Meeting Date: 10/21/26
Lease Number: 8687
Staff: M. Sapunor

Staff Report 45

APPLICANT:

City of Huntington Beach

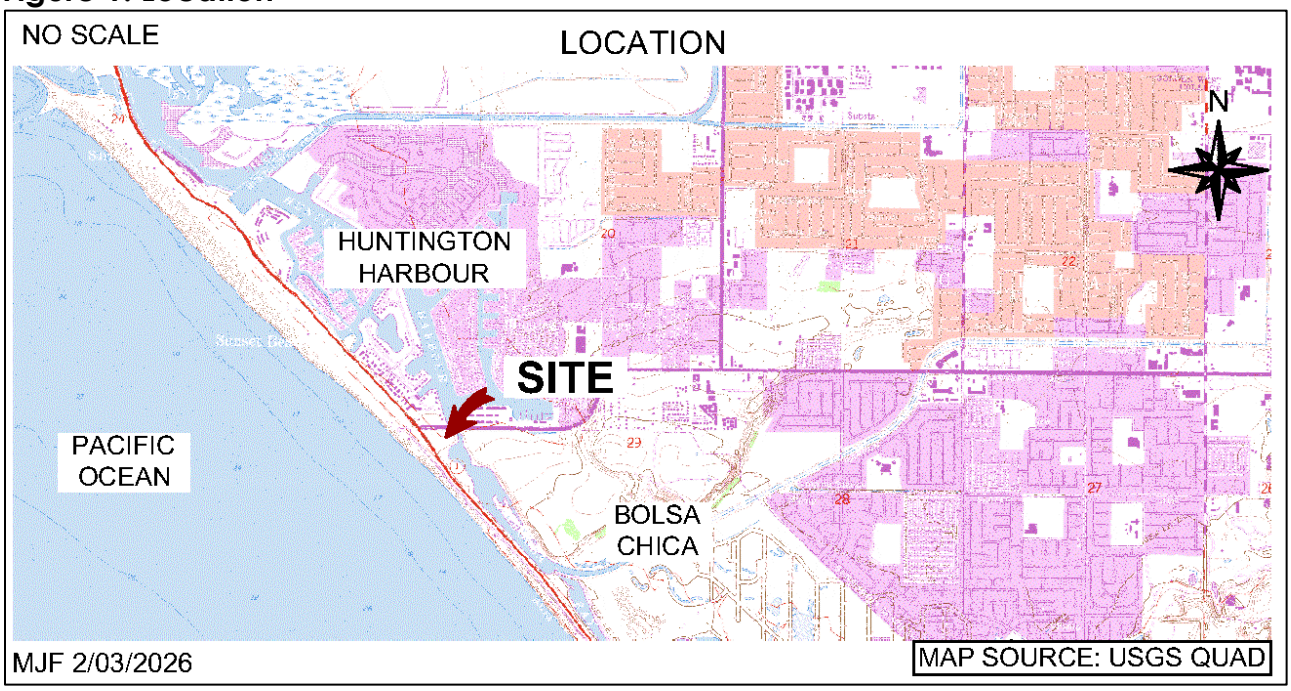
PROPOSED ACTION:

Issuance of a General Lease – Public Agency Use.

AREA, LAND TYPE, AND LOCATION:

Sovereign land adjacent to 3842 Warner Avenue, near Huntington Beach, Orange County (as shown in Figure 1).

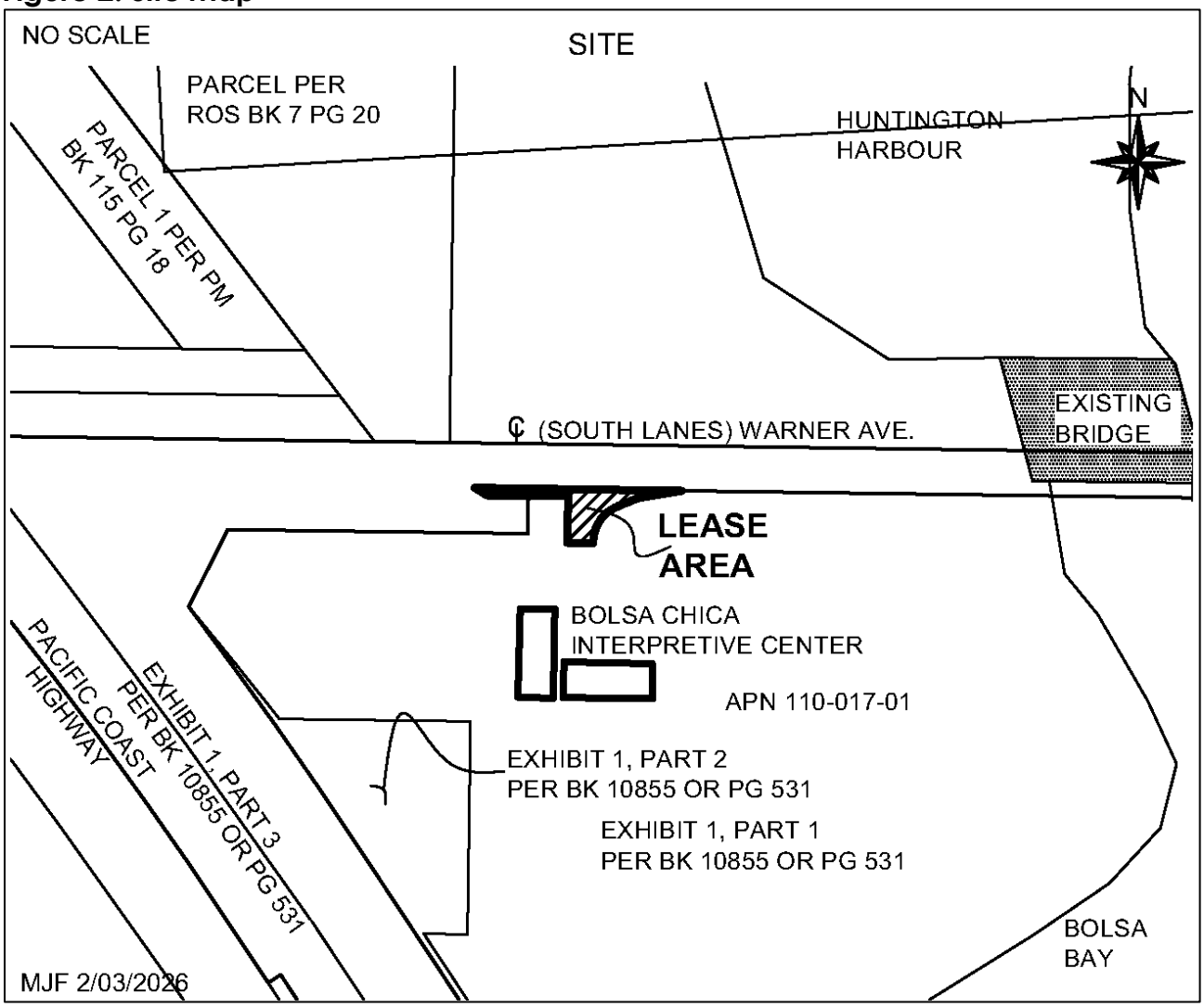
Figure 1. Location



AUTHORIZED USE:

Use of existing traffic signal poles, pull-boxes, conduit, and loop detectors (as shown in Figure 2).

Figure 2. Site Map



NOTE: This depiction of the lease premises is based on unverified information provided by the Applicant or other parties and is not a waiver or limitation of any State interest in the subject or any other property.

TERM:

10 years; beginning June 26, 2026.

CONSIDERATION:

The public use and benefit, with the State reserving the right at any time to set a monetary rent if the Commission finds such action to be in the State's best interests.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION:

AUTHORITY:

Public Resources Code sections 6005, 6216, 6301, 6501.1, and 6503; California Code of Regulations, title 2, sections 2000 and 2003.

PUBLIC TRUST AND STATE'S BEST INTERESTS:

On June 26, 2006, the Commission authorized a General Lease – Public Agency Use to the City of Huntington Beach for the upgrade, construction, and maintenance of traffic signal poles, pull-boxes, conduit, and loop detectors adjacent to the entrance of the Bolsa Chica Interpretive Center (Item 29). That lease expired June 25, 2026.

The City of Huntington Beach is now applying for the issuance of a new General Lease – Public Agency Use for the use of the traffic signal poles, pull-boxes, conduit, and loop detectors. The lease area consists of filled sovereign lands. The improvements do not substantially impair Public Trust uses and facilitate traffic control in the area and do not impair public access. The improvements occupy a small physical footprint and support traffic control and access to the Bolsa Chica Wetlands and the adjacent Warner Avenue Fire Station.

The proposed lease does not alienate the State's fee simple interest or permanently impair public rights. The lease is limited to a 10-year term, does not grant the lessee exclusive rights to the lease premises, and will have no significant impact on Public Trust-consistent uses or resources in the area. Upon termination of the lease, the lessee may be required to remove any improvements from State land and restore the lease premises to their original condition. The proposed lease requires the lessee to indemnify the State for any liability incurred as a result of the lessee's activities thereon.

CLIMATE CHANGE:

INTRODUCTION:

The climate crisis and rising sea levels are impacting coastal California now. As underscored in the State of California Sea Level Rise Guidance (Ocean Protection Council, 2024), the combination of extreme weather events and the persistent and accelerating rise in sea levels will lead to increased coastal hazards, such as wave runup, storm surges, flooding, and erosion. Shorelines will move inland due to rising seas, exposing more of the natural and human-built environment to coastal hazards. The resulting damage will occur repeatedly and incrementally over years and, in extreme cases, over the span of a few large winter storms. These impacts may affect the existing traffic signal pole, pull-boxes, conduit, and loop detectors subject to the proposed lease, located adjacent to the Bolsa Chica Interpretive Center, near the Pacific Ocean.

DATA & PROJECTIONS:

Sea levels along most of the California coast rose four to eight inches during the last century, and this trend will accelerate throughout this century. The current rate of sea level rise is triple the rate during the last century. There is growing confidence that by 2050 sea levels will be approximately ten inches higher than they were in 2000. The severity of sea level rise beyond 2050 is contingent on future levels of greenhouse gas emissions. The California Ocean Protection Council updated the State of California Sea Level Rise Guidance in 2024 to provide a synthesis of the best available science on sea level rise projections and rates for multiple emissions scenarios. To apply a precautionary approach, Commission staff evaluated the intermediate scenario due to the lower vulnerability and exposure of the lease location and infrastructure. The Los Angeles tide gauge was used for the projected sea level rise scenario for the lease area, as listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Projected Sea Level Rise for Los Angeles

Year	Intermediate (feet)
2040	0.5
2060	0.9
2080	1.6
2100	2.8

Source: Table 12, State of California Sea Level Rise Guidance: 2024 Update
Note: Projections are with respect to a 2000 baseline.

ANALYSIS:

Commission staff used the online sea level rise mapping tool, Our Coast Our Future, to evaluate risks to the lease premises and structures from sea level rise. At present sea levels, the lease premises are already regularly flooded and subjected to wave impacts and erosion, which could potentially damage any structures or improvements on the lease premises. Episodic or short-term events, such as extreme storms, very high or King tides, and El Niño events, alone or in combination, will increase the vulnerability of the lease premises and expose it to higher water levels and stronger wave runup, overtopping, and erosion.

As a result, the traffic signal pole, pull-boxes, conduit, and loop detectors may sustain substantial damage and degradation over the lease term, requiring more frequent repairs and maintenance to retain their function. The increased saltwater exposure from higher sea levels and rising groundwater can accelerate the corrosion of metal components and the deterioration of concrete foundations.

Regular maintenance, as referenced in the terms of the lease, may reduce the likelihood of severe structural degradation or dislodgement. Pursuant to the proposed lease, the Lessee acknowledges that the lease premises and adjacent upland (not within the lease area) are located in an area that may be subject to the effects of climate change, including sea level rise and rising groundwater levels.

CONCLUSION:

For all the reasons above, staff believe the proposed lease will not substantially impair the public rights to navigation, fishing, and commerce or substantially interfere with Public Trust needs and values at this location, at this time and for the term of the lease; and is in the best interests of the State.

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:

1. Approval or denial of the application is a discretionary action by the Commission. Each time the Commission approves or rejects a use of sovereign land, it exercises legislatively delegated authority and responsibility as trustee of the State's Public Trust lands as authorized by law. The lessee also has no right to a new lease or to renewal of any previous lease.

2. This action is consistent with the "Leading Climate Activism", "Meeting Evolving Public Trust Needs", and "Committing to Collaborative Leadership" Strategic Focus Areas of the Commission's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan.

3. Staff recommends that the Commission find that this activity is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as a categorically exempt project. The project is exempt under Class 1, Existing Facilities; California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905, subdivision (a)(2).

   Authority: Public Resources Code section 21084 and California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15061 and California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

It is recommended that the Commission:

CEQA FINDING:

Find that the activity is exempt from the requirements of CEQA pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15061 as a categorically exempt project, Class 1, Existing Facilities; California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905, subdivision (a)(2).

PUBLIC TRUST AND STATE'S BEST INTERESTS:

Find that the proposed lease will not substantially impair the public rights to navigation, fishing, and commerce or substantially interfere with Public Trust needs and values at this location, at this time and for the term of the lease; and is in the best interests of the State.

AUTHORIZATION:

Authorize issuance of a General Lease – Public Agency Use to the Applicant beginning June 26, 2026, for a term of 10 years, for the use of existing traffic signal poles, pull-boxes, conduit, and loop detectors; consideration being the public use and benefit, with the State reserving the right to set a monetary rent if the Commission finds such an action to be in the State's best interest.