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Alternate Site Approved for New Siskiyou Courthouse

SAN FRANCISCO—The State Public Works Board (SPWB) has approved selection of an alternate site in Yreka for the proposed new courthouse for the Superior Court of Siskiyou County. The alternate site is approximately four acres of privately held, vacant land in southwestern Yreka on the south side of Moonlit Oaks Avenue between Campus Drive and South Main Street.

The SPWB approved the preferred site—approximately 2.4 acres in downtown Yreka comprising multiple parcels bounded by Oregon Street, South Street, Fourth Street, and Butte Street—in August 2011.

“The New Yreka Courthouse has just passed a major milestone by receiving approval of both the primary and alternate sites for this project,” said Presiding Judge Laura Masunaga of the Superior Court of Siskiyou County. “This is one of the most crucial steps in the process. We look forward to continued progress toward finalizing the site.”

Approval of a preferred site and an alternate site is a standard part of the state’s site selection process for courthouse projects. SPWB approval allows the state Administrative Office of the Courts, which is managing the project, to undertake further due diligence, environmental assessment under the California Environmental Quality Act, and negotiations with sellers that will ultimately result in finalization of the site. Site selection and environmental review, as well as site acquisition (which also requires SPWB approval), must be completed before architectural design of the new courthouse can begin. The architecture firm of EHDD has been selected to design the new courthouse.

The planned new six-courtroom courthouse will replace the current four-courtroom Siskiyou Courthouse, which is overcrowded and has significant security deficiencies. For example, it lacks on-site in-custody holding and separate circulation areas for in-custody defendants, staff, and the public. The current courthouse also has severe functional deficiencies and lacks accessibility for people with disabilities.

The New Yreka Courthouse project was ranked as an “immediate need” in the judicial branch’s capital-outlay plan, making it among the branch’s highest-priority infrastructure projects. It is one of 41 projects funded by Senate Bill 1407, which finances critically needed courthouse construction, renovation, and repair through a portion of judicial branch fees, penalties, and assessments, without impact on the state’s General Fund.

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The state Budget Act for fiscal year 2011–2012 contains significant cuts to the judicial branch budget in general and to the account that funds SB 1407 projects in particular. These cuts may cause delays in SB 1407 projects. It will be several months before the impact of these cuts on specific projects is known, but in the meantime, the Yreka project will continue with site selection and acquisition activities.

More information about the project is available on the California Courts website at www.courts.ca.gov/facilities-siskiyou.htm.

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