

# State Route 4 realignment project price tag goes up \$3 mil

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Change orders, cost overruns and construction delays continue to plague the State Route 4 “Wagon Trail” Realignment Project.

The Calaveras County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday heard the estimated cost of the project has gone up from \$49.9 million back in May to \$53 million.

The initial phase of the road construction project goes 3.2 miles from Bonanza Mine Way to Appaloosa Road west of Angels Camp and the contractor, Sukut Construction, was asking for the board to approve a \$2.1 million change.

Interim Public Works Director Craig Pedro said the change order would only cover construction costs up to this time and anticipated the board would be asked for another \$1 million in September.

District 1 Supervisor Gary Tofanelli questioned why the contractor was permitted to incur costs past the previous change order.

If another order is approved, Tofanelli said the contractor “can’t go past the change order and expect to get paid for it.”

“To me it feels like the tail is wagging the dog,” said District 3 Supervisor Martin Huberty. “It doesn’t sound like anyone is holding Sukut accountable.”

Board Chair and District 2 Supervisor Jack Garamendi was critical of the construction management team.

At the beginning of the year before construction resumed “we recognized the construction management team had not been holding up their side and we were told it’s going to get better,” Garamendi said. “I’m not so sure it’s getting better. It’s certainly getting more expensive and we paid millions of dollars to have this project managed and it looks like it’s not being managed.”

A critical component of the cost overruns, changes and delays has been the discovery of Native American artifacts in the construction area. To protect many of those artifacts, construction of a Mechanically Stabilized Earth retaining wall has been added to the project. It is estimated the wall added another \$10 million to costs (of) the project.

Up to now, state funding has been used to cover the project, Pedro told the board. When those funds are exceeded, the county will have to use its own Road Impact Mitigation fees.

Further consideration of the change order and possible approval was pushed back to the board’s Sept. 10 meeting.

Construction of Phase 1 began in January of 2022 and was anticipated to be completed late this year. However, work is expected to continue through mid-2025.

Phase 2, which includes work from Appaloosa Road for approximately 3 miles eastward towards Angel Camp, began in 2022 with the award of a design contract. Design and right-of-way work for this phase should be completed in 2026 with construction beginning some time after.