

This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document provides information on commonly asked questions and responses related to the La Honda Parking and Trailhead Access Project.

1. What are the goals of the La Honda Parking and Trailhead Access Project?

- a. Establish new public access in the central portion of La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve
- b. Design elements to reflect the rural character of the site and the Red Barn
- c. Provide safe public access
- d. Balance public access with grazing activities and other uses
- e. Include amenities that facilitate environmental education
- f. Protect scenic views of and from the site
- g. Protect natural resources to the extent possible
- h. Incorporate climate change adaptation where appropriate
- i. Provide equitable access opportunities to accommodate the diverse community Midpen serves

2. How has the La Honda community been engaged in the project?

In 2019, District Board members, La Honda Community members and constituents from throughout the District’s service area formed the La Honda Public Access Working Group (PAWG) to identify sites to consider for expanding public access to the central area of La Honda Creek Preserve. More specifically, the PAWG consisted of two La Honda residents as stakeholders from District Ward 6, where La Honda is located, three community representatives from La Honda, one ward stakeholder for each of the six other wards, and two District Board members.

Over eight months and seven meetings, the PAWG evaluated site conditions and developed recommendations for the District to explore three sites that could potentially provide public access to the central area of the Preserve. On October 21, 2020, the Board accepted the PAWG’s recommendations, moving the project forward with their recommendations into the feasibility phase of the project. The feasibility study analyzed existing conditions and the opportunities and constraints associated with each site and developed initial concept designs and cost estimates for each site. The feasibility study was presented to the full Board twice for Board and public comment in 2024 and was affirmed by the Board on June 24, 2024.

Currently, the conceptual site designs are undergoing environmental review. These conceptual designs reflect the PAWG recommendations as noted above. The environmental analysis phase has been temporarily placed on hold while the Board evaluates revised conceptual design options for Site D and Site E3 prepared in response to updated traffic recommendations arising from a 2025 peer review of the prior 2024 traffic report. Opportunities to provide public comment on the revised design options include: the March 31, 2026 Planning and Natural Resources Committee meeting (informational only), the May 13, 2026 Board meeting (informational only), and a tentatively scheduled June 24, 2026 Board meeting where the Board will select the preferred design option for each site.

The design options the Board selects for Site D and Site E3 will be incorporated in the CEQA project description along with Site B2 whose design is unchanged, allowing environmental review to resume. The public will have an opportunity to comment on the environmental review document during the 30-day public review period prior and leading up to when the Board will consider CEQA certification and project approval, tentatively scheduled for Spring 2027. Following this, the project would proceed to final design, permitting and construction.

3. What is the project proposing?

The District is preparing designs for three proposed parking and trailhead areas to support ecologically sensitive public access to the central portion of the vast La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve in a way that is protective of the area's rural character, scenic views and working agricultural lands.

The project proposes three (3) parking and trailhead sites. The feasibility study conceptual designs included the following programming, however, redesign of Site D could change the amount of parking spaces.

- Site B2 – Sears Ranch Road Expansion
 - A lower gravel parking lot with 54 spaces:
 - Four new equestrian trailer parking spaces (each space accommodating a two-horse trailer for a total of eight horses)
 - 50 additional standard parking spaces
 - Reconfiguration of the existing upper paved parking with 21 total spaces:
 - Four restriped ADA parking spaces
 - 17 standard parking spaces
 - Trail access from the lower parking lot to the upper parking lot and trail system
 - Widening the Sears Ranch Road driveway entrance to 20 feet with improvements
 - New gates to prevent public vehicular access to grazing areas
 - New hitching posts and mounting blocks for equestrian use at the lower lot and the upper lot near the restroom
- Site D – near Gate LH07
 - A paved parking lot with 28 ¹spaces:
 - Two ADA spaces on a concrete pad
 - 26 standard parking spaces
 - Vault restroom located adjacent to the parking lot
 - New driveway off Highway 84
 - New, automatic, solar gate to prevent public vehicular access outside normal operating hours
 - Traffic safety enhancements such as warning beacons
 - New trailhead and trail connection to the internal trail system via a newly replaced trail bridge over La Honda Creek
- Site E3 – Red Barn Area

¹ The Site D redesign could reduce the number of spaces to 26 spaces.

- A gravel parking area with 18 spaces:
 - One ADA space on a concrete pad
 - 17 standard parking spaces
- Restricted entry and limited access via a permit reservation system and/or docent-led access only to control level of use
- Improvements to existing driveway off Highway 84
- Traffic safety enhancements such as median barriers and warning beacons
- Trail access from the proposed parking lot to the Red Barn

4. How has the La Honda community’s concerns about protecting the aesthetics of the scenic highway been addressed?

Compared to early designs that date back to 2017/18, the new conceptual designs for the proposed parking area at Site E3 are greatly reduced in scale and scope, with several natural and rural elements incorporated to protect the aesthetics of the surrounding Red Barn site.

To protect scenic views from Highway 84, the designs for Site D and Site E3 incorporate the following elements:

- Keeping the scale/footprint of each site small: For Site E3, the total number of parking spaces is greatly reduced (down to 18 spaces) compared to earlier conceptual design showing 50-75 spaces (June 12, 2018 Conceptual Alternative 3 and Phase 2 site plan), and access is restricted to by-permit use and/or docent-led activities only. For Site D, parking is limited to 26-28 spaces.
- For both Sites E3 and D, tucking the parking areas behind existing and new proposed vegetation to screen views of the small parking areas from the highway.
- For site E3, modified parking circulation and site layout that uses the existing ranch roads for vehicles to access the parking area
- Site E3 uses parking area materials that blend with the surrounding environment (gravel, natural color materials, wood elements, etc.)
- Retaining and preserving the white corrals on the site, in the foreground, such that the corrals will continue to be the primary landscape feature alongside the Red Barn at Site E3.

5. How have the La Honda community’s concerns about traffic and safety been addressed?

As part of the planning process, extensive traffic analysis was conducted at each proposed public access site to ensure that each site met Caltrans standards.

Following Board affirmation of the PAWG recommendations, the District conducted a comprehensive traffic study for the recommended sites (Site B2, Site D and Site E3) in June 2024 as part of the feasibility study. The 2024 traffic study included collision analysis and speed data for numerous days across both winter and summer months.

To confirm the findings and recommendations of the 2024 traffic study, the District voluntarily conducted a peer review in August 2025 during the early environmental review process. Because the placement of each driveway and any proposed safety improvements along Highway 84

requires Caltrans approval, the 2025 peer review traffic study focused on confirming that the proposed driveways met AASHTO standards.

The 2025 speed surveys reaffirm that the design speed remains at 50-mph, with no changes identified between 2021 and 2025 based on the available data. Additionally, these traffic surveys indicate that the traffic volume remains consistent as of 2021.

The 2025 peer review did identify that Site D and Site E3's driveway locations did not meet Caltrans sight distance standards, and recommended changes to those locations. The traffic consultant recommends moving Site D's driveway 90 feet north of the existing preserve gate with a stop bar located 15 feet back from the edge of Highway 84. At Site E3, the traffic consultant recommends only using the southern driveway for public use as the entry and exit point for the small parking area, removing the northern driveway from public use. With these changes incorporated, the revised site design options for Site D and Site E3 meet the required Caltrans sight distance standards.

Furthermore, although not required, the designs also include the use of advanced warning signage and flashing beacons at both driveway locations and the addition of a highway median at Site E3 to enhance traffic safety along Highway 84.

6. Why does the District not conduct a comprehensive assessment that includes a full collision analysis and a speed study covering all seasons?

The proposed parking areas recommended by the La Honda Creek Public Access Working Group's (PAWG) underwent a traffic study in 2024 and a peer review traffic study in 2025. Extensive traffic analysis was conducted through these efforts to ensure the sites meet Caltrans standards. Below is a more detailed account of the traffic studies:

After the District's Board of Directors (Board) accepted the PAWG recommendations, the District conducted a comprehensive traffic study for the recommended sites (Sites B2, D and E3) in June 2024 as part of a feasibility study. The 2024 traffic study included collision analysis and speed data for days in both winter and summer months.

To confirm the findings and recommendations of the 2024 traffic study, the District voluntarily conducted an expert peer review in August 2025. Because placement of the driveways and any proposed safety improvements along Highway 84 require Caltrans approval, the 2025 peer review traffic study focused on confirming that the proposed driveways met Caltrans design standards. Additionally, the peer review traffic consultant reviewed the most recent collision data along Highway 84 for the time period of April 2024 to December 2025.

As part of the 2024 traffic study (LSA), speed surveys were conducted multiple times in 2021 and 2023:

- Between Wednesday, November 3, 2021, and Saturday, November 6, 2021
- Between Thursday, July 13, 2023, and Saturday, July 15, 2023.
- Between Thursday, December 7, 2023, and Saturday, December 9, 2023.

As part of the 2025 peer review traffic study (Hexagon), speed surveys were conducted as follow:

- Between Thursday, August 14, 2025, and Saturday, August 16, 2025

The 2025 speed surveys reaffirmed the previous design speed at 50-mph, with no notable changes in speed between 2021 and 2025. Additionally, both traffic surveys indicate that the traffic volume has been consistent since 2021.

7. Does Site E3 and Site D align with the PAWG’s original recommendations – for limited, permit-only or docent-led access with minimal infrastructure?

Per the PAWG’s recommendations, Site E3 is proposed to be a small lot with 18 spaces with limited access through by-permit use and/or docent-led access only. The site designs for Site E3 Options 1 and 2 are both consistent with the Board-approved PAWG recommendations.

While by-permit only access was initially considered for Site D, the final PAWG recommendations for Site D did not include “limited access to by-permit use or docent-led access only.” Therefore, Site D is consistent with the PAWG Board-approved recommendations.

The final LHC PAWG recommendations for Site D and Site E3 are shown to the right, pulled directly from the PAWG report (page 44).

The District appreciates the PAWG’s participation in the planning and evaluation of potential parking site locations and in shaping the outcomes of the PAWG recommendations to

the District Board of Directors. Additional information regarding the La Honda PAWG process can be reviewed in the report posted on the District’s webpage: [La Honda Creek Report 071620.pdf](#).

Site D – Preserve Gate LH07

Location for a proposed small parking lot (size to be determined by physical and other constraints) with trailhead access and restroom facilities

Site E3 – Red Barn Area

Location for a proposed small parking lot (size to be determined by physical and other constraints), with limited access (specific constraints to be determined during feasibility study phase, but potential options include permit only/docent-led only conditions)

8. Can a design alternative advance into CEQA review if sight distance measurements exceed standards by one foot or less and perpetual vegetation management within the Caltrans right-of-way may be needed to maintain safe sight lines?

At Site D, the traffic consultant confirmed that the stopping site distance is considered adequate at the proposed revised driveway location that is now 90 feet north of gate LH07, with a stop bar 15 feet from the edge of pavement under the existing conditions with roadside vegetation. The one-foot difference between the 475-foot required sight distance and the 474-foot measured sight distance is within typical field tolerance and does not change the conclusion that the proposed design meets safety standards. Field sight distance measurements with moving traffic commonly have small tolerances due to how the distance is measured and the assumed driver eye positions at the traffic stop bar and in the traffic lanes. The sight distance measurement was conducted under existing conditions without any vegetation clearing. The engineer’s report indicates that vegetation removal on the hillside would improve the line-of-sight conditions. The vegetation

removal would result in full removal of the roadway frontage vegetation at strategic locations, versus pruning and cutting back, to prevent annual regrowth. Nonetheless, these sites will be monitored to ensure no new vegetation is established in these zones.

Site E3 exceeds the Caltrans standard for stopping sight distance for new driveways. The measured sight distance southbound and northbound exceeds the standard by 100 feet or more. As a result, the revised designs for Site E3 and Site D can proceed into the environmental review phase, pending Board selection of the revised design options, to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

9. The left-turn intersection sight distance is 130 feet short of the AASHTO standard at Site D and 25 feet short at Site E3? How can a design move forward if standards cannot be met at these locations?

Two types of sight distances, stopping sight distance and corner (intersection) sight distance, have been evaluated for the Project. Stopping sight distance refers to the minimum distance a driver traveling on a roadway needs in order to perceive a hazard and safely bring a vehicle to a complete stop. Compliance with Caltrans stopping sight distance standards is specifically required for approval of driveway improvements.

Corner (intersection) sight distance, by contrast, is the distance required for a driver on a minor road to see approaching traffic and safely enter, cross, or turn onto a major road. Its purpose is to ensure that a driver can enter the roadway within an acceptable gap without causing on-coming traffic to slow down, rather than to avoid a collision through stopping. Meeting corner (intersection) sight distance is not a requirement for Caltrans approval of driveway improvements.

Although the 2024 Traffic Study found that Site E3 and Site D do not meet AASHTO Green Book intersection sight distance criteria, compliance with those criteria is not required for Caltrans' approval of the proposed driveway access. According to the 2025 peer review, the revised proposed driveway configurations for both Site E3 and Site D satisfy Caltrans stopping sight distance requirements.

The revised site designs for Sites E3 and D are both consistent with the PAWG (and Board) approved recommendations and meet Caltrans requirements. Pending the Board of Directors' acceptance of the revised designs for Sites E3 and D, the District would be able to proceed with environmental review for compliance with the California Environmental Quality (CEQA).

At Site D, the traffic consultant has confirmed that the stopping site distance is adequate at the new driveway location for Site D that is now 90 feet north of gate LH07, with a stop bar 15 feet from the edge of pavement with the vegetation. The one-foot difference between the 475-foot required sight distance and the 474-foot measured sight distance is within typical field tolerance and does not change the conclusion that the proposed design meets safety standards. Field sight distance measurements with moving traffic commonly have small tolerances due to how the distance is measured and the assumed driver eye positions at the traffic stop bar and in the traffic

lanes. The sight distance measurement was conducted under existing conditions without any vegetation clearing. The report indicates that vegetation removal on the hillside would improve the line-of-sight conditions. Note that vegetation removal would result in full removal of the roadway frontage vegetation at strategic locations, versus pruning and cutting back, to prevent regrowth. Nonetheless, these sites will be monitored to ensure no new vegetation is established in these zones.

At Site E3, the traffic consultant has determined that Site E3 exceeds the Caltrans standard for stopping sight distance. In both southbound and northbound, the measured sight distance exceeds the standard by 100 feet or more.

10. Has the District considered the most recent collision history for Highway 84?

Both traffic consultants (LSA and Hexagon) reviewed the available collision data from the Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS) database. Hexagon reviewed the most recent collision data along Highway 84 from the SWITRS database for the time period of April 2024 – December 2025. Recent trends remain consistent with the trends found in the 2024 study, with most traffic issues related to unsafe speeds and improper passing/turning. The 2024 traffic study and 2025 peer review both indicate that the concentration of documented collisions do not occur at the proposed Site E3 (southern) driveway and the proposed Site D driveway. Accidents are concentrated away from these two proposed driveway locations.

11. How is the District addressing illegal vehicular passing at Site E3?

Although not technically required, the 2024 traffic study recommends adding a median on the straight-away in front of Site E3 to prevent vehicle passing. This measure would enhance overall general traffic safety along this stretch of the highway, regardless of whether vehicles are entering or existing Midpen land.

12. How is the District evaluating speed data and addressing the outliers when vehicle speeds exceed the posted speed limit?

The 2024 traffic study included multiple speed surveys to identify the observed vehicle speeds. The recorded vehicle speeds were higher than the posted speed limit of 40 mph. Based on traffic engineering standards, the plans for Site D and Site E3 are designed with a 50-mph design speed based on the 85th percentile of observed vehicle speeds for both sites. A 50-mph design speed requires a longer line of sight distance than a 40-mph design speed, per the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Green Book.

Per industry standards, projects are designed to the 85th percentile speed. Caltrans, who is the authorizing regulatory agency for the highway, bases their sight distance requirements on the 85th percentile speed. It is unreasonable and inconsistent with established standards for the District or any other property owner to design driveways using outlier speeds.

13. How is the District addressing the different estimated sight distances for the Site E3 driveway as provided in the two traffic consultant studies?

As noted in the 2025 peer review, the previously evaluated northern driveway at Site E3 was found to not provide adequate line of sight and is therefore no longer recommended as a driveway location. However, the southern driveway was affirmed to meet all Caltrans (AASHTO) stopping sight distance requirements. As a result, the revised site plan options for Site E3 now solely utilize the southern driveway for both the entrance and exit.

The traffic consultant has confirmed that the stopping sight distance is the only Caltrans sight distance requirement required for new driveways. The intersection sight distance is not a Caltrans requirement for approving driveway improvements.

See tables below showing sight distances provided in the 2024 traffic study and the 2025 peer review traffic study.

Although not required, per the peer review traffic consultant, advance warning signage (flashing beacons) would provide enhanced traffic safety. This signage is included in the Site D and Site E3 redesigns being shared with the Board.

2024 Traffic Study – Site E3 – Sight Distance Analysis

Table L: Site E3 Exit Driveway Sight Distance

Note: intersection sight distances are not required by Caltrans for driveways.

Speed (mph)	Recommended Sight Distance (ft)		
	Stopping Sight Distance ¹	Intersection Sight Distance	
		Left-Turn from Stop ¹	Right-Turn from Stop ²
25	155	280	240
40	305	445	385
45	360	500	430
50	425	555	480
60	570	665	575
70	730	775	670
Measured Sight Distance			
At E3 Exit Driveway	525	530	525

Source 1: A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets, 6th Edition (AASHTO 2011).

Source 2: La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve – Red Barn Access Study (Hexagon 2016).

¹ Table 9-6 (AASHTO 2011).

² Table 9-8 (AASHTO 2011).

AASHTO = American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials

ft = feet

mph = miles per hour

Table 2
Sight Distance at Site E3 South Driveway

Location	Measured Sight Distance ¹		Sight Distance Standard ²
	Looking Left (SB traffic)	Looking Right (NB traffic)	
Site E3 South Driveway	525 ft	530 ft	425 ft

Notes:
ft = feet; NB = northbound; SB = southbound
¹ The sight distance at Site E3 south driveway was measured in the field by Hexagon in 2016.
² The sight distance standard reflects a design speed of 50 mph for stopping sight distance in the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)'s 2011 *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets (Green Book)*.

14. How is the District addressing the different estimated sight distances for the Site D driveway as provided in the two traffic consultant studies?

Hexagon has confirmed that locating the new driveway 90 feet north of Gate LH07 will provide adequate stopping distance without the need for any vegetation clearing. A one-foot difference between the 475-foot required sight distance and the 474-foot measured sight distance exists and is within the typical field tolerance and does not change the safety conclusion. Field sight distance measurements with moving traffic commonly have small tolerances due to how the distance is measured and the assumed driver eye positions at the traffic stop bar and in the traffic lanes. The sight distance measurement was conducted under existing conditions without any vegetation clearing and was confirmed by the traffic consultant to meet line of sight requirements. The report indicates that vegetation removal on the hillside would improve the line of sight conditions.

The District would work with Caltrans for an encroachment permit to remove vegetation at strategic locations along the highway frontage. The District will seek to wholly remove specific plants, versus depend on ongoing pruning and cutting back. The District will also monitor the site to remove any new growth that may come in.

15. Are traffic safety mitigations needed for the proposed driveways? If not, are there any traffic calming measures that can be considered for the new driveway locations?

The proposed driveway locations for Site E3 and Site D meet the Caltrans stopping sight distance standards, which are the only sight distance standards required by Caltrans to permit new driveways. As a result, traffic mitigations for vehicles entering the highway are not required. However, traffic calming measures could be considered to enhance safety. The traffic consultants have proposed advanced warning signage and flashing beacons at both locations, as well as a traffic median on the straight-away in front of Site E3 to provide enhanced traffic safety.

16. How is the District addressing roadway access and other infrastructure at Site E3 that is necessary for emergency response and public safety services (e.g., services provided by the Fire Brigade, San Mateo County Fire and other responders)? Has the District considered the implications to emergency operations?

The parking feasibility study design for Site E3 was shared with San Mateo County Fire and their comments and requirements/requests have been incorporated into the revised design options (including adding pullouts every 400 feet along the internal circulation driveways). These pullouts are standard requirements for longer, narrow driveways, regardless of where these driveways are located.

Also, the helicopter landing zone at Site E3 remains in place. Given that the use of this small, 18-space parking area will be highly controlled via by-permit access and/or docent-led activities only, the level of parking use will be limited. As such, when the landing zone is needed, District Rangers will close and/or highly control driving access using the site's existing gates and fences to ensure that the landing zone remains in operation without delays.

As a reminder, San Mateo County fire requirements must be met for each parking area to obtain the necessary building permits for construction.

17. How were the PAWG's traffic safety and access concerns related to Highway 84 addressed in the revised site plans for Site E3 and Site D?

To address the PAWG's traffic safety concerns and confirm the proposed designs meet safety standards, the District voluntarily conducted a peer review of the 2024 traffic study developed during the feasibility study. When the 2025 traffic peer review provided new traffic recommendations, staff conducted additional site analyses and redesigned the site plans for both Site D and Site E3 to ensure that the driveways at each site meet Caltrans line of sight requirements. The CEQA phase of the project was placed on hold to prepare and present revised site designs to the Board for their consideration before resuming environmental review.

As suggested in the feasibility study traffic report and supported by the 2025 peer review, traffic calming measures are included in each site design. The traffic calming measures include flashing beacons and advance warning signs at both the Site E3 and Site D driveways to alert drivers on the highway of vehicles entering the highway. At Site E3, a median is also proposed to prevent passing, which can also reduce traffic speeds since drivers would no longer be tempted to increase speeds for the purpose of passing slower vehicles along this stretch of highway.

18. How have local fire agencies been involved in the planning process?

As part of the feasibility study phase of the project, the District worked to consult with fire agencies. In 2023, the District held a joint meeting and invited representatives from the La Honda Fire Brigade and San Mateo Fire. Meeting attendees included the project's feasibility study consultant, traffic consultant, District staff and San Mateo County Fire; at this meeting, the designs were reviewed and discussed. Although invited, the La Honda Fire Brigade did not attend the meeting. The District incorporated recommendations from San Mateo County Fire into the Feasibility Study Conceptual Designs.

Staff was able to meet recently with the La Honda Fire Brigade on May 7, 2026, and the Fire Chief provided comments and questions on the updated redesigns for Sites D and E3 and the Site B2 feasibility study conceptual design. The La Honda Fire Brigade remains concerned about

safety and out of town drivers who are unfamiliar with Highway 84 accessing the driveways along Highway 84 (Site D and E3). Their feedback included:

- Overall support for additional parking at Site B2
- Concerns about driveway locations at Sites E3 and D
- Emergency landing zone could be maintained within the proposed parking at Site E3

Staff reached out to the San Mateo County Sheriff's office to discuss collision data. The Sheriff's Office referred the District to the California Highway Patrol (CHP). The District's traffic consultant reviewed and analyzed the Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS) data and found that the most common primary collision factor is improper turning followed by unsafe speed. The 2024 traffic report and 2025 peer review both indicate collisions are not documented at the proposed Site E3 (southern) driveway or at the Site D driveway. Accidents are concentrated away from these two proposed driveway locations.

The project will undergo additional review by San Mateo County Fire and other regulatory agencies during the permitting process.

19. Will roadside parking be restricted near new parking areas?

The District will work to restrict parking along Highway 84 near the new parking areas. Implementation of parking restrictions and associated signage will require approval from Caltrans through their encroachment permit process and potentially also approval from the County of San Mateo, if required.

20. Where can I find more information about the Feasibility Study?

The [feasibility study](https://www.openspace.org/what-we-do/projects/la-honda-creek-parking-and-trailhead-access-project) is available on the project webpage at: <https://www.openspace.org/what-we-do/projects/la-honda-creek-parking-and-trailhead-access-project>

21. How can the public stay up to date and engaged with this project?

Members of the public can sign up to receive updates and notifications on the project web page: <https://www.openspace.org/what-we-do/projects/la-honda-creek-parking-and-trailhead-access-project>

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