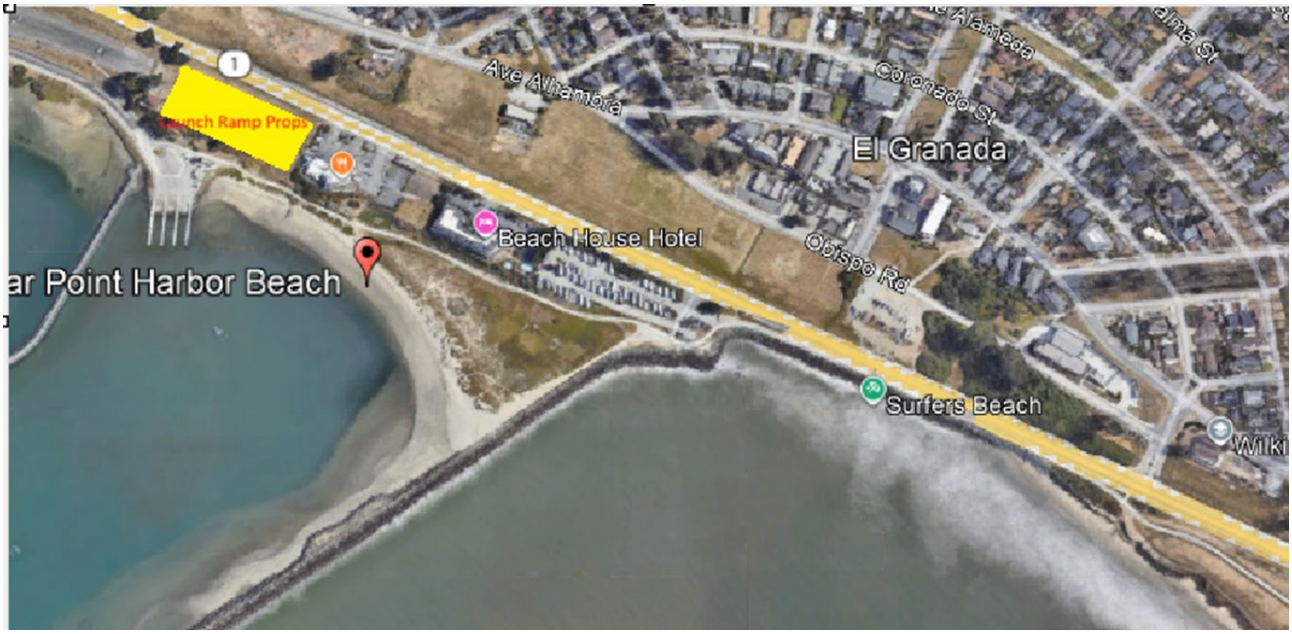
A petition drive against any parking project on the Burnham Strip was started on line and gained over 1000 signatures. However, the petition drive used false and misleading information in describing the project. For example, the petition states "The San Mateo County Harbor District is planning to build a maximum-capacity parking lot and a crosswalk to Sam's Restaurant on the north end of the historic Burnham Strip…across from Sam's Restaurant". This statement is false, the initial plan was to develop a parking area that included open space, the Ohlone Trail extension, natural landscaping, walking paths, and benches. The Harbor District was not looking to bult a "maximum-capacity" parking lot.

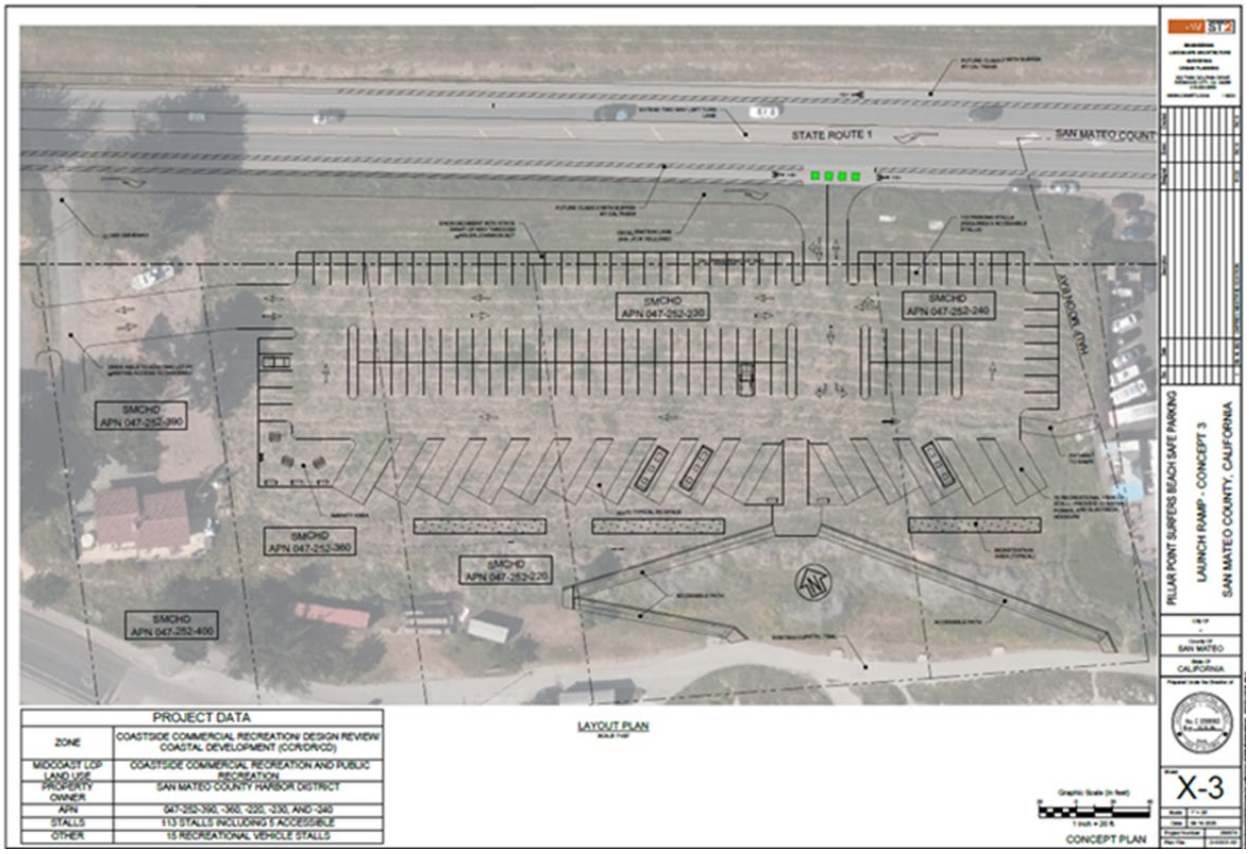
<u>Option 2/3 Issues and Concerns:</u>

- Extremely tight, limited area to maneuver trailers.
- Attaining adjacent private property is cost prohibitive.
- Requires crosswalk/overpass of Hwy 1.
- Distance to coastline.
- Logistics/traffic
- Possible alternative/better use of parcel for Deer Creek
- Public Concern

Based on the issues identified in the initial design and engineering, Staff does not recommend Option 2 or 3.

Option 4: Launch Ramp Properties
Staff Recommended Option.





The launch ramp properties located between Parking Lot C-3 and Sam's restaurant was not initially considered by Staff based on the direction the property had to be reserved for some type of revenue generating purpose. However, after reviewing the consultants initial suggestion of using the Launch Ramp Properties, Staff recommended adding RV spaces along the west side of the lot. With the RV spaces, the lot would be revenue generating with a potential income to the Harbor District of $410,625 to $615,937 per year, while providing overflow parking for the launch ramp and Harbor.

Other positive considerations:

- Located at the Pillar Point Launch Ramp
- Located on the Coastal Trail
- Adjacent to Breakwater and Surfers Beach
- More maneuverability.
- May satisfy CCC Requirements for Caltrans to provide 75 parking spaces.
- May support local businesses (Sam's Chowder House, Pillar Point RV Park).
- No crosswalk or overpass needed to cross Hwy 1.
- No additional property purchases are necessary.

For all the above reasons, Staff is recommending to the Board of Harbor Commissions to elect Option 4 and direct the General Manager to work with CSWSC2 to design, engineer, and permit a parking/rv lot on the Launch Ramp Properties under the RFP approved on August 20, 2025.

Recommended Motion:

Motion: The preferred option for the Pillar Point Surfers Beach Safe Parking Project is Option 4 located on the Launch Ramp Properties, APNs of 047-252-390, 047-252-360, 047-252-220, 047-252-230, and 047-252-240.

Attachments:

1) November 19, 2024, Email "Parking"
2) November 26, 2024, letter to the California Coastal Commission
3) December 18, 2024, Burnham Strip Parking Project Staff Report
4) February 18, 2025, Staff Report: Request authorization to issue RFP.
5) March 12, 2025 MCC Presentation
6) Letter from Supervisor Mueller dated June 30, 2025
7) July 23, 2025 letter to the MCC
8) Letter from Midcoast Community Council dated August 13, 2025
9) August 20, 2025 Staff Report
10) October 27, 2025 Special Meeting Staff Report
11) October 27, 2025 Public Listening Session Presentation

12) October 27, 2025 Public Listening Session Presentation Script
13) Listening Session Flyer
14) El Granada Resident Parking Study
15) Public Comments