

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

DATE: August 18, 2015

TO: Honorable Members of the Rules, Elections, Intergovernmental Relations, and
Neighborhoods Committee

FROM: Sharon M. Tso *Sharon M. Tso* Council File No.: 15-0002-S92
Chief Legislative Analyst Assignment No.: 15-08-0647

SUBJECT: California Scenic Highway Program.

CLA RECOMMENDATION: Adopt the attached Resolution (Bonin-Wesson) to include in the City's 2015-16 State Legislative Program SUPPORT for legislation or administrative action that extends formal State Scenic Highway designation to the stretch of Topanga Canyon Boulevard (SR-27) extending south from the Los Angeles City/County line south of Mulholland Drive to Pacific Coast Highway (SR-1) at Topanga State Beach.

SUMMARY

California's Scenic Highway Program was created by the Legislature in 1963, Streets and Highway Code, Section 260 et seq., to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. A highway may be designated scenic depending upon how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler's enjoyment of the view.

The scenic highway designation process begins with the submittal of a Resolution of Intent package by a city or county to the Department Transportation Advisory Committee (DTAC) through the appropriate Caltrans district office. The package must include a Resolution of Intent by the local governing body, along with various technical documents. If it is determined that the corridor meets the scenic criteria, the applicant must prepare and adopt a scenic corridor protection program. If it is determined that the program meets the legislative standards, a recommendation to designate the highway as scenic will be forwarded to the Caltrans Director.

Los Angeles County is pursuing a Scenic Highway Designation through Caltrans for an 11-mile stretch of Topanga Canyon Boulevard from the northern slope overlooking the San Fernando Valley to the Pacific Coast Highway. There is a small segment of Topanga Canyon Boulevard that traverses a part of the City of Los Angeles, which would be part of the new highway designation. In order for County to proceed with the process, Caltrans requires a resolution from any affected jurisdiction.

BACKGROUND

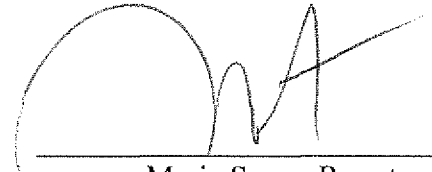
Topanga Canyon Boulevard (SR-27) traverses the central part of the Santa Monica Mountain range, and the canyon's ecosystem supports a diverse variety of plant species, of which many are identified as "plant communities of special concern" by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. SR-27 also offers the public a historical connection to the greater Los Angeles area's past, winding through ancient Tongvan territory, tracing the historic route of pioneers and homesteaders, and featuring



architecturally unique bridges and other architectural features that call to mind the original character of the highway when it was first built as a two-lane road for horses and wagons in the late 19th century.

DEPARTMENTS NOTIFIED

Department of Transportation

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, rounded 'M' followed by a smaller 'S' and a stylized 'R' with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Maria Souza-Rountree
Analyst

Attachments:

1. Resolution

SMT:msr

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, any official position of the City of Los Angeles with respect to legislation, rules, regulations or policies proposed to or pending before a local, state or federal government body or agency must have first been adopted in the form of a Resolution by the City Council with the concurrence of the Mayor; and

WHEREAS, the Santa Monica Mountains are an important public and environmental resource. Topanga Canyon is located in the central part of the mountain range, and the canyon's ecosystem supports a diverse variety of plant species, including Oak Woodlands, Coastal Sage Scrub, and Riparian Woodlands, all of which are identified as "plant communities of special concern" by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife; and

WHEREAS, Topanga Canyon is traversed by Topanga Canyon Boulevard (SR 27), a state highway located in the western portion of the City linking the San Fernando Valley with the Pacific Coast Highway through the Santa Monica Mountain range; and

WHEREAS, more than three-quarters of a million travelers each year enjoy SR 27's stunning views and captivating landscape as they pass through the vibrant Topanga Creek Watershed, which is home to protected plant life and rugged geological formations; and

WHEREAS, traveling north along Topanga Canyon Boulevard from the Pacific Ocean into the Canyon, travelers see a wide variety of distinct geologic features, rock formations, and the ancient landslides that have helped to create the unique character of the Canyon -- traveling south yields a different perspective, with broad vistas of the Canyon, natural ridgelines, mountainous landscapes, and distinct valleys all coming into view; and

WHEREAS, SR 27 also offers the public a historical connection to the greater Los Angeles area's past, winding through ancient Tongvan territory, tracing the historic route of pioneers and homesteaders, and featuring architecturally unique bridges and other architectural features that call to mind the original character of the highway when it was first built as a two-lane road for horses and wagons in the late 19th century; and

WHEREAS, the center of Topanga "village" is located along SR 27, approximately half way through the Canyon -- the "village" contains a historic US Post Office, fire station, small shops, restaurants, a public library, and a Caltrans-installed traffic signal designed to look like an old-fashioned lamppost, which is unique among traffic signals along the state highway system; and

WHEREAS, while SR 27 passes primarily through unincorporated Los Angeles County, a portion of the highway just south of Topanga "village" is located in the City of Los Angeles and passes through a rather undeveloped section of the Canyon before continuing back into the unincorporated area; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the economic and aesthetic value of scenic highways, the State Legislature established the California Scenic Highway Program in 1963 to showcase and promote the state's most visually appealing roads; and


AUG 11 2015

WHEREAS, SR 27 merits recognition as one of the state's picturesque highways, thereby increasing public awareness of this scenic resource; and

WHEREAS, any official position of the City of Los Angeles with respect to legislation, rules, regulations or policies proposed to or pending before a local, state or federal governmental body or agency must have first been adopted in the form of a Resolution by the City Council with the concurrence of the Mayor;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, with the concurrence of the Mayor, that by the adoption of this Resolution, the City of Los Angeles hereby includes in its 2015-16 State Legislative Program SUPPORT for any legislation or administrative action that officially requests Caltrans to favorably consider the request to extend formal State Scenic Highway designation to the stretch of Topanga Canyon Boulevard extending south from the Los Angeles City/County line south of Mulholland Drive to Pacific Coast Highway (SR1) at Topanga State Beach.

PRESENTED BY:



MIKE BONIN
Councilmember, 11th District

SECONDED BY:

