

Erosion threatens popular road

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CAPITOLA — A Capitola cliff slowly disappearing with each rain is threatening a popular scenic road.

The face of the bluff next to Cliff Drive has worn away to become adjacent to a fence and bike lane at one location, according to city officials.

"The loss of the cliff embankment and supporting basement soil has seriously affected the structural stability of the eastbound traffic lane," said Public Works Director Fred Braun in a report that goes before the City Council today. "The city should immediately

act ... to maximize the remaining life of the roadway."

Steps needed to solve the problem will be discussed at the 7 p.m. City Council meeting at City Hall.

"I would consider it serious," Braun said Wednesday. "Ultimately, it will be fatal to the road."

The cliff was about three feet from the road before the winter storms hit, he said.

There are no homes along the road, a popular route for pedestrians and bicyclists as well as motorists.

One possible move would be to prohibit truck and bus traffic on Cliff Drive between

Wharf Road and 47th Avenue, according to Braun.

Another short-term solution would be to close the eastbound lane to all traffic. A traffic study would be required before doing so.

"The load and vibration will weaken the road further," Braun said. "We want to act now before it gets to that point."

A long-term solution would be to stabilize the cliff and or move the roadway toward the Southern Pacific railroad tracks. Either move would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and require extensive plans, Braun said.

The city has not identified any funding sources for a major project.