
3.0 ALTERNATIVES

3.1 GENERAL CEQA REQUIREMENTS

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project be described and considered within an environmental impact report (EIR). The alternatives considered should represent scenarios that could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but will avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant environmental effects. The feasibility of an alternative may be determined based on a variety of factors including, but not limited to, site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, other plans or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries, and site accessibility and control (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(f)(1)).

The purpose of this process is to provide decision-makers and the public with a discussion of viable development options and to document that other options to the proposal were considered in the application process (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6).

CEQA requires that the lead agency adopt mitigation measures or alternatives, where feasible, to substantially lessen or avoid significant environmental impacts that would otherwise occur. Where a lead agency has determined that even after the adoption of all feasible mitigation measures, a project as proposed will still cause significant environmental effects that cannot be substantially lessened or avoided, the agency, prior to approving the project as mitigated, must first determine whether, with respect to such impacts, there remain any project alternatives that are both environmentally superior and feasible within the meaning of CEQA.

CEQA provides the following guidelines for discussing project alternatives:

- An EIR need not consider every conceivable alternative to a project. Rather, it must consider a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that will foster informed decision-making and public participation (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(a)).
- An EIR is not required to consider alternatives which are infeasible (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(a)).
- The discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives to the project or its location which are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(b)).
- The range of potential alternatives to the proposed project shall include those that could feasibly accomplish most of the basic objectives of the project and could avoid or substantially lessen one or more of the significant effects (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(c)).
- The EIR should briefly describe the rationale for selecting the alternatives to be discussed (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(c)).
- The EIR shall include sufficient information about each alternative to allow meaningful evaluation, analysis and comparison with the proposed project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(d)).

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e) also requires that a No Project Alternative be described and its impacts evaluated. The “no project” analysis shall “discuss the existing conditions, as well as what would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services.” The EIR

3.0 ALTERNATIVES

must also identify the environmentally superior alternative. If the environmentally superior alternative is the No Project Alternative, CEQA requires that the EIR also identify an environmentally superior alternative from among the other alternatives (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(2)).

3.2 RELATIONSHIP TO PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Project objectives are used as the basis for comparing project alternatives and determining the extent that the objectives would be achieved relative to the proposed Bob Jones Pathway (BJP; project). The objectives of the proposed project are as follows:

- Provide new and expanded recreation within the county consistent with the Park and Recreation Element of the General Plan. (Goal 2, Objective B)
- Provide a viable multi-use trail system consistent with Park and Recreation Element of the General Plan (Goal 2, Objective C), which respects private property and uses and balances public resources, community concerns, and environmental protection.
- Provide a primarily Class I bicycle/pedestrian corridor that does not require excessive long-term maintenance costs due to design, location, or use.
- Provide an alternative transportation corridor connecting the city of San Luis Obispo, from the Octagon Barn, with the community of Avila Beach.
- Provide a safe and scenic bicycle/pedestrian route for a broad range of users (e.g., families, walkers, joggers, young cyclists, cycling enthusiasts, skaters, and the disabled).
- Maximize users' contact with the natural environment while avoiding environmental impacts

3.3 PRELIMINARY DESIGN CONCEPTS/ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT SELECTED

Alternative alignments for the proposed project were vetted through two feasibility studies, the *Planning and Preliminary Engineering Study of Bob Jones Trail Routes Phase II* prepared by the Morro Group and Questa Engineering Corporation in February 2002 and the *Bob Jones Pathway Phase II Feasibility Study* prepared by Alta Planning + Design and Questa Engineering Corporation in December 2003, which are included in **Technical Appendix T7** of this DEIR. Based on the feasibility studies, several preliminary design concepts of various segments or portions of segments of the preferred alignment were evaluated and determined infeasible for various reasons. In the *Bob Jones Pathway Phase II Feasibility Study*, the preliminary design concepts were ranked on a scale of zero (low benefit or negative impact) to ten (high benefit or low negative impact) based on the following criteria: vehicle conflicts/safety; flood impacts; function/access; usage; cost; environmental impacts; private property impacts; right-of-way; and aesthetics. Environmental impacts included an evaluation of impacts to wetlands, visual resources, cultural resources, noise, and health. For CEQA purposes, criteria for determining a project infeasible included flood impacts, environmental impacts, and aesthetics impacts. Reasons for eliminating a design concept/alternative from further consideration included a determination that the design concept is infeasible (low ranking in flood impact, aesthetics, and/or environmental impacts), a finding that the design concept/alternative does not attain the basic objectives of the proposed project (see subsection 3.2, above), and identification that the design concept/alternative does not avoid or substantially lessen one or more of the significant effects. Based on these criteria, the following preliminary design concepts/alternatives were considered and then rejected for further evaluation in the DEIR.

Sub-Segment 2a: Design Concept B

Under this design concept, the southern end of Segment 1 and the northern portion of Segment 2 would use a bridge adjacent to the existing bridge to cross over to the west side of the creek and tie into Clover Ridge Lane. This design concept offers a creekside environment that would provide beneficial impacts to aesthetics. Trail implementation in conjunction with creek enhancement and restoration activities in this area would provide beneficial impacts to biological resources as well.

However, this design concept would require the acquisition of an easement through private property from an unwilling property owner. The trail would be adjacent to existing farm operations, which may result in conflicts with agricultural operations and require buffers. Two bridges would be required to cross San Luis Obispo Creek (SLO Creek) at East Branch and at Davenport Creek, with potential environmental impacts. Due to potential easement issues and additional bridge impacts, this design concept was rejected; however, this design option may be considered at a future date if and when the easement becomes feasible. Any future BJP design alterations would be subject to further environmental review under CEQA and/or the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Sub-Segment 3: Design Concept A

This design concept would align Segment 3 between the SLO Creek Crossing (south of Clover Ridge Lane) and the Old Farm Bridge Crossing along the west side of SLO Creek. This design concept minimizes major flood impacts, vehicle conflicts, environmental impacts, and private property impacts. However, because the alignment is located adjacent to Highway 101, it would result in greater impacts to aesthetics and would have the potential for very high construction costs due to the terrain. Lack of sufficient right-of-way is a key flaw of this design concept.

Sub-Segment 3b: Design Concept A

This design concept would align Segment 3 between an old farm bridge crossing of SLO Creek and San Luis Bay Drive along the west side of SLO Creek. Under this design concept, users would be provided an environment consisting of a riparian corridor and farmland. However, it may be challenging to acquire easements from property owners and the alignment may result in conflicts with adjacent agricultural operations. In addition, flooding may occur near the old farm bridge and the creek. Replacement of the existing farm bridge with a new clear span bridge would improve conditions of the floodway; however, bridge construction would result in its own environmental impacts.

Sub-Segment 3b: Design Concept B

This design concept would align Segment 3 between Old Farm Bridge Crossing and San Luis Bay Drive along the east side of SLO Creek, adjacent to the creek. Under this design concept, users would be provided an environment surrounded by riparian corridor and agriculture, which would provide beneficial aesthetic impacts. However, a new bridge would be required at San Luis Bay Drive, which may result in flooding impacts during major storm events.

3.4 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

This alternatives discussion identifies and examines a range of feasible alternatives that would avoid or reduce the severity of one or more significant environmental effects and/or address the

3.0 ALTERNATIVES

public comments received during the scoping process. The alternatives analyzed include the following:

- Alternative 1 – No Project/No Development
- Alternative 2 – Important Farmland Avoidance
- Alternative 3 – Elimination of South Higuera Crossings
- Alternative 4 – Highway 101 Undercrossing at Ontario Road Staging Area
- Alternative 5 – Interim Improvements

The alignment of Alternatives 2, 3 and 4 are illustrated in **Figure 3.0-1**. Environmental impacts associated with each of the five alternatives are compared with impacts resulting from the proposed project. The impact level of the alternative as compared to the project (less, slightly less, similar, slightly greater, or greater) is noted in parentheses at the beginning of each comparison. **Table 3.0-1** in Section 3.5 below provides a summary of the environmental impacts of each alternative by segment. Section 3.5 also includes identification of the environmentally superior alternative, as required by CEQA.

ALTERNATIVE 1 – NO PROJECT

Under Alternative 1, the proposed project would not be constructed. There would be no physical alteration of the environment, nor would the community receive the added benefit of a scenic Class I pathway between San Luis Obispo and Avila Beach. Cyclists would continue to have to share the roadway with vehicles. Use of the corridor would continue to be limited to more experienced cyclists. Use by pedestrians and users of all ages would be prohibited (or severely constrained) for safety reasons, which would not meet the objectives of the project. Alternative 1 is not consistent with the objectives for the proposed project.

Comparative Analysis of Alternative 1

Aesthetics and Visual Resources – (Lesser) Alternative 1 would not result in the benefit of a visually pleasing Class I pathway. Cyclists would continue to share the roadway with vehicles, which is not as scenic a route as the proposed project. However, no physical improvements (i.e., overcrossing, ramps) would be constructed nor vegetation removed, which would lessen the degree of impact to the visual character and quality along the Highway 101 corridor, which were identified as significant but mitigable.

Agricultural Resources – (Lesser) Alternative 1 would result in a lesser degree of impact to agricultural resources compared to the proposed project because this alternative would not require the conversion of important farmland or forestland, result in increased conflicts with existing agricultural zoning or operations, or increase runoff onto agricultural land. Users would, however, continue to use the right-of-way adjacent to agricultural land, which may continue to conflict with existing agricultural operations.

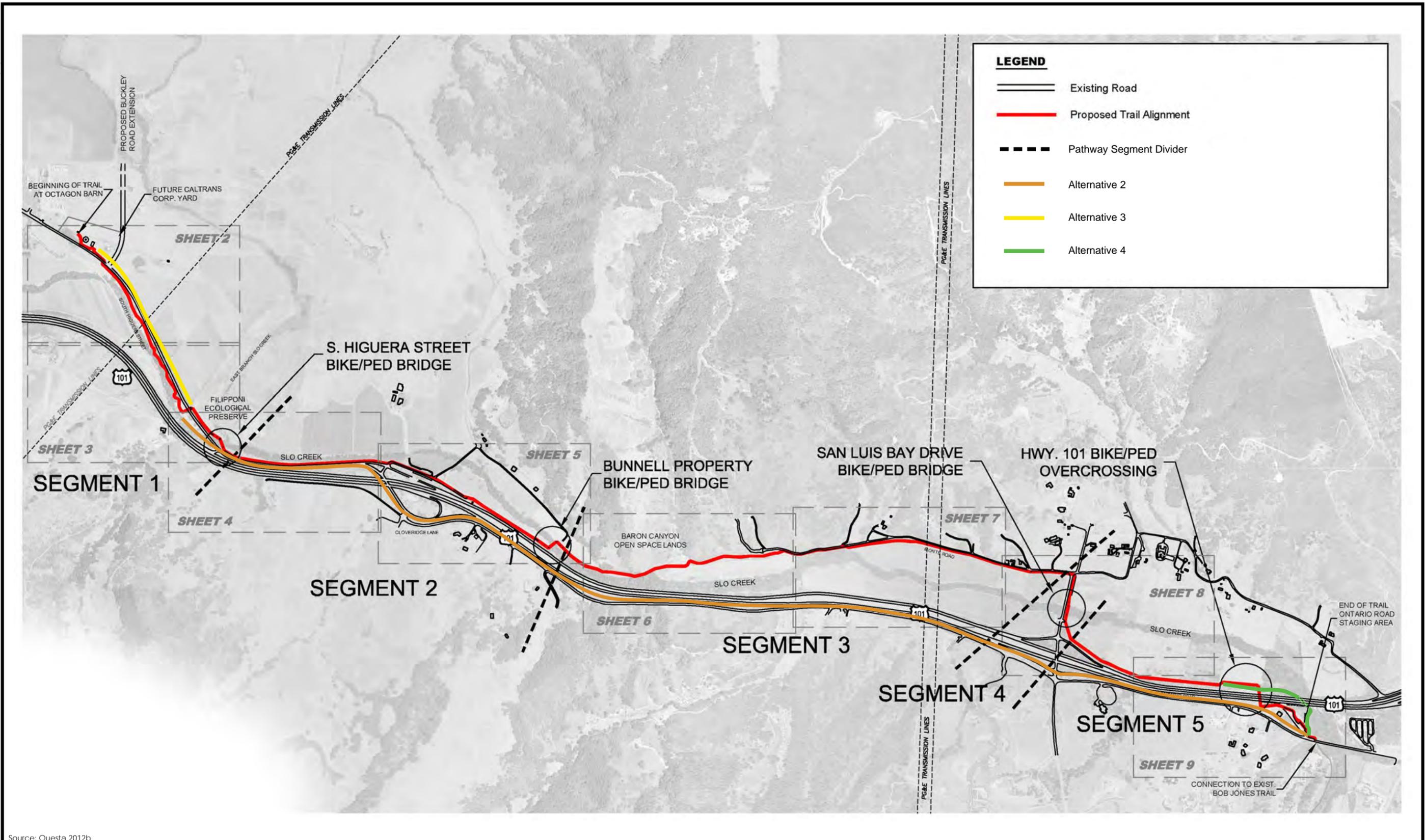


Figure 3.0-1 Alternatives 2, 3, and 4

This page intentionally left blank.

Air Quality – (Similar) Alternative 1 would result in a lesser degree of impact to air quality compared to the proposed project because this alternative would not result in the physical disturbance of the environment or the use of construction equipment; therefore, construction emissions would be less than the proposed project. However, without the proposed project, the community would not receive the benefits of a Class I pathway that may increase alternative forms of transportation during peak commute hours, which would potentially reduce regional mobile source emissions. Although this benefit is difficult to quantify, the County estimates that long term use of the pathway by commuters who would otherwise be driving will eventually counterbalance (and possibly surpass) the near term emissions caused by the project's construction. For these reasons, this alternative would likely result in emissions similar to the proposed project.

Biological and Natural Resources – (Lesser) Alternative 1 would result in a lesser degree of impact to biological and natural resources compared to the proposed project because this alternative would not require the removal of vegetation, the disturbance of the SLO Creek corridor or surrounding habitat, or the trimming of trees. Since there would be no removal of vegetation or trimming of trees, the potential for impacts to special-status species and habitat would be reduced.

Cultural Resources – (Lesser) Alternative 1 would result in a lesser degree of impact to cultural resources compared to the proposed project because this alternative would not result in the physical disturbance of the environment. Since there would be no physical disturbance of the site, there would be no potential to affect the existing identified historical and archaeological resources or to disturb previously undiscovered cultural resources (archaeological, historical, and/or paleontological) or human remains. Therefore, Alternative 1 would result in a lesser degree of impact to cultural resources than the proposed project.

Geology and Soils – (Lesser) Alternative 1 would result in a lesser degree of impact to geology and soils compared to the proposed project because this alternative would not result in the physical disturbance of the site and no structures would be constructed. Since there would be no site disturbance, there would be no potential for erosion and no mitigation would be necessary. No structures would be constructed so there would be no seismic-related hazards of concern.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions – (Similar) Alternative 1 would result in a similar degree of impact to greenhouse gas emissions as the proposed project. This alternative would not result in the physical disturbance of the environment, removal of vegetation/trees, or use of construction equipment; therefore, GHG construction emissions and loss of carbon sequestration would be less than the proposed project in this regard. However, without the proposed project, the community would not receive the benefits of a Class I pathway that may increase alternative forms of transportation during peak commute hours, which would potentially reduce regional mobile source greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Although this benefit is difficult to quantify, it is a benefit that Alternative 1 would not provide. Overall, Alternative 1 would result in a similar degree of greenhouse gas emission impacts as the proposed project.

Hazardous Materials/Hazards – (Similar) Alternative 1 would result in a similar degree of impact related to hazardous materials/hazards as the proposed project. This alternative would result in less potential for exposure to the use of on-site hazardous materials during construction than the proposed project because no construction would occur. Exposure to off-site hazardous materials would be greater than the proposed project, as users would continue to be exposed to hazardous materials being transported along Highway 101 and sprayed on the agricultural fields, as well as to exhaust fumes from vehicles on Highway 101 and shared roadways. Airport

3.0 ALTERNATIVES

and wildfire hazards would remain similar to the proposed project. Therefore, overall this alternative would result in a similar degree of impact related to hazardous materials/hazards.

Hydrology and Water Quality – (Lesser) Alternative 1 would result in a lesser degree of impact to hydrology and water quality compared to the proposed project because this alternative would not result in the physical disturbance of the environment. Without site disturbance, the potential to degrade water quality would be lessened. Therefore, hydrology and water quality impacts would be less than the proposed project.

Land Use – (Greater) Alternative 1 would result in a greater degree of impacts to land use compared to the proposed project because not implementing the project would be inconsistent with the *San Luis Obispo County General Plan Parks and Recreation Element*, *San Luis Obispo County Bikeways Plan 2010 Update*, and *2010 Regional Transportation Plan and Preliminary Sustainability Communities Strategy*. Although this alternative would not require the need to acquire easements on private property, the conflict with three existing planning documents would make this impact greater than the proposed project.

Noise – (Lesser) Alternative 1 would result in a lesser degree of noise impacts compared to the proposed project because this alternative would not result in construction activities. Without construction activities, the potential to generate noise would be lessened. Noise impacts would be less than the proposed project.

Public Services – (Lesser) Alternative 1 would result in a lesser degree of public service impacts than the proposed project because this alternative would not result in increased public access to agricultural land on private property, thus reducing the potential for trespassing and the potential to increase demand for police services. However, continued shared use within the right-of-way will continue to pose safety risks and potentially result in accidents requiring the services of police and emergency medical providers.

Recreation and Parks – (Greater) Alternative 1 would result in a greater degree of impacts to recreation and parks compared to the proposed project in that it would not provide a priority recreation improvement that has been planned for decades.

Transportation/Traffic – (Greater) Alternative 1 would result in a greater degree of traffic hazards compared to the proposed project because users would be required to continue to share the roadway with vehicles for almost the entire distance of the preferred alignment. This would expose them to increased safety hazards associated not just with vehicles on the roadway but with agricultural equipment that uses the roadway. Mitigation that would reduce conflicts between users and agricultural operators and promote safety would not be implemented.

Utilities and Services Systems – (Similar) Alternative 1 would result in no impact to utilities and service systems. Because no development would be proposed, no utilities or services systems would be necessary. However, this alternative would also not implement the utilities benefits of the proposed project (i.e., repairing existing drainage culverts). Overall, impacts to utilities and service systems would be similar to the proposed project.

Summary for Alternative 1

Alternative 1 would not meet any of the project objectives. However, it would result in a similar or lesser degree of impact to most resources with the exception for land use, recreation and parks and transportation/traffic, which would be greater.

ALTERNATIVE 2 – IMPORTANT FARMLAND AVOIDANCE

Alternative 2 would begin the same way as the proposed project, with Segment 1 crossing South Higuera Street near the Octagon Barn. However, instead of crossing back over the roadway, the pathway alignment would continue south along the western side of the roadway as a Class I pathway where feasible and as a Class II facility through the existing Highway 101 underpass near Ontario Road.

On the western side of Highway 101, the pathway would continue as a Class I pathway between Ontario Road and Highway 101 where terrain would allow. At the San Luis Bay Drive intersection/off-ramp, the intersection would be formalized and the Class I pathway would continue on the east side of Ontario Road, where feasible, to the existing Ontario Road Staging Area. The segment between San Luis Bay Drive and the Ontario Road Staging Area is similar to preliminary Design Concept A for Sub-Segment 5 as analyzed in the *Bob Jones Pathway Phase II Feasibility Study (Technical Appendix T7)*; however, that design concept had the pathway within the roadway right-of-way, not as a separated pathway. The feasibility study rejected the design concept for real and perceived safety, usage, and user enjoyment issues. This alternative would be a slightly different design than the preliminary design concept in that it would provide a separated pathway on the eastern side of the roadway, where feasible. This would require acquiring easements on private property. The alignment of Alternative 2 is illustrated in orange on **Figure 3.0-1**

Comparative Analysis of Alternative 2

Aesthetics and Visual Resources – (Similar) Alternative 2 would not provide a Class I pathway, and cyclists would continue to share the roadway with vehicles for a portion of the alignment. In addition, a majority of the alignment would be located between a roadway and highway, which would be less aesthetically pleasing to users than the proposed project alignment adjacent to the SLO Creek corridor and agricultural land.

Alternative 2 would require less bridge construction, and the need for an overcrossing structure and ramps would be eliminated, which would reduce visual impacts to viewers on Highway 101. However, the segment of pathway located between Ontario Road and Highway 101 would be visible to those traveling on Highway 101. Although the visual impact of a pathway would be less intrusive than an overcrossing structure, the length of exposure would be for a longer duration and likely include long retaining wall structures that would require mitigation similar to the proposed project.

Additionally, the removal of vegetation associated with this section of pathway would be more visible to viewers on Highway 101 because it would be in the foreground in a less vegetated area rather than in the background in a more vegetated area. Any vegetation removal would require revegetation as soon as possible to reduce the potential for erosion. A landscaping plan would be necessary to help screen any massive walls or structures and to discourage graffiti. However, since the pathway would be adjacent to another roadway, the pathway, as mitigated, would not substantially degrade the existing visual character. Overall, Alternative 2 would result in a similar degree of impacts to aesthetics and visual resources as the proposed project.

Agricultural Resources – (Lesser) Alternative 2 would result in a lesser degree of impact to agricultural resources compared to the proposed project because the alignment would not require easements on private property designated as important farmland or under Williamson Act contract. In addition, a majority of the alignment would not be located adjacent to

3.0 ALTERNATIVES

agricultural land uses so the potential for conflicts with agricultural operations would be reduced accordingly.

Air Quality – (Similar) Alternative 2 would result in a similar degree of air quality impact as the proposed project because they would both result in similar construction emissions and have virtually no operational emissions. Due to the topography and terrain between Ontario Road and Highway 101, more extensive grading may be required with this alternative; however, other portions may require no grading where the pathway would be Class II.

Biological and Natural Resources – (Lesser) Alternative 2 would result in a lesser degree of impact to biological and natural resources compared to the proposed project because there would be less disturbance of sensitive habitat and vegetation within the SLO Creek corridor. Less tree removal and trimming would be necessary. Although impacts to riparian, agricultural, and grassland habitat would be reduced, impacts to coastal scrub habitat would increase. Overall, Alternative 2 would result in a lesser degree of impact to biological and natural resources than the proposed project.

Cultural Resources – (Similar) Alternative 2 would result in a similar degree of impact to cultural resources as the proposed project because this alternative would eliminate the potential to disturb the identified archaeological site. However, this alternative may be located in proximity to identified Avila Valley Historic Site (H) (CA-SLO-802), which is a recorded historic and archaeological site (0.59 acre) that contains the remnants of a historical building with scattered artifacts (e.g., tile, bottles, and crockery). If so, similar mitigation as required for the proposed project would be applicable to this alternative but in a different location. Alternative 2 would result in similar impacts to the identified historical site and would have the same potential to discover previously undiscovered sites.

Geology and Soils – (Greater) Alternative 2 would result in a greater degree of impact to geology and soils compared to the proposed project because the portion of the pathway located between Ontario Road and Highway 101 would be located on steep slopes. The same erosion control measures would be required for this alternative as for the proposed project. However, due to the terrain along the segment, the potential for slope failure and erosion would increase and may require additional post-construction measures. This alternative would also likely require retaining walls in various locations. Where the slope is cut, there is the chance for slope failure during seismic ground shaking. Therefore, Alternative 2 would result in slightly greater impacts to geology and soils than the proposed project.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions – (Similar) Alternative 2 would result in a similar degree of impact with respect to greenhouse gas emissions compared to the proposed project. This alternative would result in similar to slightly greater physical disturbance of the environment due to increased grading required within Segments 2 through 4, similar to slightly less removal of vegetation/trees within all segments, and similar use of construction equipment. For these reasons, GHG construction emissions and loss of carbon sequestration would be similar to the proposed project.

Hazardous Materials/Hazards – (Greater) Alternative 2 would result in hazardous materials and related hazards impacts slightly greater as compared to the proposed project. This alternative would result in a similar potential for exposure to the use of on-site hazardous materials during construction as the proposed project. Exposure to off-site hazardous materials, however, would be greater than the proposed project, as route users would continue to be subject to hazardous materials being transported along Highway 101, sprayed on the agricultural fields, and subject to higher concentrations of vehicles on shared roadways. Airport and wildfire hazards would

remain similar to the proposed project. Therefore, overall Alternative 2 would result in a slightly greater degree of impact related to hazardous materials/hazards.

Hydrology and Water Quality – (Lesser) Alternative 2 would result in a lesser degree of impact to hydrology and water quality compared to the proposed project because this alternative would reduce the amount of physical disturbance near SLO Creek, which would reduce the potential to degrade water quality. Mitigation would be reduced to requiring erosion control plans and a stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP). The minor increased demand for groundwater associated with this alternative would not substantially deplete groundwater supplies, and the alternative itself would not substantially interfere with groundwater recharge. The alignment would be mostly removed from the floodplain. Therefore, Alternative 2 would result in a lesser degree of hydrology and water quality impacts than the proposed project.

Land Use – (Similar) Alternative 2 would result in a similar degree of impact to land use as the proposed project because it would continue to connect (not divide) a community and would not result in the development or displacement of housing. The need to acquire easements would remain; however, more easements would be required on public land (right-of-way) than on private property. Where easements are not obtainable, the pathway would be required to become a Class II pathway, which would not meet the primary objectives of the project. Overall, this alternative would result in a similar degree of impact to land use as the proposed project.

Noise – (Greater) Alternative 2 would result in a greater degree of noise impact compared to the proposed project because this alternative would be located near more sensitive receptors that may be affected by elevated noise levels generated during construction. Due to the proximity of this alternative to existing sensitive noise receptors, surrounding vegetation, and existing noise ambient levels, the noise levels generated by Alternative 2 are not anticipated to result in a substantial permanent increase (greater than 5 dB) in ambient noise.

In addition, users would be exposed to elevated existing mobile noise levels while riding on the pathway due to the proximity to mobile sources along Highway 101. These exposures to elevated noise levels would be short term in duration, as construction activities would be temporary and the users would be moving along the pathway. Similar to the project, this alternative would limit construction to between the hours of 7 AM and 9 PM Monday through Friday and between 8 AM and 5 PM on Saturdays and Sundays, which would exempt this alternative from the noise standards. However, since users would be subject to elevated noise levels compared to the project, the noise impacts would be greater with this alternative than with the proposed project.

Public Services – (Similar) Alternative 2 would result in a similar degree of public service impact as the proposed project because this alternative would not result in any increase in demand for police or fire protection that requires the need for new facilities in order to maintain service response ratios. This alternative would reduce the potential for trespassing onto private agricultural land. Therefore, Alternative 2 would have similar public service impacts as the proposed project.

Recreation and Parks – (Greater) Alternative 2 would result in a greater degree of impact to recreation and parks as the proposed project in that it would provide a recreation improvement that does not meet the objectives of a facility that has been planned for decades and identified as a priority. Any increased use of other sections of the trail associated with this alternative or the proposed project has been anticipated in the planning of the entire Bob Jones Pathway. Because this alternative would not meet many of the objectives of the proposed

3.0 ALTERNATIVES

project, it would have a greater impact to recreation and parks as compared to the proposed project.

Transportation/Traffic – (Greater) Alternative 2 would result in a greater degree of traffic safety impact compared to the proposed project. Although it would eliminate one of the at-grade crossings at South Higuera Street, users would have to cross a Highway 101 on-ramp, share the roadway along a portion of South Higuera Street where there is a dangerous undercrossing and an off-ramp with a history of accidents, and navigate a congested section where San Luis Bay Drive intersects the Highway 101 off-ramp/on-ramp and Ontario Road. Additional mitigation would be necessary to provide safety enhancements where the pathway would share the roadway and cross on- and off-ramp facilities.

The San Luis Bay Drive intersections would need to be formalized. Even with additional safety measures in place, these safety issues would likely limit the use of the pathway to experienced bicycle riders, which would not be consistent with the primary objectives of the proposed project. Shared use with the roadway would make use by pedestrians hazardous. The grade of the pathway along Ontario Road would also make it difficult for less experienced riders to use the pathway. Therefore, Alternative 2 would result in a greater degree of transportation/traffic impact as compared to the proposed project.

Utilities and Services Systems – (Similar) Alternative 2 would result in a similar degree of impact to utilities and service systems as the proposed project. This alternative would not result in an increased demand for treatment or conveyance of wastewater and/or water that would result in the construction or expansion of existing or new facilities. Similar to the proposed project, water demand would be limited to restrooms at the trailhead near the Octagon Barn Center, which would not exceed the capacity of existing entitlements for that property. This alternative would not be connected to a stormwater drainage system except where stormwater needs to be captured to control erosion and allowed to infiltrate. In addition, this alternative would not generate solid waste to a level that would exceed the permit capacity of the landfill. Therefore, Alternative 2 would result in a similar degree of impact to utilities and service systems as the proposed project.

Summary for Alternative 2

Alternative 2 does not meet some of the objectives of the proposed project. It would not provide a multi-use trail or a primarily Class I bicycle/pedestrian corridor but would continue to provide a Class II or Class III bicycle route. Due to the Class II and Class III sections, use would likely be more conducive to more advanced bicyclists and deter use by pedestrians. It would not provide a safe and scenic bicycle and pedestrian route for a broad range of users nor would it maximize users contact with the natural environment.

Alternative 2 would minimize easements requirements on important farmland, which would lessen the degree of impact on this resource. Farmland impacts have already been identified in the EIR as less than significant. Conversely, this alternative would result in a greater degree hazards exposure, geology and soils, noise, parks and recreation, and traffic safety impacts than the proposed project.

ALTERNATIVE 3 – ELIMINATION OF SOUTH HIGUERA CROSSINGS

Alternative 3 would have the same alignment as the proposed project with the exception of changes in Segment 1. Under Alternative 3, Segment 1 between the Octagon Barn and the South Higuera Street crossing of SLO Creek would be aligned so that the pathway would not

cross South Higuera Street (twice), but instead would continue to run along South Higuera Street on the south/east side of the roadway as illustrated in yellow on **Figure 3.0-1**. This alternative would avoid any safety concerns associated with the road crossing, while providing function and access. This alternative is similar to Design Concept B for Sub-Segment 1a analyzed in the *Bob Jones Pathway Phase II Feasibility Study (Technical Appendix T7)*.

Comparative Analysis of Alternative 3

Aesthetics and Visual Resources – (Similar) Alternative 3 would continue to provide a Class I pathway; however, the northern section of Segment 1 aligned on the east side of South Higuera Street adjacent to agricultural land would be less aesthetically pleasing to users than the proposed project alignment adjacent to the SLO Creek corridor. Alternative 3 would require similar bridge construction, and the need for an overcrossing structure and ramps would remain, which would result in a similar degree of visual impacts to viewers on Highway 101 as the proposed project. The same mitigation as required for the proposed project would be applicable to this alternative. Overall, Alternative 3 would result in a similar degree of impacts to aesthetics and visual resources as the proposed project.

Agricultural Resources – (Greater) Alternative 3 would result in a greater degree of impact to agricultural resources compared to the proposed project because the alignment would require obtaining additional easements on private property designated as important farmland (Prime Farmland) along South Higuera Street. However, most of the alignment would likely be located within the public right-of-way on the margins of existing farmland. The existing agricultural road and proximity to South Higuera Road currently limit existing agricultural operations where Segment 1 would be realigned under Alternative 3. Therefore, Alternative 3 would result in a slightly greater degree of impacts with respect to the conversion of productive important farmland and potential conflicts with agricultural operations. The same mitigation as required for the proposed project would be applicable to this alternative.

Air Quality – (Similar) Alternative 3 would result in a similar degree of air quality impact as the proposed project because they would both result in similar construction emissions and have virtually no operational emissions. The same mitigation as required for the proposed project would be applicable to this alternative.

Biological and Natural Resources – (Lesser) Alternative 3 would result in a lesser degree of impact to biological and natural resources compared to the proposed project because there would be less disturbance of sensitive habitat and vegetation within the SLO Creek corridor but more disturbance of agricultural habitat. Although impacts to riparian habitat would be reduced, impacts to agricultural habitat, which support some special-status species but not as many as riparian habitat, would increase. The same mitigation as required for the proposed project would be applicable to this alternative. Overall, Alternative 3 would result in a lesser degree of impact to biological and natural resources compared to the proposed project.

Cultural Resources – (Similar) Alternative 3 would result in a similar degree of impact to cultural resources as the proposed project because this alternative would result in the same potential to disturb the identified archaeological site and historical resources. Alternative 3 would also have the same potential to discover previously undiscovered sites. The same mitigation as required for the proposed project would be applicable to this alternative. Therefore, Alternative 3 would result in a similar degree of impact to cultural resources as the proposed project.

Geology and Soils – (Similar) Alternative 3 would result in a similar degree of impact to geology and soils as the proposed project because similar areas of the environment would be disturbed.

3.0 ALTERNATIVES

The same erosion control measures would be required for this alternative as for the proposed project. Therefore, Alternative 3 would result in a similar degree of impact to geology and soils as the proposed project.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions – (Similar) Alternative 3 would result in a similar degree of impact to greenhouse gas emissions as the proposed project. It would result in similar to slightly greater physical disturbance of the environment, similar to slightly less removal of vegetation/trees, and similar use of construction equipment. The same mitigation as required for the proposed project would be applicable to this alternative. For these reasons, GHG construction emissions and loss of carbon sequestration would be similar to the proposed project.

Hazardous Materials/Hazards – (Similar) Similar to the project, this alternative would result in limited potential for exposure to on-site hazardous materials during construction. Exposure to off-site hazardous materials would also be similar to the proposed project, as users of this alignment would experience similar exposure to vehicle emissions and hazardous materials being transported along Highway 101. For a short distance, users would be physically closer to herbicides and pesticides that are applied to the adjacent agricultural fields. Airport and wildfire hazards would remain similar to the proposed project. Overall, Alternative 3 would result in a similar degree of impact related to hazardous materials/hazards.

Hydrology and Water Quality – (Similar) Alternative 3 would result in a similar degree of impact to hydrology and water quality as the proposed project because this alternative would only slightly reduce the amount of physical disturbance near SLO Creek. Mitigation required for the proposed project would remain applicable to this alternative. The demand for groundwater associated with this alternative would be similar to the proposed project and would not substantially deplete groundwater supplies, and the alternative itself would not substantially interfere with groundwater recharge. The alignment would remain mostly within the floodplain. Therefore, Alternative 3 would result in a similar degree of impact to hydrology and water quality as the proposed project.

Land Use – (Similar) Alternative 3 would result in a similar degree of impact to land use as the proposed project because it would continue to connect (not divide) a community and would not result in the development or displacement of housing. The need to acquire easements would remain; however, more easements would be required on private property designated for agricultural use. Overall, Alternative 3 would result in similar impacts to land as the proposed project.

Noise – (Similar) Alternative 3 would result in a similar degree of noise impact as the proposed project because this alternative would be near the same number of sensitive receptors and use similar construction equipment, which would result in similar construction noise levels. The same mitigation as required for the proposed project would be applicable to this alternative. Therefore, Alternative 3 would result in a similar degree of noise impacts compared to the proposed project.

Public Services – (Similar) Alternative 3 would result in a similar degree of public service impact as the proposed project because this alternative would not result in any increase in demand for police or fire protection that requires the need for new facilities in order to maintain service response ratios. Although potential conflicts between pathway users and agricultural operations may increase due to an increase in pathway area adjacent to agricultural land, mitigation provided for the proposed project would remain applicable to this alternative, which would reduce the potential for trespass and increased demand for police services. Therefore, Alternative 3 would have similar public service impacts as compared to the proposed project.

Recreation and Parks – (Similar) Alternative 3 would result in a similar degree of impact to recreation and parks as the proposed project in that it would provide a significant recreation facility that has been planned for decades and identified as a priority. Any increased use of other sections of the trail associated with this alternative has been anticipated in the planning of the entire Bob Jones Pathway. Therefore, this alternative would have similar impacts to recreation and parks as the proposed project.

Transportation/Traffic – (Lesser) Alternative 3 would result in a lesser degree of potential conflicts with the County's 2011 *Public Improvements Standards* compared to the proposed project. This alternative would eliminate the need for two at-grade crossings at South Higuera Street. However, one at-grade crossing may still be required to provide connectivity to the City of San Luis Obispo's portion of the BJP. Mitigation provided for the proposed project would remain applicable to this alternative in order to ensure consistency with the 2011 *Public Improvement Standards* and to ensure any potential safety impacts associated with an interim at-grade crossing are reduced by providing warning lights, striping, and signage prior to the construction of the signalized intersection. Since the need for two at-grade crossings would be eliminated, Alternative 3 would result in a lesser degree of transportation/traffic impact compared to the proposed project.

Utilities and Services Systems – (Similar) Alternative 3 would result in a similar degree of impact to utilities and service systems as the proposed project. This alternative would not result in an increased demand for treatment or conveyance of wastewater and/or water that would result in the construction or expansion of existing or new facilities. Similar to the proposed project, water demand would be limited to restrooms at the trailhead near the Octagon Barn Center, which would not exceed the capacity of existing entitlements for that property. This alternative would not be connected to a stormwater drainage system except where stormwater needs to be captured to control erosion and allowed to infiltrate. In addition, this alternative would not generate solid waste to a level that would exceed the permit capacity of the landfill. Therefore, Alternative 3 would result in a similar degree of impact to utilities and service systems as the proposed project.

Summary for Alternative 3

Alternative 3 meets most of the primary objectives of the proposed project. While it would improve traffic safety by eliminating the at-grade crossings on South Higuera Street, this alternative also results in a slightly greater degree of impact to agricultural resources and hazardous material exposure when compared to the proposed project.

ALTERNATIVE 4 – HIGHWAY 101 UNDERCROSSING AT ONTARIO ROAD STAGING AREA

Alternative 4 would have the same alignment as the proposed project with the exception of Segment 5. Alternative 4 would align Segment 5 between San Luis Bay Drive and the Ontario Road Staging Area to cross Highway 101 under an existing bridge instead of constructing a new overcrossing structure and associated ramps as illustrated in green on **Figure 3.0-3**. Within Segment 5, the pathway would extend south along a farm road within a Caltrans easement that is adjacent to the east side of Highway 101. At the Highway 101 Bridge (Bridge No. 49-0014R/L) at SLO Creek, the pathway would go under the highway and connect to the existing Ontario Road Staging Area. This alternative is similar to Design Concept B for Sub-Segment 5 as analyzed in the *Bob Jones Pathway Phase II Feasibility Study* (**Technical Appendix T7**).

3.0 ALTERNATIVES

Comparative Analysis of Alternative 4

Aesthetics and Visual Resources – (Lesser) Compared to the proposed project, Alternative 4 would result in a lesser overall degree of impact to visual quality and character to those traveling on Highway 101, primarily because Segment 5 crosses under existing freeway bridge structures in lieu of the new overcrossing structure. The result is a “less visible” project concept that appeals to some members of the community. Although the environmental and visual impacts from the overcrossing as proposed could be fully mitigated, this structure is an iconic component of the project that has generated much public input and opinion. The undercrossing alternative addresses those opinions regarding the project’s visibility. Alternative 4 would also serve to provide users with excellent views of agricultural land and riparian habitat along the creek corridor; however, the vistas to be gained by the elevated bridge crossing would be lost.

Agricultural Resources – (Similar) Alternative 4 would result in a similar degree of impact to agricultural resources as the proposed project, which was found to be less than significant. The alignment of Segment 5 would require obtaining similar easements on private property designated as important farmland (Prime Farmland). Productivity of this land is currently restricted as it is limited to a farm road and not in production. Therefore, Alternative 4 would result in similar degree of impact to agricultural resources within Segment 5 as the proposed project.

Air Quality – (Similar) Alternative 4 would result in a similar degree of air quality impact as the proposed project because they would both result in similar construction emissions and have virtually no operational emissions.

Biological and Natural Resources – (Greater) Alternative 4 would result in a greater degree of impact to biological and natural resources compared to the proposed project because there would be more disturbance of sensitive habitat and vegetation within the SLO Creek corridor. The additional work required within the floodway would increase the potential for sedimentation. The undercrossing improvements would likely require additional vegetation removal and alteration of the creek itself, which may affect special-status species and their habitat. Increased noise levels under the bridge may disturb nesting birds. Mitigation required for the proposed project would also be required for this alternative; however, the final Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) would need to be expanded to the area to be disturbed under the bridges.

Cultural Resources – (Similar) Alternative 4 would result in a similar degree of impact to cultural resources as the proposed project because this alternative would result in the same potential to disturb the identified archaeological site and historical resources. Alternative 4 would have greater potential to discover previously undiscovered sites because more earthwork would be done adjacent to the creek where previously undiscovered site are likely to be located. The same mitigation as required for the proposed project would be applicable to this alternative to reduce these potential impacts to a less than significant level, and thus the impacts would be similar.

Geology and Soils – (Greater) Alternative 4 would result in a greater degree of impact to geology and soils compared to the proposed project because it would require substantial earthwork adjacent to footings and supporting piers of Highway 101 bridges that convey vehicles over SLO Creek. The pathway would be constructed within the floodway, which would be prone to accumulation of sediment and debris after a storm event. Maintenance would be required to clear debris after storms. These maintenance activities may result in impacts of their

own associated with mobilization and operation of machinery and clearing equipment. The design of the pathway would also need to include retaining walls or subsurface keyways to protect against scouring action and undermining. In addition, there is high groundwater (at an elevation of approximately 21 feet) (Caltrans 2006b) at the undercrossing, so any excavation would require additional mitigation to accommodate high groundwater. The same erosion control measures would be required for this alternative as for the proposed project. Overall, Alternative 4 would result in a greater degree of impacts to geology and soils than the proposed project.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions – (Similar) Alternative 4 would result in a similar degree of impact to greenhouse gas emission as the proposed project. Both would result in similar to slightly greater physical disturbance of the environment, similar to slightly less removal of vegetation/trees, and similar use of construction equipment. For these reasons, GHG construction emissions and loss of carbon sequestration would be similar to the proposed project.

Hazardous Materials/Hazards – (Similar) Alternative 4 would result in similar exposure to hazardous materials/hazards as the proposed project. Under this alternative, user exposure to on-site hazardous materials during construction would be similar, users would continue to be exposed to similar off-site hazardous materials being transported along Highway 101 and sprayed on the agricultural fields, and airport and wildfire hazards would remain similar to the proposed project. Therefore, Alternative 4 would result in a similar degree of impact to hazardous materials/hazards as the proposed project.

Hydrology and Water Quality – (Greater) Alternative 4 would result in a greater degree of impacts to hydrology and water quality compared to the proposed project because it would place the pathway within a regulated floodway with existing bridge structures supporting an interstate highway. This alternative would increase the amount of work adjacent to and within SLO Creek, which would increase the potential for sedimentation to degrade water quality. The same mitigation measures to control runoff and minimize erosion for the proposed project would be applicable to this alternative. Construction activities adjacent to the creek would have similar impacts as the proposed project and the same mitigation measures would be applicable. Mitigation measures for the proposed project that require obtaining a Section 1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and coordinating with the State Water Resources Control Board/Regional Water Quality Control Board (SWRCB/RWQCB) regarding the need for a Section 13263(a) general waste discharge requirement would remain applicable to this alternative. However, Alternative 4 would place users and obstructions within the floodway, which would require additional mitigating design requirements for safety and maintenance of flood capacity through the undercrossing and minimize impacts to the pathway itself.

The pathway would be constructed within the floodway, which would be prone to accumulation of sediment and debris after a storm event. Maintenance would be required to clear debris after a storm event. These maintenance activities may result in impacts of their own associated with the mobilization and operation of machinery and clearing equipment.

Land Use – (Similar) Alternative 4 would result in a similar degree of impact to land use compared to the proposed project because the alignment would require use of land purchased by the State (Caltrans) that has limited rights of use and passage. The State does not hold the land as a right-of-way for the benefit of the public at large but as a fee holding encumbered by the grantors' right to use it as a cattle path for access to public roads from their fields (Caltrans 2006a). Therefore, the abutting owners have a real interest in the property, and their permission would be necessary to allow the use of the land for the BJP (Caltrans 2006a). This

3.0 ALTERNATIVES

may require purchasing an easement or acquiring the rights for the affected owners to use the land, which would require the County to enter into an agreement or obtain an encroachment permit from Caltrans with an indemnification and hold harmless agreement and assurances that the County would maintain the improvements (Caltrans 2006a).

Noise – (Similar) Alternative 4 would result in a similar degree of noise impacts as the proposed project because this alternative would be near the same number of sensitive receptors and use similar construction equipment, which would result in similar construction noise levels.

Public Services – (Similar) Alternative 4 would result in a similar degree of public service impacts as the proposed project because this alternative would not result in any increase in demand for police or fire protection that requires the need for new facilities in order to maintain service response ratios. Although potential conflicts between pathway users and agricultural operations may increase as there will be an increase in pathway use adjacent to agricultural land, mitigation provided for the proposed project would remain applicable to this alternative, which would reduce the potential for trespass and increased demand for police services.

Recreation and Parks – (Similar) Alternative 4 would result in a similar degree of impact to recreation and parks as the proposed project in that it would provide a recreation improvement that has been planned for decades and identified as a priority. Any increased use of other sections of the trail associated with this alternative has been anticipated in the planning of the entire Bob Jones Pathway. Therefore, this alternative would have similar impacts to recreation and parks as the proposed project.

Transportation/Traffic – (Similar) Alternative 4 would result in a similar degree of traffic safety impact as the proposed project. This alternative would retain the same alignment except for the overcrossing, which did not pose a safety hazard. Therefore, Alternative 4 would result in a similar degree of transportation/traffic impact as the proposed project.

Utilities and Services Systems – (Similar) Alternative 4 would result in a similar degree of impact to utilities and service systems as the proposed project. This alternative would not result in an increased demand for treatment or conveyance of wastewater and/or water that would result in the construction or expansion of existing or new facilities. Similar to the proposed project, water demand would be limited to restrooms at the trailhead near the Octagon Barn Center, which would not exceed the capacity of existing entitlements for that property. This alternative would not be connected to a stormwater drainage system except where stormwater needs to be captured to control erosion and allowed to infiltrate. In addition, this alternative would not generate solid waste to a level that would exceed the permit capacity of the landfill.

Summary for Alternative 4

Alternative 4 meets most of the primary objectives of the proposed project but would result in a greater degree of impacts compared to the proposed project with regard to biological and natural resources, geology and soils, and hydrology and water quality.

The undercrossing structure being located in a floodway would result in greater maintenance and operational costs, as well as seasonal closures. In addition, the undercrossing may attract illegal camping and related activities associated with use by transients, which may also increase maintenance costs and result in secondary environmental consequences. This alternative would likely have excessive long-term maintenance costs due to design, location, and use. In addition, this alternative will have increased permitting costs and time delays associated with

improvements within the floodway, as any modifications within the floodway will require other agency approval and oversight.

However, if Caltrans programs future improvements to the Highway 101 bridge structure (i.e., retrofitting or other upgrades), pathway improvements could be incorporated into the design of those improvements. Incorporating the pathway into the design of future Caltrans bridge improvements may allow for a pathway undercrossing that is located at a higher elevation and outside of the floodway, incorporating environmental mitigation and spreading the costs associated with maintenance and permitting across all improvements. Any future improvements to the bridge structure would be subject to Caltrans design, review and approval process, which would include subsequent environmental review. However, the timing, need and funding for any bridge improvements by Caltrans is unknown at this time, and any bridge project that could include or incorporate the trail undercrossing is not foreseeable in the time frames currently sought for the Bob Jones Pathway project. For these reasons, implementation of an alternative similar to Alternative 4 is only considered feasible if tied to other improvements outside of the County's control.

ALTERNATIVE 5 – INTERIM IMPROVEMENTS

Alternative 5 would retain the same Class II route but provide interim safety improvements (i.e., barricades, bollards, flashing lights), directional signage, and striping to better identify bike lanes and protect users until a more formal pathway can be constructed. Cyclists would continue to share the roadway with vehicles but with improved safety features. Use by pedestrians may continue to be prohibited in some areas for safety reasons, and thus Alternative 5 would not meet all of the stated objectives of the project. This alternative—or similar interim improvements—may also be implemented along various segments during the construction timeline or while easements are in the process of being obtained.

Comparative Analysis of Alternative 5

Aesthetics and Visual Resources – (Lesser) Alternative 5 would not result in the benefit of a visually pleasing Class I pathway. Cyclists would continue to share the roadway with vehicles, which is not as scenic a route as the proposed project. However, no physical improvements (i.e., overcrossing, ramps) would be constructed nor vegetation removed, which would lessen the degree of impact to the visual character and quality along the Highway 101 corridor. Therefore, Alternative 5 would result in a lesser degree of impact to aesthetics and visual resources compared to the proposed project.

Agricultural Resources – (Lesser) Alternative 5 would result in a lesser degree of impact to agricultural resources compared to the proposed project because this alternative would not require the conversion of important farmland or forestland, conflict with Williamson Act land, or result in conflicts with existing zoning. Users would, however, continue to use the right-of-way adjacent to agricultural land, which may conflict with existing agricultural operations.

Air Quality – (Lesser) Alternative 5 would result in a lesser degree of impact to air quality compared to the proposed project because this alternative would result in minimal physical disturbance of the environment and limited use of construction equipment; therefore, construction emissions would be less than the proposed project. However, without the proposed project, the community would not receive the benefits of an improved alternative mode of transportation that would reduce regional emissions. Overall, Alternative 5 would result in a lesser degree of impact to short-term air quality than the proposed project.

3.0 ALTERNATIVES

Biological and Natural Resources – (Lesser) Alternative 5 would result in a lesser degree of impact to biological and natural resources compared to the proposed project because this alternative would not require the removal of vegetation, the disturbance of the SLO Creek corridor or surrounding habitat, or the trimming of trees. Since there would be no removal of vegetation or trimming of trees, potential for impacts to special-status species and habitat would be reduced. Therefore, Alternative 5 would result in a lesser degree of impact to biological and natural resources than the proposed project.

Cultural Resources – (Lesser) Alternative 5 would result in a lesser degree of impact to cultural resources compared to the proposed project because this alternative would not result in the physical disturbance of the environment. Since there would be no physical disturbance of the site, there would be no potential to affect the existing identified historical and archaeological resources or disturb previously undiscovered cultural resources (archaeological, historical, and/or paleontological) or human remains. Therefore, Alternative 5 would result in a lesser degree of impact to cultural resources than the proposed project.

Geology and Soils – (Lesser) Alternative 5 would result in a lesser degree of impact to geology and soils compared to the proposed project because this alternative would not result in the physical disturbance of previously undisturbed/developed land and no structures would be constructed. Since there would be no potential to disturb previously undisturbed/developed land, there would be no potential for erosion and no mitigation would be necessary. No structures would be constructed, so there would be no seismic-related hazards of concern.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions – (Similar) Alternative 5 would result in a similar degree of impact to greenhouse gas emissions as the proposed project. This alternative would result in similar to slightly greater physical disturbance of the environment, similar to slightly less removal of vegetation/trees, and similar use of construction equipment. For these reasons, GHG construction emissions and loss of carbon sequestration would be similar to the proposed project.

Hazardous Materials/Hazards – (Similar) Alternative 5 would result in a similar degree of impact related to hazardous materials/hazards as the proposed project. This alternative would result in less potential for exposure to the use of on-site hazardous materials during construction than the proposed project since no construction would occur. Exposure to off-site hazardous materials would be greater than the proposed project, as users would continue to be exposed to hazardous materials being transported along Highway 101 and sprayed on the agricultural fields, as well as to exhaust fumes from vehicles on Highway 101 and shared roadways. Airport and wildfire hazards would remain similar to the proposed project. Therefore, overall this alternative would result in a similar degree of impact related to hazardous materials/hazards.

Hydrology and Water Quality – (Lesser) Alternative 5 would result in a lesser degree of impact to hydrology and water quality compared to the proposed project because this alternative would not result in the physical disturbance of the environment. Without site disturbance, the potential to degrade water quality would be lessened. Therefore, hydrology and water quality impacts would be less than the proposed project.

Land Use – (Greater) Alternative 5 would result in a greater degree of impact to land use compared to the proposed project because not implementing the project would be inconsistent with the *San Luis Obispo County General Plan Parks and Recreation Element*, *San Luis Obispo County Bikeways Plan 2010 Update*, and *2010 Regional Transportation Plan and Preliminary Sustainability Communities Strategy*. Although this alternative would not require the need to acquire easements on private property, the conflict with three existing planning

documents would make this impact greater than the proposed project. However, if this alternative were implemented in combination with the proposed project or other alternatives that meet more of the project objectives, this impact would be reduced.

Noise – (Lesser) Alternative 5 would result in a lesser degree of noise impacts compared to the proposed project because this alternative would result in limited construction activities. With limited construction activities, the potential to generate noise would be reduced.

Public Services – (Similar) Alternative 5 would result in a similar degree of public service impacts compared to the proposed project. Although this alternative would not increase public access to agricultural areas, thus reducing the potential for trespassing on private land, the lack of a Class I pathway would retain the shared use within the right-of-way, which poses safety risks and could potentially result in more accidents over time requiring the services of police and emergency medical providers. Therefore, this alternative would result in similar degree demand for public services.

Recreation and Parks – (Greater) Alternative 5 would result in a greater degree of impact to recreation and parks compared to the proposed project in that it would not provide a priority recreation improvement that has been planned for decades.

Transportation/Traffic – (Greater) Alternative 5 would result in a greater degree of traffic hazards compared to the proposed project because users would be required to continue to share the roadway with vehicles for almost the entire distance of the pathway alignment. This would expose users to increased safety hazards associated not just with vehicles on the roadway but with agricultural equipment that uses the roadway. Mitigation that would reduce conflicts between users and agricultural operators and promote safety would remain applicable along certain segments.

Utilities and Services Systems – (Similar) Alternative 5 would result in no impact to utilities and service systems. Because no development would be proposed, no utilities or services systems would be necessary. However, this alternative would also not implement the utilities benefits of the proposed project (i.e., repairing existing drainage culverts). Overall, impacts to utilities and service systems would be similar to those of the proposed project.

Summary for Alternative 5

Alternative 5 would not meet any of the project objectives. However, it would result in a similar or a lesser degree of impact to most resources, with the exception for land use, recreation and parks, and transportation/traffic, which would be greater. This alternative could be implemented as a stand-alone alternative if funding became limited or in conjunction with the proposed project or other preferred alternative, where portions of the pathway construction may be delayed for various reasons (e.g., easements, funding).

3.5 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(2) requires that the environmentally superior alternative be identified as part of this analysis. Due to the linear characteristics of the proposed project the impacts to particular environmental resources may vary between segments. It is important when identifying the environmental superior alternative that the impacts to each environmental resource within each segment be weighed. Therefore, a summary of each alternative's potential physical affects on the environment on a segment by segment basis, as compared to the proposed project's impacts, is provided in **Table 3.0-1**.

3.0 ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives 1 and 5 would result very little if any improvements, which would result in lesser degree of impacts to most of the environmental resources when compared to the proposed project. However, these alternatives would not meet any of the stated project objectives.

Alternative 2 would provide primarily a Class II and III bicycle corridor that result in lesser degree of impacts to agricultural resources, biological resources, hydrology and water quality primarily within Segments 2 through 5; however, this alternative would also result in greater degree of impacts to aesthetics, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, noise, recreation and parks and traffic safety than the proposed project. This alternative would not reduce the traffic safety impact identified for the proposed project nor would it meet most of the objectives for the proposed project.

Alternative 4 would provide an undercrossing of Highway 101 in Segment 5 instead of an overcrossing, which was identified to result in significant but mitigable impacts. This alternative would result in lesser degree of impacts to aesthetics; however, it would also result in greater degree of impacts to biological resources, geology and soils, hydrology and water quality and land use than the proposed project.

Alternative 3 would realign Segment 1 to eliminate the double at-grade crossing of South Higuera Street, which was identified as a significant but mitigable impact. Alternative 3 would result in lesser degree of impact to biological resources and reduce potential conflicts with the County's *Public Improvement Standards*; however, this alternative would result in greater degree of impact to important farmland than the proposed project. Implementation of the same mitigation measures for the proposed project would ensure that the increased conversion of important farmland results in a significant but mitigable cumulative impact.

When taking into account the impacts of the proposed project, as well as the weight and magnitude of the impacts, Alternative 3 represents the environmentally superior alternative. As determined from the analysis, it is the only alternative that would reduce the degree of impact on traffic safety while achieving the main objectives of the proposed project.

**TABLE 3.0-1
COMPARISON OF PROJECT ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

Alternatives/ Segments	Environmental Resource Effects														
	Aesthetics a Visual Resources	Agricultural Resources	Air Quality	Biological & Natural Resources	Cultural Resources	Geology & Soils	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Hazardous Materials/Hazards	Hydrology & Water Quality	Land Use	Noise	Public Services	Recreation and Parks	Transportation/Traffic	Utilities & Services Systems
Alternative 1 - No Project															
Segments 1-5	Lesser	Lesser	Similar	Lesser	Lesser	Lesser	Similar	Similar	Lesser	Greater	Lesser	Lesser	Greater	Greater	Similar
Alternative 2 – Important Farmland Avoidance															
Segment 1	Similar	Similar	Similar	Lesser	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Lesser	Similar	Similar	Similar	Greater	Greater	Similar
Segment 2	Similar	Lesser	Similar	Lesser	Similar	Greater	Similar	Greater	Lesser	Similar	Greater	Similar	Greater	Greater	Similar
Segments 3-4	Greater	Lesser	Similar	Lesser	Lesser	Greater	Similar	Greater	Lesser	Similar	Greater	Similar	Greater	Greater	Similar
Segment 5	Lesser	Similar	Similar	Lesser	Greater	Lesser	Similar	Lesser	Lesser	Similar	Similar	Similar	Greater	Greater	Similar
Alternative 3 – Elimination of South Higuera Crossings															
Segment 1	Similar	Greater	Similar	Lesser	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Lesser	Similar
Segments 2-5	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Alternative 4 – Highway 101 Undercrossing															
Segments 1-4	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar

3.0 ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives/ Segments	Environmental Resource Effects														
	Aesthetics a Visual Resources	Agricultural Resources	Air Quality	Biological & Natural Resources	Cultural Resources	Geology & Soils	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Hazardous Materials/Hazards	Hydrology & Water Quality	Land Use	Noise	Public Services	Recreation and Parks	Transportation/ Traffic	Utilities & Services Systems
Segment 5	Lesser	Similar	Similar	Greater	Similar	Greater	Similar	Similar	Greater	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Alternative 5 – Interim Improvements															
Segments 1-5	Lesser	Lesser	Lesser	Lesser	Lesser	Lesser	Similar	Similar	Lesser	Greater	Lesser	Similar	Greater	Greater	Similar