

County of Monterey



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July 20, 2023

AMBAG

Ms. Maura F. Twomey
24580 Silver Cloud Court
Monterey, CA 93940

Re: Support for Highway 1 Bridge at Pajaro River Project

Dear Ms. Twomey:

On behalf of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Monterey, I write to express support for funding requests by the Association of Monterey Bay Area of Governments (AMBAG) for the Highway 1 Bridge at Pajaro River Project. The project would address Caltrans' 5th and 6th highest priority bridges exposed to climate change in District 5 and bring deep benefits to two severely disadvantaged communities.

AMBAG, in partnership with the Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency, is seeking grant funding for the project for planning and development of the Project Initiation Document (PID). The project will increase the resilience of the Highway 1 Bridge at the Pajaro River from the impacts of flooding, drainage impoundment, sea level rise, and climate change. Additionally, the project will provide safe passage during an evacuation and reduce the risk of damage to the critical Highway 1 evacuation route. The project minimizes impact on natural resources and ecosystems, protecting 4,000 acres of prime agricultural land that contributes to the billion-dollar agricultural economy of the Pajaro Valley. The project will study and evaluate potential nature-based solutions in partnership with roadway and infrastructure improvements.

The project is located in the City of Watsonville (Santa Cruz County), a disadvantaged community, and the Town of Pajaro (Monterey County), a severely disadvantaged community where per capita income is less than half the state and national average. Severe winter storms in early 2023 led to flooding in these areas and cast a spotlight on past inequities in this agricultural region. Storm runoff left large areas of the low income and mostly immigrant community under several feet of water and facing severe economic hardships and a long recovery.

The County of Monterey strongly supports this important climate resiliency project that is critically important to the life and economic safety of the residents of Monterey and Santa Cruz counties. Thank you for your hard work in submitting this grant application.

Sincerely,

Luis A. Alejo, Chair
Board of Supervisors