

Last Chance Grade enters next phase of study

November 4, 2019



The California Transportation Commission will visit this region Nov. 6 to tour and discuss the biggest long-term infrastructure project in Del Norte County.

The commissioners will receive a guided tour of the Last Chance Grade, then host a meeting at 2 p.m. in the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors chambers in the Flynn Administrative Center, 981 H St. in Crescent City.

The Last Chance Grade is a three-mile segment of U.S. Highway 101 just north of Wilson Creek, between Klamath and Crescent City. Landslides and road failures have been an ongoing problem there for decades.

At the transportation commission's town hall meeting, commissioners will hear from U.S. Congressman Jared Huffman, city and county staff, and the Yurok Tribe. Caltrans will give a 30-minute presentation on Last Chance Grade, the U.S. Highways 199 and 197 safety project, and the Dr. Fine Bridge replacement project.

Other agencies will have 10-minute blocks to speak as well, including the Humboldt County Association of Governments, Del Norte County Regional Airport, the Del Norte Office of Emergency Services and the Redwood Coast Transit Authority. The public is invited to speak to the commissioners, too.

A second community meeting follows at 6 p.m. at the Del Norte County Fairgrounds, 421 U.S. Highway 101 in Crescent City.

California Transportation Commission Executive Director Susan Brown will attend the meeting, which will be hosted by Huffman, State Sen. Mike McGuire and Assemblyman Jim Wood.

On the agenda will be Caltrans' efforts to re-route U.S. 101 around the Last Chance Grade slide.

The state is weighing seven alternate routes around the slide area, plus another option that leaves it as is. Those options, mapped out on website lastchancegrade.com, include four routes that would include bridges and three that require digging tunnels.

Cost estimates for the options range from \$300 million to \$2 billion.

Officials will review of the Last Chance Grade Stakeholder Group's scope and progress, update the environmental review and engineering work completed over the last 24 months, and provide estimated timelines for completion and breaking ground on the preferred permanent alternative route.

According to commission's timeline, the project approval and environmental document phase will last through 2026. The design and permitting phase would be completed by 2031, and construction finished by 2039.