



Agenda Item #: _____

Staff Report

City of Manhattan Beach

TO: Honorable Mayor Tell and Members of the City Council

THROUGH: David N. Carmany, City Manager

FROM: Richard Gill, Director of Parks and Recreation
Eve Kelso, Recreation Services Manager

DATE: September 20, 2011

SUBJECT: Consideration to Deny a Request for a Permanent, Accessible Pedestrian Walkway on the Beach for People with Limited Mobility

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that City Council approve the denial of a request to install a permanent, accessible pedestrian walkway on the beach for people with limited mobility. An Assessment and Report was submitted by the Los Angeles County Department of Beaches and Harbors (Attachment A) regarding the feasibility of constructing a permanent and accessible pedestrian walkway on the beach for people with limited mobility.

FISCAL IMPLICATION:

If approved, the initial capital costs for the purchase and installation of a permanent walkway are \$50,000.

Other costs to consider with a cement walkway are potential annual repair costs due to the possibility of damage from County trucks or erosion from high surf. Periodic sweeping may also be needed. The County is also requesting that the City take the lead on securing the Coastal Development permit that would be required.

The County has indicated that the City would need to fully fund the project. Currently in the City's Capital Improvement Project (CIP) fund, there is \$4,131,423 of uncommitted funds through June 30, 2012.

BACKGROUND:

Staff received a citizen request and City Council directed staff to research all options for an accessible pedestrian walkway on the beach for people with limited mobility.

At the April 19, 2011 City Council meeting, the discussion of a walkway to the beach was presented by City Staff and L.A. County Department of Beaches and Harbors. The positives and negatives of both a Mobi-Mat and a more permanent walkway were discussed. City Council directed staff to explore a more permanent walkway, similar to those in Santa Monica.

The L.A. County Department of Beaches and Harbors offered to do an engineers' report and cost estimate.

DISCUSSION:

City staff received the engineers' report and cost estimate from the L.A. County Department of Beaches and Harbors' Director, Santos H. Kreimann, dated August 16, 2011 (Attachment A). The County looked at two sites: 1) the area just north of the Manhattan Beach Pier, off of the north lower parking lot; and, 2) at 42nd Street near the El Porto parking lot and concession facility. The latter currently provides an ADA accessible ramp from the parking lot to the beach. The County ruled out the location just north of the pier for a number of reasons including the current lack of accessibility, the greater cost to make the area accessible and the need to maintain this area as the emergency access point for lifeguards and beach equipment when the units cannot drive under the pier because of high-tide and wave action.

The three materials that the County researched for a pedestrian walkway included wood lumber, concrete and a composite decking product. The County studied current usage of these products at various beaches. The issues with the wood walkways included wide gaps between wood planks, wider gaps at areas where four planks meet, and uneven surfaces that could lead to trip and fall liability. The issues with the composite walkways included markings on panels that are not easily removed and graffitied or damaged panels that would need total replacement. Also, voids between panels, as sand gets blown away or removed by the tide, create trip and fall hazards. The observations with the concrete walkways were that the walkways were in good condition with no dents, cracks or uneven surfaces. Also, it was noted that the concrete walkway was flush with sand areas on both sides.

If the City were to consider the installation of a pedestrian walkway, the County recommends that a permanent walkway be placed at the location near the El Porto concession stand to extend a maximum of 66 feet (approximately 1/2 way to the shoreline) and measure six feet wide (Attachment B).

It should also be noted that currently the County has a beach wheelchair program that allows people with disabilities to access the beach. The County owns two balloon tire wheelchairs located on Manhattan Beach, which can be checked out free of charge, seven days a week by contacting any ocean lifeguard. The County would relocate the location of the beach wheelchair container closer to the pedestrian walkway, making it easier for people to get closer to the shoreline by using the beach wheelchair from the endpoint of the walkway to the shoreline.

If approved, the City Council would need to identify a funding source, and indicate the project in the City's CIP.

CONCLUSION:

After researching locations and materials for a permanent, accessible pedestrian walkway, the County came up with recommendations for the City to consider if deciding to install a walkway. The recommendations include a concrete walkway near the El Porto concession stand to extend approximately half way to the shoreline. Staff is concerned that a walkway half way to the shoreline would not accomplish the goal of allowing seniors and those physically challenged to reach the shoreline. This is the same issue that staff had in 2008, when the County suggested that a portable

walkway (Mobi-Mat) only extend half way to the beach.

Additionally, some expenses for a permanent pedestrian walkway are unpredictable, such as potential annual repair costs due to the possibility of damage from County trucks or erosion from high surf.

Staff recommends against the construction of a permanent, accessible pedestrian walkway on the beach for people with limited mobility due to the limited access to the shoreline and the potential high repair costs.

Attachment:

- A. Letter from the L.A. County Department of Beaches and Harbors' Director, Santos H. Kreimann, dated August 16, 2011
- B. Map of El Porto Beach Showing the Recommended Location of a Pedestrian Walkway



To enrich lives through effective and caring service



August 16, 2011

AUG 18 2011

Santos H. Kreimann
Director
Kerry Silverstrom
Chief Deputy
Gary Jones
Deputy Director

David N. Carmany
City Manager
City of Manhattan Beach
1400 Highland Avenue
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

Dear Mr. Carmany:

Re: MANHATTAN BEACH – PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY ON THE SAND

My staff has completed an assessment and submitted a report regarding the feasibility of constructing a pedestrian walkway on Manhattan Beach. Below are the findings and recommendations.

Staff has conducted a site inspection of the various walkways on Santa Monica Beach in response to the request for an evaluation of the potential development for a pedestrian walkway, in Manhattan Beach, extending from the bicycle path toward the ocean, and the estimated cost thereof. They also met onsite with the City of Manhattan Beach's team (City Engineer, a Senior Civil Engineer, and the Recreation Services Manager) and the County's team (Southern Lifeguard Section Chief Terry Yamamoto, Department of Beaches and Harbors (DBH) maintenance Division Chief Wayne Schumaker, Ken Foreman and Rudy Montoya).

BACKGROUND

According to a City of Manhattan Beach staff report to the City Council, a city constituent recommended that a walkway be made available at an area south of 8th Street. Since there are no parking lots near this area and the sand elevation at this location has a greater slope, city staff recommended that this location not be considered and suggested two alternative locations for consideration: 1) the area just north of the Manhattan Beach Pier, off of the north lower parking lot; and, 2) at 42nd Street near the El Porto parking lot and concession facility. The latter currently provides an ADA accessible ramp from the parking lot to the beach.

FINDINGS

Our independent review confirms that the area south of 6th Street lacks amenities and infrastructure to make a walkway widely accessible to many beach goers and is not an

Mr. David N. Carmany
August 16, 2011
Page 2

optimum location. The area just north of the Manhattan Beach pier, too, will require excessive modification at great expense to be accessible, and it is also an emergency access point for lifeguards and beach equipment when these units cannot drive under the pier because of high-tide and wave action. Therefore, the remaining possible location for development of a walkway is the area adjacent to the El Porto concession stand. This location has a large surface parking lot and has ADA-compliant access from the parking lot to the concession stand. Additionally, the beach wheelchair container maintained by the County can be relocated to this location to further enhance access to the shoreline.

Chief Yamamoto and Chief Schumaker agreed that to protect the concession stand and the bicycle path from storm inundation whenever we have major winter storms consisting of high-tides, large waves and sand erosion, it is necessary to erect a sand berm parallel to the wave, approximately 70 feet away from the concession stand's footprint. Therefore, the maximum dimension of any new walkway to be developed should not extend beyond 66 feet from the concession stand's footprint so that it will be landside of the sand berm demarcation line and protected by the sand berm whenever needed. However, during the summer season, a 66-foot walkway is only approximately half way to the shoreline and anyone wishing to reach the water would have to continue beyond the walkway and travel on the sand to get there.

During our field inspection of the walkways at the Santa Monica Beach, we have observed the following:

Wood lumber

The walkway made of wood lumber was observed to have uneven surface, uneven edges, broken planks, and splinters. The uneven surface and uneven edges are caused by weathering, and the difference in thickness between the old boards and the new boards that have been used to replace broken pieces. Also, the protective hydrocarbon additive once worn off, leads to separation of the wood fibers and creation of splinters that could cause injury to the beachgoers. Exhibit 1 includes several photographs illustrating the potential trip-and-fall hazard and maintenance problems posed by walkways made of lumber.

Based on discussions with Santa Monica city employees, the city is no longer in favor of constructing any additional wood lumber walkways. The city is concerned about the danger of splinters, costs of maintenance, as well as the material's impact to the environment. The hydrocarbon additive that the city used to treat its lumber and other additives such as creosote that are used to protect the integrity of lumber are not environmentally friendly. Moreover, the walkway cannot withstand the weight of beach cleaning tractors.

Mr. David N. Carmany
August 16, 2011
Page 3

Concrete

The concrete walkway was in very good condition and was well maintained. The surface was flushed with sand and is easy to clean. Exhibit 2 shows the condition of an existing concrete walkway at the Santa Monica Beach. Concrete construction can be engineered to support the weight of heavy beach cleaning equipment and withstand the corrosive saltwater environment.

Based on a construction cost formula provided by the Department of Public Works, the expense of constructing a 6-foot wide by 66-foot long walkway, with a round turnaround area at the terminus, including mobilization and project management expenses, is approximately \$50,000. This cost estimate does not include the expense of processing a Coastal Development Permit and the possible appeal thereof to the California Coastal Commission. It is assumed that the City of Manhattan Beach will review construction plans for issuance of a Building and Safety Permit, secure the necessary Right of Entry Permit or operating agreement from the County, and process the attendant Coastal Development Permit application as well as the potential appeal thereof.

Composite decking product

The two composite walkways we inspected appeared to be in reasonably good repair, albeit they are not in as good condition as the concrete walk path. Both walkways' surfaces had signs of wear and tear and the panels appeared to start to warp. There were a few panels with missing nails and screws and/or lifting, which potentially could cause injuries. Also, the gaps in between the panels were filled with sand. As sand recedes due to wave action or wind forces, the sand-filled gaps become voids and could potentially be a problem for pointed shoe heels. Exhibit 3 shows the condition of the composite walkways.

The composite material used for these beach walkways is known as Trex, which is not structurally sound, and will not support DBH's heavy equipment that can weigh as much as 80,000 pounds. There are different ways to construct composite walkways, and the City of Santa Monica constructed its composite walkways on wood beams, supported by concrete underlayment. The city has historically used treated wood but is now moving towards composite decking due to its durability, sustainability (no hydrocarbons), and less liability risk. The city is planning to construct more composite walkways in conjunction with its restroom rehabilitation projects.

It should be noted, however, that the Santa Monica Beach is much wider than the beach at Manhattan Beach. Therefore, the city of Santa Monica's heavy beach maintenance equipment can avoid crossing over these composite walkways. Given the narrow beach width at Manhattan Beach, the fact that composite deck material is not structural, and the Department of Beaches and Harbors must maintain unobstructed access over

Mr. David N. Carmany
August 16, 2011
Page 4

the area behind the winter sand berm, staff from the City of Manhattan Beach and DBH agreed that a composite deck walkway on Manhattan Beach is not a viable option.

CONCLUSION

This research has led to the conclusion that development of a permanent, fixed walkway at the location near the El Porto concession stand is the best option, if a pedestrian walkway is to be constructed on Manhattan Beach. The walkway should be 6-feet wide and not exceed 66 feet in length, and have a round turnaround area at its terminus. The construction cost is estimated to be approximately fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000), which the City would be responsible to fully fund.

A Memorandum of Agreement should also be executed whereby the City shall agree to indemnify, defend and save harmless the County. Any claims the County may receive in association with the walkway shall be forwarded to the City for defense and settlement. If, at a later time, it is determined that the walkway should be removed for any reason, the County should have the right to remove the improvements or cause them to be removed at the City's expense.

Mr. Carmany, we are pleased to provide you with this report and look forward to hearing from you.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Santos H. Kreimann", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

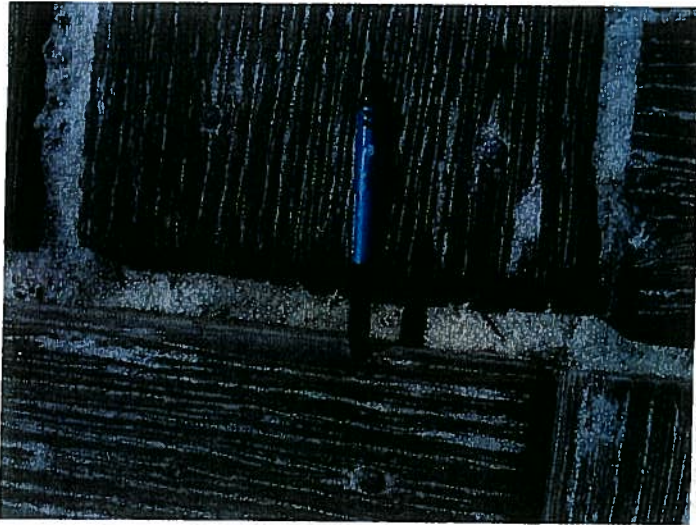
Santos H. Kreimann, Director

SHK:GJ:pw

Attachments (3)

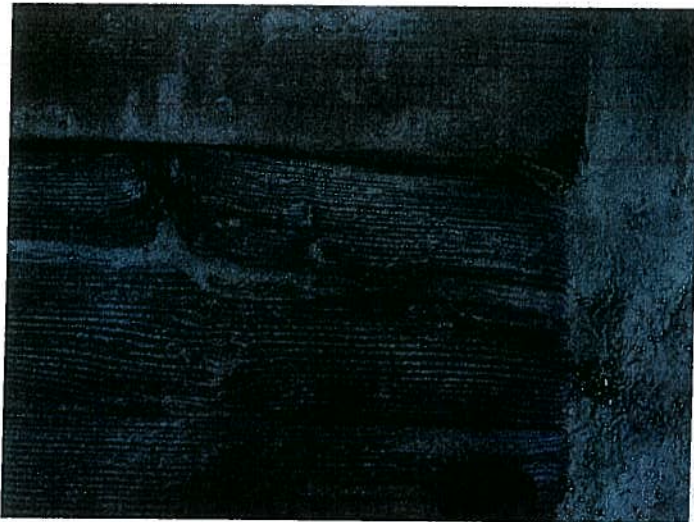
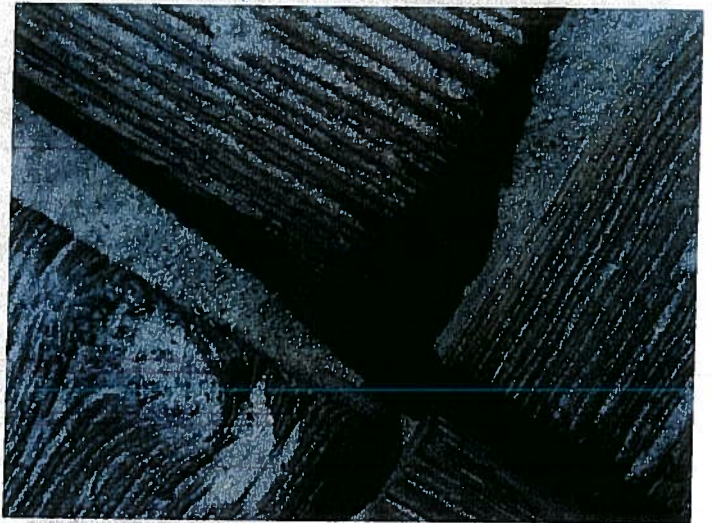
Problems Observed at Wood Walkways

EXHIBIT 1



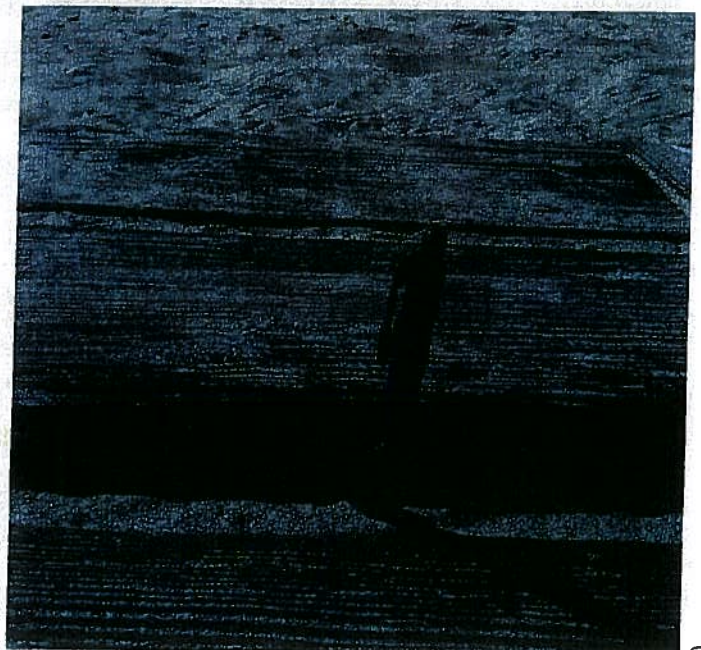
Wide Gaps Between Wood Planks

Gaps At Areas Where Four Planks Meet Can Be Wider

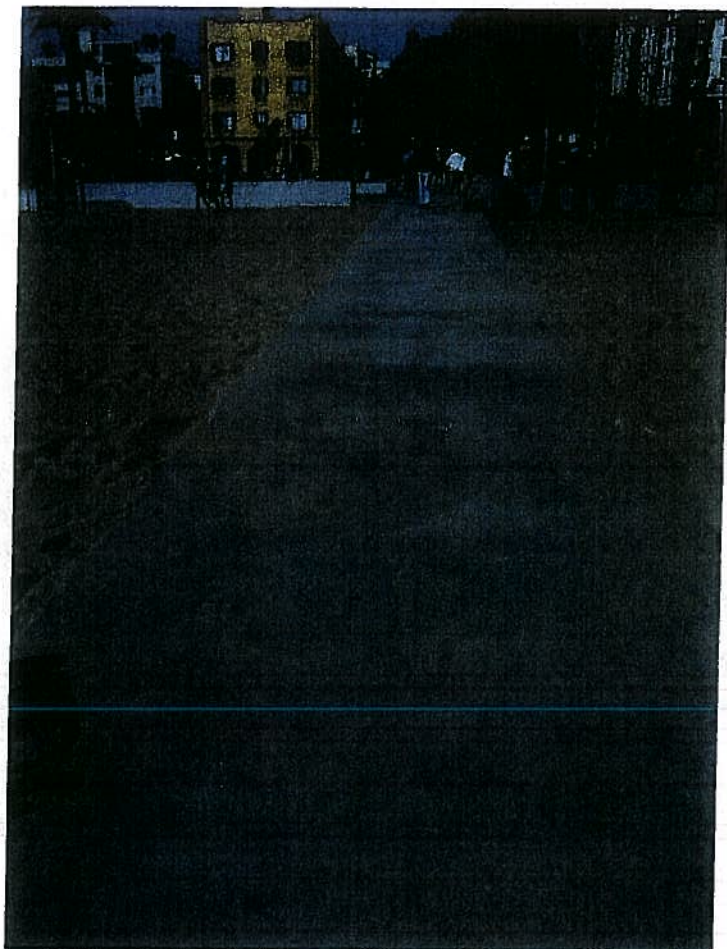


Broken Wood

Uneven Surfaces Can Cause Trip-and-Fall Liability



Observed Conditions Of Concrete Walkways

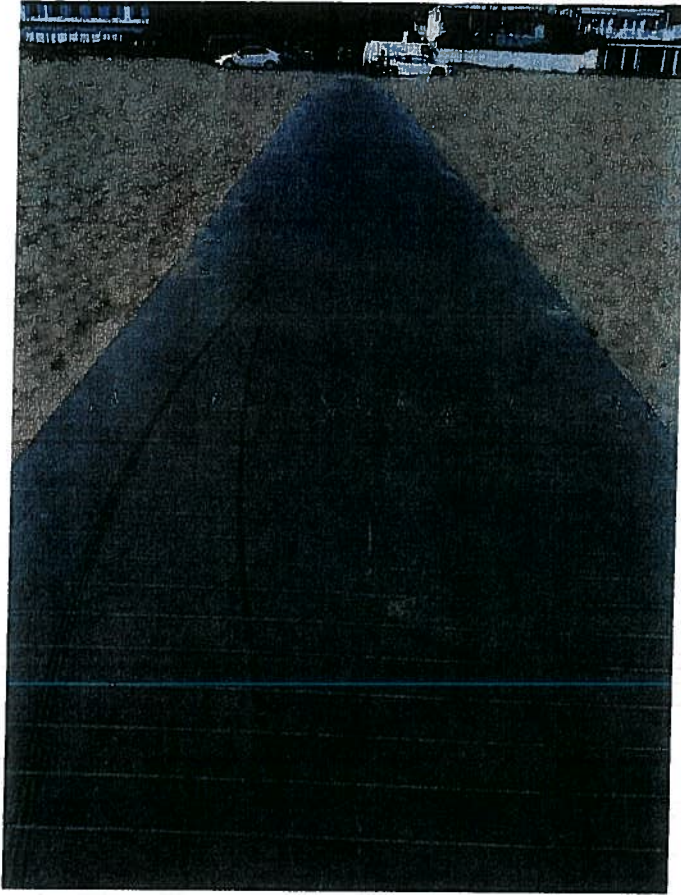


**Walkway Is In Good Condition;
No Dents, Cracks Or Uneven
Surfaces**



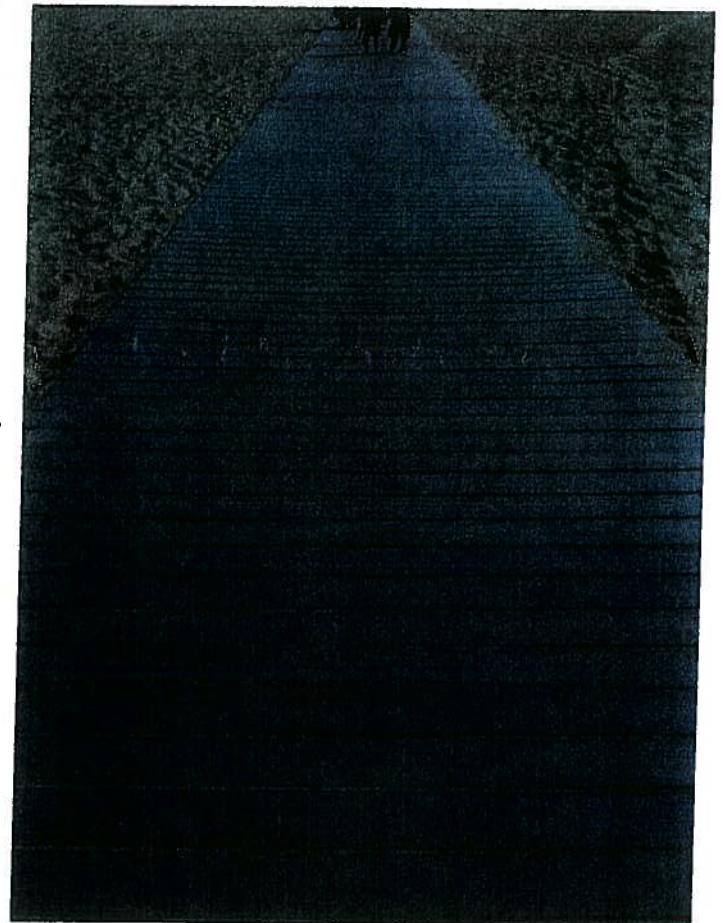
**Walkway Is Flush
With Sand Areas
On Both Sides**

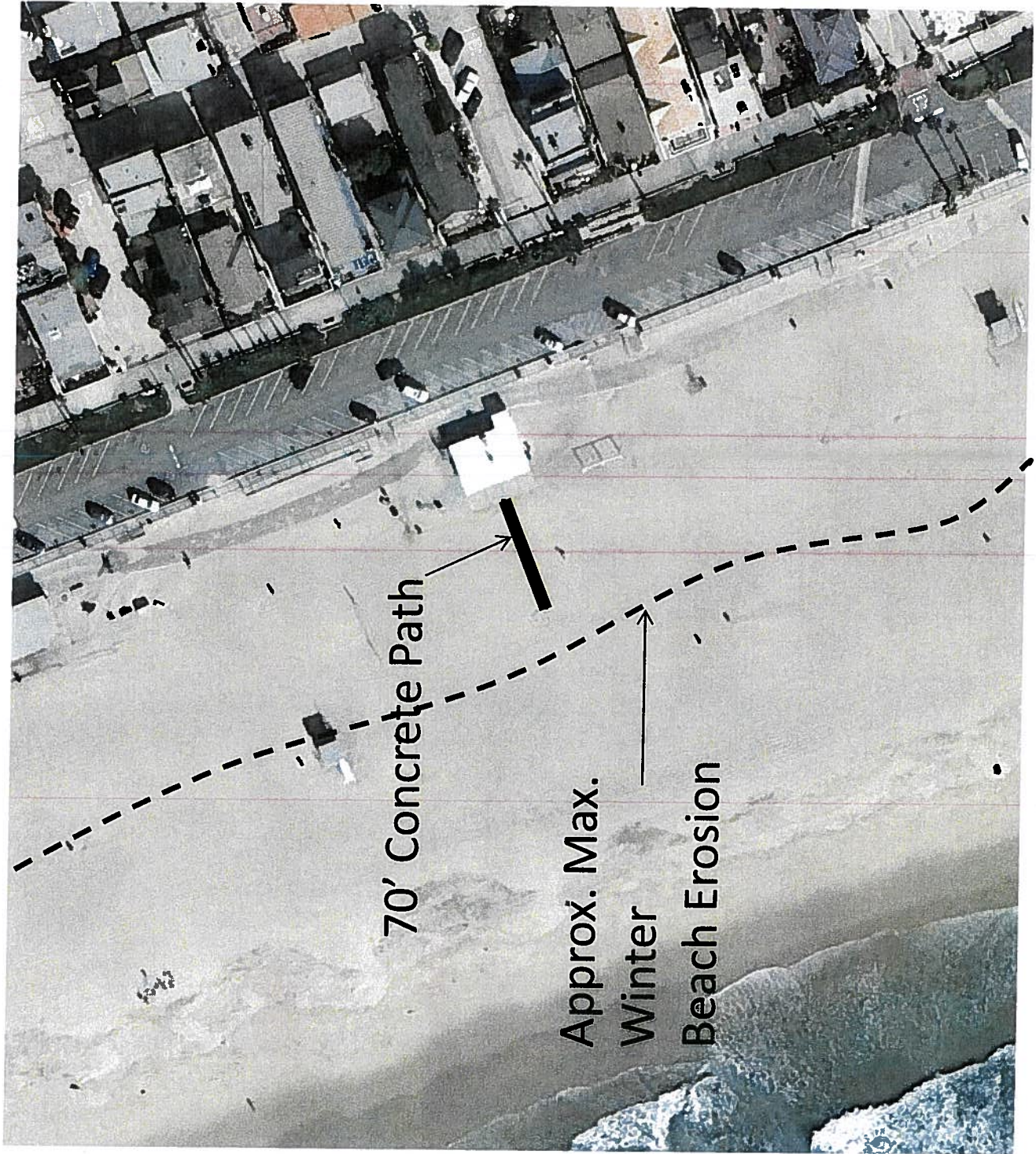
Observed Conditions Of Composite Walkways



Markings On Composite Panels
Are Not Easily Removed And
Graffitied Or Damaged Panels Will
Need To Be Completely Replaced

Voids Can Appear Between Panels
As Sand Gets Blown Away Or
Removed By The Tide, Creating
Trip-and-Fall Hazards





70' Concrete Path

Approx. Max.
Winter
Beach Erosion