

I. INTRODUCTION

I.A. PURPOSE AND TYPE OF EIR

Under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), public agencies are required to evaluate proposed development projects for their effects on the physical environment, and identify any feasible measures that would avoid or lessen significant environmental effects. This is intended to provide disclosure to the public and agency decision-makers of the environmental consequences of a project before action is taken to approve project permits.

The Willow Road Extension/US 101 Interchange project, which includes the extension of Willow Road from Pomeroy Road to Thompson Road, construction of an interchange where Willow Road would cross US 101, and the addition of a frontage road between Willow Road and Sandydale Drive, will be phased or tiered (refer to Section 15385 of the State CEQA guidelines). In 1999, a Tier 1 Final EIR (FEIR) was completed for the Willow Road Extension/US 101 Interchange project (proposed project). The FEIR addressed the potential environmental impacts of two alternative road alignments (Alignment 2 and Alignment 4) as well as two alternative frontage road locations (eastern and western frontage roads). The study was used to assist the County in the selection of the final Willow Road extension and frontage road alignments.

The County of San Luis Obispo, as the Lead Agency under CEQA, has determined that a Supplemental EIR (SEIR) is necessary to address the potential effects on the environment of the preferred alternative. Willow Road Alignment 2 and the eastern frontage road were chosen as the preferred alternative and this document serves as the Tier 2 SEIR. Many of the environmental assessments presented in the Phase/Tier 1 FEIR were sufficient in detail and adequacy for use in the SEIR. For these topics, discussion of environmental effects is incorporated by reference from the 1999 FEIR. However, updated technical studies were required for other environmental topics to address the environmental effects of the more detailed project design.

As an SEIR, this document evaluates changes in the environment resulting from both the construction and operation of the Willow Road Extension/US 101 Interchange project (Section 15161 of the CEQA Guidelines). Only the information necessary to make the previous FEIR adequate and up to date has been included (Section 15163(b) of the CEQA Guidelines).

I.B. CONTENTS OF THE EIR

The EIR contains the following chapters and content:

Chapter I, Introduction: Purpose and type of EIR, contents of the EIR, effects found not to be significant and not analyzed further in the EIR, and required agency approvals.

Chapter II, EIR Summary and Mitigation Monitoring Program (MMP): An overview of the project description, site characteristics, project history and background, project objectives,

alternatives to the proposed project considered, and summary of environmental impacts and mitigation measures. The MMP is a chart itemizing each identified mitigation measure to reduce environmental impacts, including the responsible party and timing of the mitigation requirement.

Chapter III, Project Description: Project history, project location, project objectives, and project description, including the construction and operation of the proposed project.

Chapter IV, Environmental Setting: The setting used for each environmental topic is summarized.

Chapter V, Environmental Analysis: Chapter V constitutes the environmental review of the proposed project for each of the environmental topics described below. The analyses in each topical section include the following information:

Existing Conditions: Identification of the existing physical conditions on the project site and in the vicinity of the site;

Thresholds of Significance: Identification of impact significance guidelines for assessing the severity of identified environmental impacts as well as a discussion of applicable policies, plans, and standards identified for each environmental topic;

Project Impacts: Evaluation of project-related environmental impacts and effects of the current project proposal;

Cumulative Impacts: Evaluation of the long-term environmental impacts and combined effects of the current project proposal and other pending projects in the area;

Mitigation Measures: Description of mitigation measures required to reduce or avoid environmental impacts;

Residual Impacts: Identification of environmental impacts after mitigation has been applied.

The following environmental topics are included in Chapter V:

V.A, Land Use and Planning: Discussion of existing land use conditions, zoning and General Plan land use designations.

V.B, Traffic and Circulation: Construction traffic and detours, and operational long-term project trip generation.

V.C, Noise: Construction and vehicular noise.

V.D, Air Quality: Carbon monoxide “hot spots,” increased fugitive dust, emissions and equipment traffic during construction, and decreased vehicle emissions in the long-term.

V.E, Public Services: Impacts to fire protection, police protection, and public utilities.

V.F, Biological Resources: Loss of coast live oak trees, and disruption to wildlife.

V.G, Cultural and Paleontological Resources: Effects to known and unknown archaeological, historic and paleontological resources.

V.H, Agricultural Resources: Effects to agricultural lands, agricultural preserves, and agricultural soils.

V.I, Aesthetics: Public views, on-site visual aesthetics and compatibility, and lighting.

V.J, Geology and Soils: Primary and secondary seismic conditions, including differential consolidation and seismic settlement, liquefaction and lateral spreading, landsliding, and erosion.

V.K, Drainage Erosion and Sedimentation: Drainage patterns, flooding, soil erosion, and water runoff.

V.L, Water Quality: Potential impacts to surface water hydrology, groundwater hydrology, and water quality during and after construction.

V.M, Hazardous Materials: Hazardous materials.

V.N, Socio-Economics: Population, housing, and economic effects.

Chapter VI, Significant Environmental Effects Which Cannot be Avoided: The environmental effects of the proposed project that remain significant after mitigation measures are implemented.

Chapter VII, Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes: Any irreversible uses of non-renewable resources by the proposed project (all phases) are discussed.

Chapter VIII, Alternatives: This chapter provides comparative environmental evaluation of the following alternative site designs and site locations for their potential to avoid or minimize significant environmental impacts while substantially meeting the project's objectives.

- “No Project/No Build” Alternative
- Alternative Project Sites
- Alternative Interchange Designs
- No Interchange Alternatives
- Alternatives Evaluated but Withdrawn from Consideration
- Environmentally Superior Alternative

Chapter IX, Growth Inducing Impacts: Growth inducing factors include the removal of impediments to growth and precedent-setting development. This chapter analyses how growth inducement may impact economics, population, housing, and community services.

Chapter X, Organizations and Persons Contacted: A listing of all persons and organizations contacted as part of preparation of the SEIR.

Chapter XI, References: A listing of all documents utilized in preparation of the SEIR.

I.C. EFFECTS FOUND NOT TO BE SIGNIFICANT IN THE INITIAL STUDY

In 1995, the County prepared an Initial Study in accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines. The Initial Study was included with the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft EIR (DEIR) and distributed to public agencies that would potentially have comments on the content and analysis to be provided in the DEIR. The information, analysis, and conclusions contained in the

Initial Study were the basis for the County's decision to prepare a Tier 1 EIR to further analyze project impacts. The Initial Study was used to focus the 1999 FEIR on the effects determined to be potentially significant.

The 1995 NOP and Initial Study determined that the proposed project would not have significant environmental effects in the following areas, and therefore these topics were not discussed in the 1999 FEIR. These topics include:

- Mineral Resources
- Recreation

In June 2004, a NOP was distributed regarding the preparation of the current document, the Tier 2 SEIR. This NOP did not identify effects found not to be significant. Instead, it identified the technical studies that will be prepared to address project design requirements now prepared. These technical studies were prepared to address the following environmental topics:

- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Traffic and Circulation
- Hazardous Waste
- Water Quality

Each of these topics is discussed in detail in this SEIR. All other topics are incorporated by reference from the 1999 FEIR.

I.D. REQUIRED AGENCY APPROVALS

The County of San Luis Obispo, as the designated Lead Agency, has the authority for preparation and certification of this SEIR and approval of subsequent county permits and approvals. These permits are described in Chapter III of this SEIR.

There are also responsible and trustee agencies that have authority over one or more actions involved with the development of the proposed project as follows:

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans): Review and approval of the final interchange design and approval of an encroachment permit for project work within the Caltrans right-of-way.

State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB): Issuance of a Notice of Intent under the State General Construction Permit for authorization of storm water discharges.

Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB): Review of project compliance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) construction permit.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps): Notification and consultation regarding potential impacts to Nipomo Creek, review and approval of the Nationwide permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act for project work in Nipomo Creek.

California Department of Fish and Game: Review and approval of a Streambed Alteration Agreement under Section 1602 of the Fish and Game Code for project work in Nipomo Creek.

I.E. STANDARDS OF ADEQUACY OF EIR

CEQA Guidelines Section 15151 states that an EIR analysis need not be exhaustive, but that it provide information that enables decision makers to make a decision that intelligently takes into account a project's environmental consequences. Section 15151 notes that disagreement among experts does not invalidate an EIR analysis; however, a summary of any disagreement among experts should be provided. As stated in Section 15151, ". . . the courts have looked not for perfection but for adequacy, completeness, and a good faith effort at full disclosure."

I.F. PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS

According to Section 15163(c) of the CEQA Guidelines, SEIRs shall be given the same type of notice and public review as draft EIRs. Therefore, this SEIR is released for public review according to procedures in Section 15105(a) of the CEQA Guidelines. Individuals from the public and agencies have the opportunity to provide written comments on the contents of the SEIR for a period of 45 days. During the public review period, the County Department of Planning and Building will hold a public meeting to provide further opportunity for members of the public and public agencies to verbally comment or request clarification about the proposed project and the SEIR. Upon conclusion of the public review period, written responses will be prepared to address comments on environmental issues in the SEIR. These responses, in addition to any revisions to the text of the SEIR, will be incorporated into the Final SEIR.

Subsequently, public hearings will be held by the County Board of Supervisors to consider certification of the SEIR and related documents, including the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, Facts and Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations if necessary.