

## 1.5.2 NO-BUILD ALTERNATIVE

The No-Build Alternative represents an alternative and a baseline for future year conditions if no other actions are taken in the study area beyond what is already in place. Under this alternative, the Bridge's sidewalks would remain open to the public, with the existing outside railing remaining four (4) feet high. The No-Build Alternative would continue the existing non-physical suicide deterrent programs at the Bridge, as well as implement Bridge modifications approved as part of the seismic upgrade project.

Individuals of varying heights, weights, ages, and sexes, not using the Bridge sidewalks for their intended purpose, could climb over the existing railing and jump to their death. There would be no other physical barrier preventing an individual from jumping, if the railing were to be scaled. Suicide rates under this alternative would likely follow historical trends as indicated below.

- In 2005, there were 622 known suicides in the nine Bay Area counties, of which 23 were estimated to occur at the Bridge. Further, in that same year, 58 persons contemplating suicide were successfully stopped. In 2006, 31 suicides are known to have occurred at the Bridge, while 57 individuals were stopped. Similarly, in 2007, 39 suicides occurred and 90 were stopped. The individuals taken off of the Bridge are transported to a local hospital for a psychiatric evaluation pursuant to Section 5150 of the California Welfare and Institutions Code.
- A variety of non-physical measures to deter suicides on the Bridge have been in place for many years. However, there are still approximately two dozen deaths that occur each year as a result of individuals jumping off the Bridge. The non-physical measures have stopped approximately two-thirds of those individuals with the intent to commit suicide at the Bridge; despite these measures one-third are not prevented.
- Although official figures have not been maintained through the years, since 1937 it is estimated that approximately 1,300 individuals have committed suicide by jumping off of the Bridge.

### **Existing Suicide Deterrent Programs**

#### **Emergency Counseling Telephones**

On November 5, 1993, by Board Resolution #93-264, the District upgraded the emergency motorist "call-box" telephone system on the Bridge sidewalks to also accommodate suicide prevention and crisis intervention calls. Additional phones were installed to expand the coverage area with a total of 11 phones located on both sidewalks. The system was modified to

allow the Bridge security staff to instantly connect callers, at their request, to trained suicide prevention counselors at San Francisco Suicide Prevention's crisis line.

To comply with international convention regarding emergency telephones, the signs above the telephone call boxes were modified in color from black on yellow to white on blue. The wording was changed from "Emergency Telephone" to "Emergency Telephone and Crisis Counseling" and the international "telephone" icon was added. Further, in 2006, additional signs with blue with white lettering, were added directly above the telephone call boxes that read: "Crisis Counseling, There is Hope, Make the Call. The Consequences of Jumping from this Bridge are Fatal and Tragic."

The phones are used both by potentially suicidal persons seeking assistance and by members of the public who wish to alert District authorities to persons that may be contemplating suicide. In recent years, the proliferation of cellular telephones has also increased the incidence of reporting by the general public of potential persons contemplating suicide.

### **Public Safety Patrols**

On February 23, 1996, under Board Resolution 93-34, a Public Safety Patrol was initiated on the Bridge sidewalks with suicide prevention as one of its primary objectives. The patrols started on April 1, 1996. Under this program, the District's existing Bridge Patrol Program was reoriented with an emphasis on patrolling the Bridge east sidewalk. The initial patrols were performed on foot and by scooter. In August 1999, the Board authorized the formation of a bicycle unit within the Bridge Patrol ranks. Today the majority of sidewalk patrolling is done on bicycles. In December 2001, as a result of heightened security concerns, the Board authorized the hiring of additional Bridge patrol officers to expand the Bridge's security force. These new officers are trained in suicide prevention and intervention. In early 2003, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) deployed its own bicycle patrol officers on the Bridge, increasing law enforcement coverage even further. CHP officers are also trained in suicide intervention.

### **Employee Training**

All Bridge security personnel, as well as several Bridge ironworkers who have volunteered to assist in suicide intervention and rescue activities, have received special training. In 2004, the District, CHP, and the U.S. Park Police jointly sponsored an intensive full-day training session on crisis intervention and suicide prevention. This course was attended by more than 120 law enforcement officers, District security, and ironworker personnel. The course was conducted by a nationally renowned expert in

the field of crisis intervention and by personnel from San Francisco Suicide Prevention, Inc.

### **Surveillance Cameras**

In the 1960s, closed-circuit cameras were installed at the Bridge towers to remotely monitor traffic conditions. As a result of security system upgrades in the mid 1990s and again following September 11, 2001, additional cameras were installed at other locations on and around the Bridge. This network of cameras aids in directing intervention personnel.

### **Seismic Retrofit Project**

Immediately following the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, a vulnerability study for the Bridge was conducted that concluded if a high magnitude earthquake centered near the Bridge occurred, there would be a substantial risk of impending collapse of the San Francisco and Marin Approach Viaducts and the Fort Point Arch, and extensive damage to the remaining Bridge structures. After determining that retrofitting the Bridge would be more cost-effective than replacement, a construction phasing plan was developed in 1996 to retrofit the Bridge. The seismic retrofit modifications were designed to maintain the historic and architectural appearance of the Bridge. The following phasing plan reflected the degrees of structural vulnerabilities:

- Phase I retrofit the Marin (north) Approach Viaduct
- Phase II retrofit the San Francisco (south) Approach Viaduct, San Francisco (south) Anchorage Housing, Fort Point Arch, and Pylons S1 and S2
- Phase III retrofit the Main Suspension Bridge and Marin (north) Anchorage Housing and North Pylon

Phase I of the Seismic Retrofit Project was completed in 2002. Phase II of the Seismic Retrofit Project was completed in 2008. The third and final phase has been divided into two construction projects: Phase IIIA and Phase IIIB. Phase IIIA, which was awarded on March 28, 2008, will retrofit the north anchorage housing and north pylon. It is scheduled to be completed in three years. Phase IIIB, the seismic retrofit of the main span and towers, is planned to start in 2010. Phase IIIB includes a wind retrofit of the suspended span, including the replication of the west outside handrail between the towers and the installation of wind fairings along the same length.