

San Luis Obispo North Coast Scenic Byway Corridor Plan 2014



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Route 1 between the City of San Luis Obispo and the Monterey County line was designated an All-American Road by the Federal Highway Administration on August 8, 2003. This level of scenic designation is reserved for routes that possess nationally significant resources (intrinsic qualities) and is the highest scenic designation of any road or highway in the nation. The Route 1 San Luis Obispo North Coast Scenic Byway Corridor was designated as a result of the scenic, natural, recreational, and historical qualities that draw visitors from around the country and around the world. Coupled with the Big Sur Coast All-American Road, which begins at the San Luis Obispo/Monterey County Line and courses along the rugged coastline north through Big Sur to Monterey, the highway provides one of the best traveling experiences in the world.

The Route 1 Scenic Byway Corridor Plan (BCP) is intended to identify programs that will maintain and improve the opportunities and experiences of traveling in the corridor. It also identifies the resources that make the Byway extraordinary and includes how the corridor is being protected and enhanced. The plan attempts to bring together improvement plans of the different regulatory and programming agencies in the corridor, including San Luis Obispo County, the City of Morro Bay, Caltrans, California Department of Parks and Recreation, Bureau of Land Management, California Coastal Conservancy, California Coastal Commission, and the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG). These agencies have developed plans that are consistent with their missions through extensive public outreach and input.

This BCP update focused on refining the plan's comprehensiveness, document layout, mapping, and the economic benefits provided by the corridor.

There are four chapters of the Byway Corridor Plan:

1. North Coast Scenic Byway Corridor
2. Byway Vision and Improvements
3. Plan Administration and Project Implementation
4. Economic Benefits

The plan does not introduce additional land use regulatory restrictions or policies. It is based on adopted strategies to protect and enhance the corridor's qualities, which were discussed at length during development of the original plan. In addition to the locally adopted plans that address land use policies and circulation of the local transportation system, the plan identifies many of the improvements that are planned for the corridor by SLOCOG and the State. These projects are primarily associated with maintaining the highway's current configuration with improvements to enhance access and aesthetics, maintain operations, and improve how the highway interrelates with the communities it passes through.

Due the removal of grant funding from the National Scenic Byway Program, an economic benefit analysis was performed. The analysis demonstrates the importance of funding scenic projects along the Byway in an increasingly competitive transportation funding environment.

As a result of this process, two key findings were apparent. The first key finding was to encourage local agencies to adopt policies which support the goals and objectives of the Scenic Byway Corridor Plan. The second finding was to consider the possibility of pursuing scenic designation south of the City San Luis Obispo along Route 1, which would require applying for state scenic designation and then, if resources allow, pursue federal designation.

CHAPTER 1

BYWAY CORRIDOR OVERVIEW

- Existing Conditions
- Corridor Communities
 - San Luis Obispo
 - Morro Bay
 - Cayucos
 - Cambria
 - San Simeon
- Intrinsic Qualities
 - Scenic
 - Historic
 - Natural
 - Recreational

EXISTING CONDITIONS



The subject area of Highway 1 is a two to four lane rural arterial extending approximately 58 miles between Highland Drive in the City of San Luis Obispo and the Monterey County line. The highway is a four-lane freeway expressway from San Luis Obispo to just north of Cayucos, where it becomes a conventional two lane rural highway to the Monterey County line. The highway continues north of SLO County for 72 miles along the Big Sur All-American Road to Carmel, providing for a remarkable 130-mile adventure.

The route serves both regional and interregional traffic with Department of Transportation (Caltrans) being the sole operator and maintainer of the facility. Caltrans is also responsible for ensuring the safety of the facility, which includes such improvements such as median barriers, channelizations, shoulders and bridge widening. Much of the traffic is tourist in nature, although commute traffic is prevalent between San Luis Obispo and Cambria. There are a number of major traffic generators on the route including Hearst Castle, Cuesta Community College, California Men's Colony (a medium security federal correctional facility) and California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, as well as the communities along the route. The highway has an overall safety record that is generally better than comparable highways throughout the State of California.

The highway is the primary north/south arterial through the North Coast Planning Area of San Luis Obispo County. The highway is specifically restricted to be maintained as a two-lane highway north of Cayucos by the California Coastal Act (passing lanes and channelization are allowable under certain parameters). There are five grade-separated interchanges through the length of the corridor: three in Morro Bay and two in Cayucos.

Many intersections along the corridor are anticipated to meet warrants for signalization in the future. Operational improvements, such as turn channelization, acceleration/deceleration lanes, and potentially a passing lane between Cayucos and

Cambria are measures that will be considered to respond to the anticipated increase in vehicle trips. The California Coastal Commission does not permit widening of highway 1 to four lanes in the byway corridor.

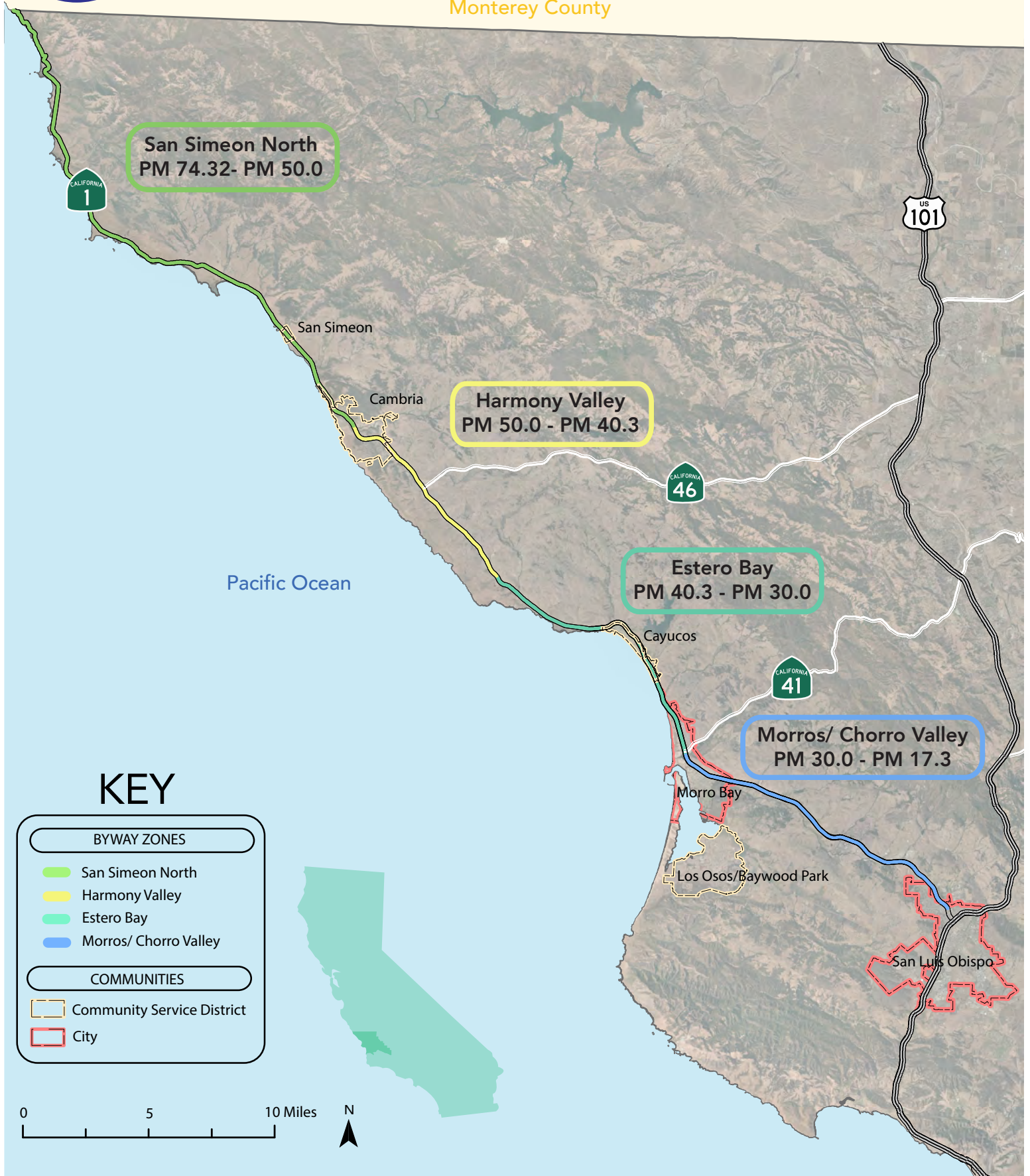
The highway has created challenges for pedestrian and bicycle access crossing the highway to and from the coast. This access is especially critical in the urbanized communities because of the desire to have enhanced coastal access for people on foot and on bikes. All of the communities in the corridor have placed a high priority on the enhancement of coastal access.





North Coast Scenic Byway Corridor

Monterey County



Historic



PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHTHOUSE

The Piedras Blancas Lighthouse was built in 1874 and first operated in 1875. It was built by the United States Lighthouse Board and operated by the U.S. Lighthouse Service until the Coast Guard assumed command in 1939 and later transferred to the jurisdiction of the Coast Guard. It was one of many built during this period to improve the safety of the ever increasing maritime commerce in the Pacific. Originally constructed 110 feet tall, it was later shortened by the Coast Guard because of concern for the structure in the high winds sometimes associated with the Central Coast. The lens of the light station is currently on display in Cambria, adjacent to the Veterans Memorial Building.

The lighthouse is still in operation today and continues to be is a prominent landmark for travelers on the highway. Its location is the halfway point between the lighthouses at Point Conception in the south and Pigeon Point in the north. Control of the lighthouse and the lands operated by the Coast Guard were transferred to the United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in 2000. The BLM continues to operate the lighthouse and provides public access through three weekly tours. Also, the BLM has continued to restore native dune plant communities around the lighthouse and on neighboring State Parks property, as part of a cooperative agreement with State Parks. These lands have been designated by Congress as a federally recognized “Outstanding Natural Area.” More information can be found in the 2007 Piedras Blancas Management Plan.

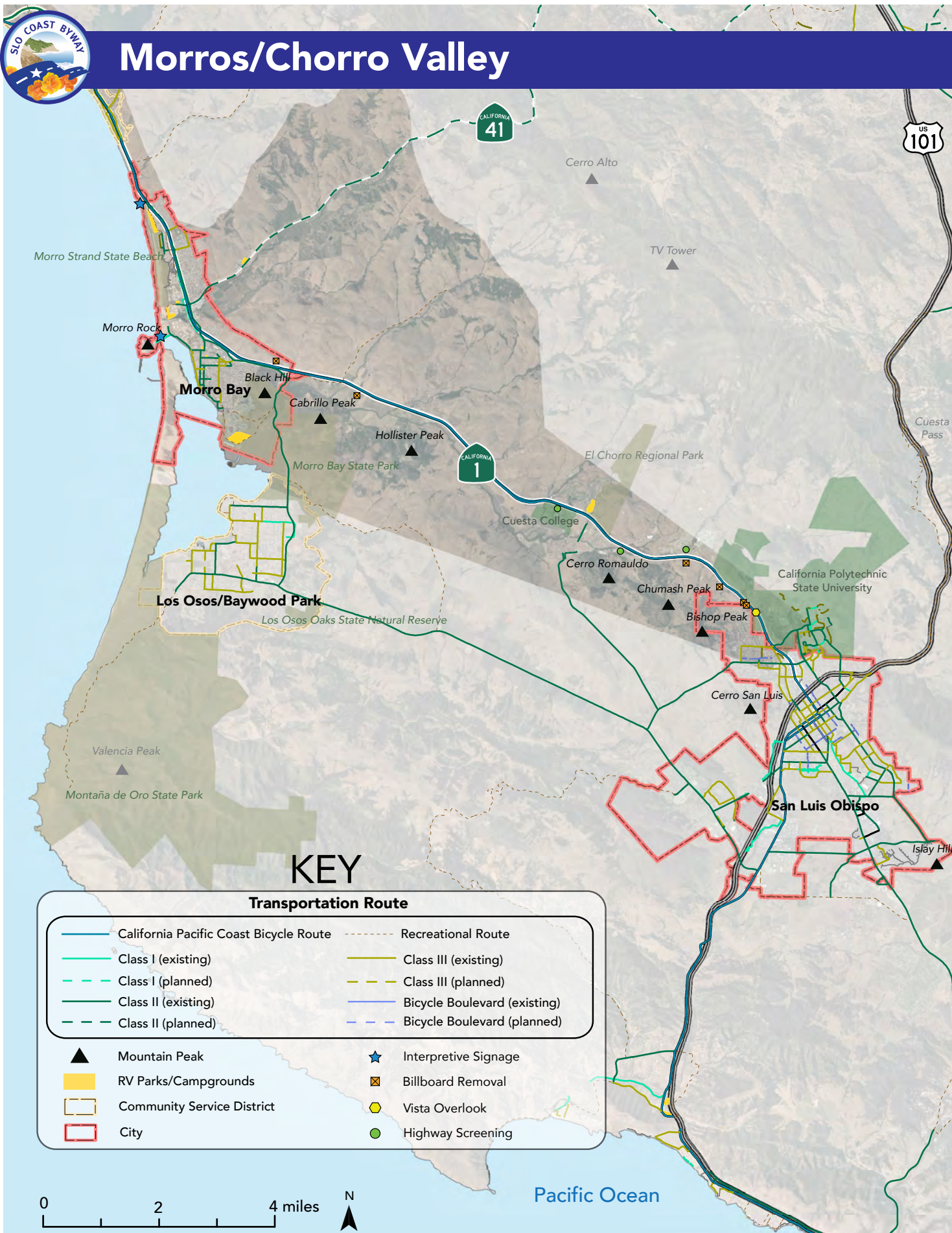


HEARST CASTLE

In the Santa Lucia Coastal Range overlooking the Pacific Ocean, Hearst Castle is a magnificent estate of 165 rooms and 127 acres of gardens, terraces, pools and walkways. The castle was once the home of newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst and the last great estate produced by America’s Gilded Age. Relinquished to the California State Park System the castle is a State Historical Monument and largest revenue generator in the state park system. It is the most important tourist destination in San Luis Obispo County with approximately 800,000 visitors per year.



Morros/Chorro Valley



KEY

Transportation Route

	California Pacific Coast Bicycle Route		Recreational Route
	Class I (existing)		Class III (existing)
	Class I (planned)		Class III (planned)
	Class II (existing)		Bicycle Boulevard (existing)
	Class II (planned)		Bicycle Boulevard (planned)
	Mountain Peak		Interpretive Signage
	RV Parks/Campgrounds		Billboard Removal
	Community Service District		Vista Overlook
	City		Highway Screening



Pacific Ocean