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Santa Cruz hosts discussions on West Cliff project



Santa Cruz Senior Civil Engineer Josh Spangrud, left, and Public Works Director Nathan Nguyen present proposals for West Cliff Drive revetment projects at a community discussion at London Nelson Community Center Thursday (Nick Sestanovich — Santa Cruz Sentinel)

By **NICK SESTANOVICH** |

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SANTA CRUZ >> Following the January storms that caused significant damage to West Cliff Drive, the city of Santa Cruz has explored options to ensure the roadway is safe in the future.

Those ideas, as well as an opportunity for the public to deliver feedback, were presented in a series of discussions hosted by city staff and held in three different rooms at the London Nelson Community Center on Thursday evening.

Attendees broke off into groups and rotated throughout three separate rooms. In one room, they learned about proposed revetment projects, traffic control projects and plugged into virtual reality headsets to learn about sea level rise in the area. In another room, consultant Farallon Strategies delivered a presentation on the roadmap for the project. In the third room, Save West Cliff gave a presentation on a mapping project.

“We’re welcoming everyone in to tour around the different sessions and chat with our presenters and learn more about what’s going on,” said city Communications Manager Erika Smart.

In November, a portion of the cliffside and sidewalk along West Cliff between Woodrow Avenue and Columbia Street was dislodged by an ocean swell. This damage was exacerbated by a series of bomb cyclones that battered the Santa Cruz coast in January, prompting a closure of West Cliff from Pelton Avenue to Almar Avenue, prompting the city to institute a temporary traffic control plan, where only one-way westbound vehicular traffic along West Cliff was permitted between Columbia and Woodrow, two-way bike and pedestrian access were open in the closed lane in that stretch, on-street parking in this section was prohibited, and West Cliff between Almar and the bridge east of David Way were open only to local traffic with shared lanes for bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

At its Feb. 28 meeting, the Santa Cruz City Council unanimously voted to move forward with a study for a one-way pilot program and explore ways to ease traffic concerns in nearby neighborhoods.

Transportation planner Claire Gallogly talked about options available once the right of way is put back in place, including allowing two-way traffic with no parking, one-way traffic with parking, installing a promenade or having a one-way parkway.

"It's a wide range of options," she told the Sentinel.

Galogly also said the presentations were about discussing regulatory framework.



Santa Cruz Transportation Planner Claire Gallogly delivers a presentation on traffic control proposals for West Cliff Drive once the revetment work is done. (Nick Sestanovich – Santa Cruz Sentinel)

"What does that look like?" she asked rhetorically. "What are the pathways we need to take moving forward, and what are those complicated steps?"

Galogly said the meetings were largely about garnering feedback. Attendees were given an opportunity to write their suggestions on poster sheets and place stickers next to statements they agreed with. Many statements suggested keeping two-way traffic on West Cliff. Other suggestions included implementing a roundabout in the existing parking lot before Columbia, making the stretch from Woodrow to Bay Street one-way to diffuse traffic in neighborhoods, separating cyclist pathways from pedestrian paths and removing rocks from failed revetments from the beach.

Public Works Director Nathan Nguyen and Senior Civil Engineer Josh Spangrud delivered presentations on the revetment process.

"We're here to talk about our efforts for the post-disaster recovery, as far as repairing the coastline and roadway, restoring it back to what it was," Nguyen told attendees.

Nguyen said 5,000 tons of riprap, or stones protecting soil from erosion, were displaced in the storm. There are five sites the city is seeking funding from the Federal Highway Administration for, including the culvert at Bethany Curve.

"These areas ... touch the path and roadway," he said. "FHWA has a disaster relief program that we believe West Cliff qualifies for because West Cliff is considered a federal aid route."

Other areas displaced by riprap would be covered under the Federal Emergency Management Agency for riprap replacement.

Nguyen said the projects would cost \$2 million in FEMA funds and \$15 million in FHWA funds, \$9 million of which would go toward the 100-year-old Bethany Curve culvert, which remains closed to vehicular traffic.

Nguyen told the Sentinel the city is working on qualifying for funds. The projects would potentially go out to bid this summer if funded.

"Ideally, if all things fall into place, we could be constructing in the fall to make these improvements at five different locations," he said. "That needs to be seen. We're still working on getting the development of those plans and spaces together."

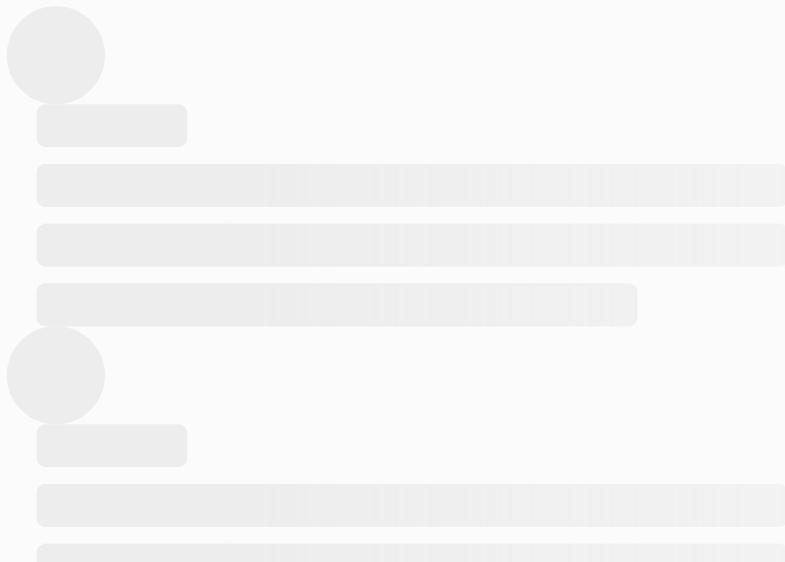
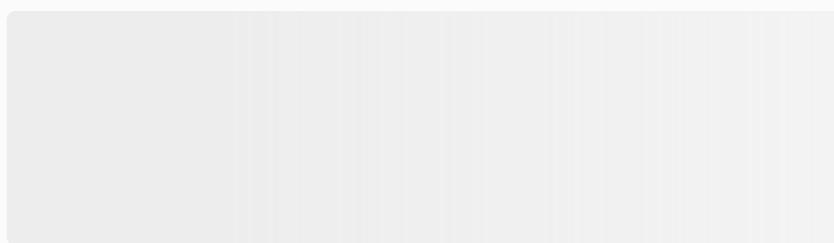
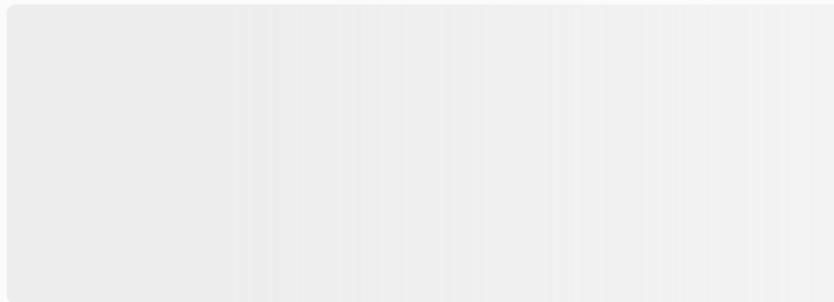
Nguyen said it has been good interacting with the public throughout the process.

"We know that there's a lot of moving parts, and I think in an event like this, it really goes to show how many people are working in this all together trying to find both near-term and long-term solutions," he said.

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Nick Sestanovich



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