

Last Chance Grade Project

2019 Update



The Last Chance Grade Project is a collaborative, multi-year effort to identify and implement **safe, smart and sustainable solutions** for a three-mile segment of coastal Highway 101 through Del Norte County.

Work is continuing to enhance this vital connection for everyone who lives, works and travels in Del Norte County—driven by over 5,000 people every day.

Project Goals:

- Ensure the safety and reliability of the highway—now and for the future.
- Find a technically feasible, cost-effective alternative.
- Respect our important environmental and cultural resources.
- Enact necessary mitigation measures.



Ongoing Road Maintenance

Caltrans works diligently to ensure that Last Chance Grade stays safe and reliable for all travelers. The road has never been fully closed for longer than one day.

Substantial work is underway to repair damage caused by road movement during winter storms in 2016-2018. The photographs below show the extent of the repairs at one location displaying the “before” and “after” conditions on Last Chance Grade near Wilson Creek.



Before



After

Legend

Routes

- Alternative A
- ⋯ Option 1
- ⋯ Option 2
- Alternative F
- Alternative G
- ⋯ Option 1
- ⋯ Option 2
- Alternative L
- Alternative X
- Tunnel
- Highway 101

THE LAST CHANCE GRADE PROJECT Project Alternatives

Working with local, regional, state and federal agencies, and community organizations, Caltrans has generated a **number of alternatives** to consider based on group discussion and preliminary studies.

While the “no build” option and re-alignment options of the highway around the current location continue to be studied, the team has been able to eliminate some alternatives due to high costs and potential impacts to this highly sensitive environment.

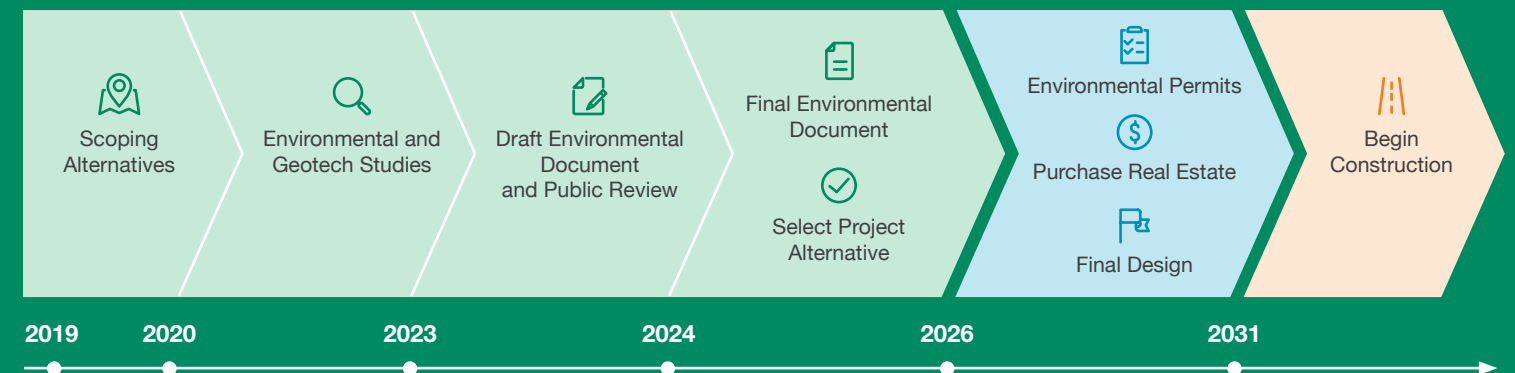
Identifying and analyzing each alternative takes time and requires coordination with agencies and organizations that have management and regulatory responsibilities for the lands and resources directly impacted by any route realignment. No decisions will be made until studies are completed and the draft environmental document is complete.

Each alternative is described in detail on the project website: LastChanceGrade.com.

PROGRESS UPDATE Fully Funded Studies

Caltrans has been awarded \$50 million to fully fund the environmental study phase. The environmental study process is lengthy because some studies require seasonal data, tracked in some cases for more than one year. Other factors, such as significant weather events, can reveal important information about geotechnical issues that are critical to identifying a final alternative which will be safe and secure for a long time to come. The graphic below shows the steps in the process.

ENVIRONMENTAL PHASE



Geology

The first phase of geotechnical studies was completed in 2018. The studies are being conducted in phases to determine feasibility and potential impacts of construction for each alternative. A Geotechnical Risk Assessment was completed in June 2018, resulting in the elimination of several alternatives with a high risk of failure. The studies are proceeding on schedule, with Phase 2 studies beginning in summer of 2019 and Phase 3 studies scheduled for summer of 2020.

Ecology

Caltrans works closely with the National Park Service, California State Parks and others in the environmental study process, which identifies potential impacts on the area’s unique ecosystem and considers what can be done to avoid and mitigate them.

Culture

Caltrans continues to engage local tribes as key stakeholders and partners throughout the project process, and will oversee cultural resource studies in collaboration with the tribes. A programmatic agreement is being developed to support this effort.

Economy

Caltrans conducts a detailed financial analysis of each alternative to determine the costs and possible economic impacts. They will analyze the costs and benefits of improving reliability, considering maintenance of the road, and larger regional economic factors.



Stay Up to Date!

Please get involved and stay up to date by learning about project alternatives and future outreach activities.

Community Open House

There will be a community meeting this coming winter to provide a progress update on the project. More information to come!

For more information, visit
LastChanceGrade.com

Or Contact

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If you would like to receive meeting notices directly by email send a request to Tamera@DNLTC.org.