

# RICHARDSON GROVE OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT FACTS





## History

Added to the State Highway System in 1909, U.S. Highway 101 in and around Richardson Grove State Park in southern Humboldt County follows the west bank of the South Fork Eel River. This scenic corridor is lined by old growth redwood trees, souvenir shops, service stations, campgrounds, residences, and a drug and alcohol recovery center. It is a narrow and winding two-lane road with a 35 MPH speed limit. Named after California's twenty-fifth governor, Friend W. Richardson, Richardson Grove State Park was established in 1922.

## What will the project do?

A long-standing transportation priority for Humboldt County, this project will provide access for industry-standard sized trucks on U.S. Highway 101. These trucks, referred to as STAA (Surface Transportation Assistance Act) trucks, are the industry standard and are allowed by law on highways like U.S. Highway 101 throughout the nation. STAA trucks can be longer than the currently-allowed California Legal trucks.

This project will remove the last restriction that prohibits these trucks on U.S. Highway 101 in Northern California and also improves safety for other large vehicles like recreational vehicles and for all users of this portion of U.S. Highway 101.

## Why is there no STAA Access now?

STAA trucks have been prohibited from this section of U.S. Highway 101 because the tight radius curves between the large redwood trees make it difficult for the longer trucks to stay within their lane without using part of the opposing lane of traffic ("off-tracking") or traveling off the roadway and onto the shoulder. Two STAA trucks may not be able to pass safely in opposite directions.

## What changes will Caltrans make?

The changes this project will make to provide STAA access include the minor realignment of curves and minor widening where necessary. This project will not make the road straighter or significantly wider. These changes will allow trucks to enter curves at the best possible angle to avoid off-tracking into objects on the shoulder or into the opposite lane.

The minor realignment will accommodate industry-standard sized trucks while the completed project will maintain the curvilinear highway, the old growth trees, the park ambience, and the "gateway" feeling of the Grove.

To find out more about this important highway project, please visit:

**[dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-1/d1-projects/d1-richardson-grove-improvement-project](https://dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-1/d1-projects/d1-richardson-grove-improvement-project)**

## How will this project affect the Eel River?

This project will have a negligible impact on the water quality and no impact on the visual characteristics of the nearby wild and scenic South Fork Eel River.

*No old growth trees  
will be removed or  
threatened by this  
project.*

38 total trees over four inches in diameter will need to be removed. 21 of the trees that need to be removed are in Richardson Grove State Park and 17 are outside of the park. Nearly all of the trees to be removed are on previously disturbed areas near the roadway. Only two redwoods in the park would be removed -- the larger of the two is eight inches in diameter at breast height (four and a half feet above the ground). Other trees to be removed include tan oaks and Douglas-firs.

## What about impacts to old growth redwood roots?

A registered consulting arborist was hired to assess potential impacts to old growth redwood trees. He concluded that even if no protective measures were used, project activities would be inconsequential to the continued vigorous health of the trees. Caltrans will be implementing measures to minimize disturbance and to protect the roots of old growth redwood trees during construction.

For the construction of new roadway structural sections, work in the structural root zone of old growth trees will be done by hand, not by heavy equipment. A tool called a pneumatic excavator -- sometimes referred to by the trade name Air Spade -- will be used. It is a proven nondestructive excavation tool that utilizes compressed air forced through a specialized nozzle to remove soil or gravel and will leave tree roots undamaged. This device has been used by certified arborists and specified by many cities for various purposes such as soil decompaction as part of an overall tree healthcare management program, root collar excavation, trenching, root pruning, and root structure analysis.

In areas where minor widening would occur, the roadway will be designed to minimize impacts to the roots. A certified arborist as well as a Native American monitor and Caltrans Archaeologist will be onsite to monitor this work.





*U.S. Highway 101 is the North Coast's most important transportation corridor. The Richardson Grove Operational Improvement Project will make minor changes to the current alignment to remove a long-standing restriction on industry-standard sized trucks.*



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