

Tunnel could be used to fix Last Chance Grade

December 3, 2021



Last Chance Grade, a portion of highway nine miles south of Crescent City that's steadily eroded and required \$85 million in repairs since 1997, may be decommissioned so a \$1.3 billion tunnel located away from the slide area can take its place. That's according to Jaime Matteoli, the Caltrans District 1 representative who provided an update to the Crescent City Council on Nov. 29. "You either accept it and you manage it - and that's what we've been doing and all the stakeholders have been saying that's not acceptable - or you avoid the landslide completely," Matteoli said. The tunnel, if built, would be about 10,000 feet long and would take until 2038 to complete.

"This is the higher cost alternative, but it would have lower risk," Matteoli said. "We found that this tunnel alternative is the best way to avoid all the landslides." Though Matteoli seemed to suggest the tunnel is the best alternative, Caltrans is still in the process of receiving comments from stakeholders, and is currently in the process of creating an environmental impact report that's anticipated to be completed in 2022. The EIR, dubbed the "Last Chance Grade Permanent Restoration Project," will include two alternatives. The first is Alternative X, which would involve reengineering the existing roadway. Within a portion of Alternative X,

the roadway would retreat inland to the east by about 130 feet, and would involve the construction of a series of retaining walls to minimize the potential for landslides on the roadway. Drainage improvements may also be required. Alternative F would include the tunnel, which would travel inland from the existing roadway near milepost 14.06 and reconnect to US Highway 101 at milepost 15.5. The EIR will also study a “No Project Alternative” - which would entail no long-term alternatives and would be a continuation of ongoing maintenance and repairs. For information about the project, visit lastchancegrade.com. Members of the public are asked to comment on the project, though input must be received by 5 p.m. Dec. 6. Comments can be emailed to scopingcomments@lastchancegrade.com, or can be mailed to Caltrans District 1, Attn: Steve Croteau, 1656 Union Street, Eureka, CA 95501.