

US-101 IMPROVEMENTS

**UNIVERSAL STUDIO BOULEVARD SOUTHBOUND ON-RAMP
& REGAL PLACE SOUTHBOUND ON-RAMP**

LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
DISTRICT 7 – LA – 101 (PM 9.34/10.15)
EA 29920K, PPNO 4649
PROJECT ID #0713000307

**Addendum to
NBC Universal Evolution Plan
Environmental Impact Report**
(certified by the City of Los Angeles
November 14, 2012)
State Clearinghouse Number 2007071036

**Prepared by the
California Department of Transportation**



April 2014

I. INTRODUCTION/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NBCUniversal proposes a freeway improvement project in Los Angeles County along US-101 from PM 9.34 to 10.15, covering a distance of approximately 0.8 miles (Project). The Project includes construction of a new southbound (SB) on-ramp from Universal Studios Boulevard (USB), as well as an operational improvement shifting and widening SB US-101 to extend the existing two-lane portion of the Regal Place on-ramp (aka SB 101 on-ramp at Lankershim) and to improve the mainline sight distance in the area of the new USB SB on-ramp. The Project also includes the closure of the existing SB off-ramp at Bennett Drive (aka SB 101 off-ramp to Barham Blvd) while retaining the exiting SB on-ramp at Bennett Drive (aka SB 101 on-ramp to Barham Blvd).

The construction of the new USB SB on-ramp is an improvement required by the NBC Universal Evolution Plan project (Evolution Plan). The City of Los Angeles and the County of Los Angeles have both approved the Evolution Plan, a long-range plan that provides for the development of approximately 2.67 million net new square feet at the existing Universal Studios property located in the City of Los Angeles and unincorporated County of Los Angeles. The Universal Studios property is adjacent to the 101 Freeway and includes the Studio, the Universal Studios Theme Park and Tram Tour and CityWalk. The Universal Studios property is a major traffic generator in the area. The Evolution Plan includes a wide range of transportation improvements phased out over the course of its development to address the traffic generated by the Evolution Plan and to help alleviate congestion on local streets serving the area and improve freeway access.

The City of Los Angeles, acting as lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), certified the environmental impact report (EIR) for the Evolution Plan on November 14, 2012 (State Clearinghouse Number 2007071036). Both the City of Los Angeles and County of Los Angeles have adopted mitigation monitoring and reporting programs (MMRPs) for the Evolution Plan. The construction of the new USB SB on-ramp is Mitigation Measure B-3 in the MMRPs. The City of Los Angeles-approved MMRP, which includes all mitigation measures adopted for the Evolution Plan (both within the City and unincorporated County area) is attached hereto as Appendix A. There were no legal challenges to the certified EIR.

The construction and operation of the USB SB on-ramp was analyzed as part of the Evolution Plan EIR. The EIR described and studied three alternatives to the USB SB on-ramp, including a "No Build Alternative." The alternatives studied in the EIR involving the USB SB on-ramp were: (1) USB SB on-ramp/Bennett Drive off-ramp remains open; (2) USB SB on-ramp/Bennett Drive off-ramp closed; and (3) No Build (no USB SB on-ramp).

This document is an addendum to the Evolution Plan EIR and was prepared by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to comply with CEQA.

The EIR did not study the Project's proposed improvements for extending and widening the Regal Place on-ramp. The improvements to the Regal Place on-ramp are

minor alterations to an existing highway facility involving negligible or no expansion of use.

This addendum also considers an additional alternative not studied in the EIR: (4) a "No Ramp Alternative," which includes improvements to the Regal Place SB on-ramp and creation of an auxiliary lane between the Regal Place on-ramp and the Bennett Drive SB off-ramp, without constructing the USB SB on-ramp.

An addendum has been prepared because no new or substantially more severe significant effects will result from the Project that were not already studied in the EIR.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Project includes construction of a new SB on-ramp from USB, as well as an operational improvement shifting and widening SB US-101 to extend the existing two-lane portion of the Regal Place on-ramp and to improve the mainline sight distance in the area of the new USB SB on-ramp. The Project also includes the closure of the existing SB off-ramp at Bennett Drive while retaining the existing SB on-ramp at Bennett Drive. In addition, approximately five overhead freeway signs on US-101 would need to be replaced or modified to reflect the Project's improvements.

III. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED

In determining the preferred alternative, Caltrans assessed four alternatives, including the Project. Caltrans has determined that three of the alternatives are not preferred and hereby rejects them. The "No Build Alternative" studied in the EIR (no construction of the USB SB on-ramp) is not preferred and should be rejected because it does not meet the project purpose and need, and if no new direct connection to US-101 is provided, traffic conditions on the overall transportation system will degrade. To that end, the proposed USB SB on-ramp will not degrade operating conditions on SB US-101. The second alternative (construction of the USB SB on-ramp, with the Bennett Drive off-ramp remaining open), also studied in the EIR, is not preferred due to the short weaving and merging length between the USB SB on-ramp and the Bennett Drive off-ramp, and with a higher than average accident history along the existing Bennett Drive off-ramp. As a result, Caltrans has determined that the second alternative should be rejected. In preparing the Project Study Report/Project Report (PSR/PR) for the Project, Caltrans also assessed an additional alternative: a "No Ramp Alternative," which includes expansion of the Regal Place SB on-ramp and creation of an auxiliary lane between it and the Bennett Drive SB off-ramp, without constructing the USB SB on-ramp. As demonstrated in the PSR/PR, this alternative does not provide improvement to Cahuenga Boulevard. As such, Caltrans has determined that the No Ramp Alternative does not meet the project purpose and need and should be rejected.

IV. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT

A. LAND USE

Implementation of the Project would require that a portion of the USB SB on-ramp cross over a portion of a privately owned parcel located at the northeast corner of the Cahuenga Boulevard/USB intersection that is occupied by a fitness center, offices, and an apartment building (the 3400 Cahuenga Property). The residential project has been constructed such that the portion of the residential project facing the freeway is a sound insulated access corridor. No residential units face onto US-101 or will be fronting on to the USB SB on-ramp. The provision for the construction of the USB SB on-ramp was previously included in the project approvals for the development of the 3400 Cahuenga Property. The City previously approved a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the 3400 Cahuenga Property project, including the possible ramp construction.

It is anticipated that the property required for the on-ramp would ultimately be acquired by the City of Los Angeles or NBCUniversal, and dedicated to Caltrans upon completion of the construction of the USB SB on-ramp by NBCUniversal. Construction and operation of the USB SB on-ramp would require the relocation of an architectural design feature at the fitness center building but would not affect the use of the property and would not divide the property. Moreover, the closure of the Bennett Drive off-ramp, improvements to Regal Place on-ramp, and replacement/modification of overhead freeway signs will not affect the use of private property or divide private property. The Project's land use impacts would be less than significant.

B. TRAFFIC

The Project's potential traffic impacts were extensively studied in Gibson Transportation Consulting's "Transportation Study for the US-101 Southbound Access Improvements," attached to the PSR/PR for the Project, as well as in the Evolution Plan certified EIR. With the Project's changes to the freeway system, access to the US-101 and safety conditions will improve and traffic flow along Cahuenga Boulevard, Buddy Holly Drive (W.C. Fields Drive), and USB will improve, without significant negative impacts on the mainline freeway lanes. The overall system will function better during both the peak and off-peak periods of the day. Notably, construction and operation of the Project will not result in any significant effects not discussed in the Evolution Plan EIR.

C. NOISE

Construction of the Project will use techniques such as scheduling certain construction activities during day times when ambient noise is higher, the use of temporary noise barriers and post-construction noise mitigation consisting of permanent soundwalls. Construction noise impacts are expected to be less than significant.

The proposed USB SB on-ramp would locate traffic approximately 20 feet closer to the mixed-use development at the 3400 Cahuenga Property (fitness center, offices and a residential complex). Operational improvements to the Regal Place on-ramp

would place additional traffic just slightly closer to an existing drive-thru fast food restaurant. The Evolution Plan EIR used the Federal Highway Administration's Traffic Noise Model to predict roadway noise levels at various traffic noise receptor locations, including slightly east and west of the 3400 Cahuenga Property. Overall, noise impacts from the increase of off-site roadway traffic due to the Evolution Plan with its mitigation measures, including the on-ramp, show a nominal or minor increase in sound levels. Noise increases at all receptor locations in the Cahuenga Boulevard area were a maximum of 1 dBA CNEL. It is widely accepted that the average healthy person can barely perceive a noise level change of 3 decibels or less. The increase in noise from the Evolution Plan traffic with the mitigation measures near the Cahuenga Boulevard area would not be noticeable and would be less than significant. Additional mitigation would not be necessary. Moreover, the mixed-use development adjacent to the US-101 at the 3400 Cahuenga Property has been designed such that residential dwelling units do not directly front the US-101 and sound insulating features were required as part of that project. As such, locating traffic closer to that development is not expected to increase operational noise impacts to a level of significance.

D. VISUAL QUALITIES

The Project would not construct or remove any buildings, other than the removal of a minor architectural design feature at the existing fitness center building on the 3400 Cahuenga Property. The remainder of the fitness center building would remain intact and undisturbed. In addition, the Project would generally be completed within the existing upper and lower elevations of the US-101 and would not introduce elements that would interfere with existing views that are available within the area. All roadway materials, as well as the replaced or modified overhead freeway signs, would continue to be similar in color, form, and texture as those in place and/or would be designed to complement the visual character of the area. In sum, the Project would not significantly impact views of valued visual resources.

E. LIGHT AND GLARE

In the event that construction of the Project occurs at night, required lighting would be focused onto the individual construction site so as to limit spillover lighting onto adjacent areas. While some limited spillover lighting could occur on the 3400 Cahuenga Property, this impact would be short term and because of its limited duration would result in a less than significant impact. In addition, any temporary sound walls installed for construction of the Project would further reduce potential impacts. Any new signage required for the Project, including any overhead freeway signs needing replacement or modification, would be installed and operated in accordance with Caltrans guidelines, as well as the regulations of the City of Los Angeles, if applicable. Compliance with applicable guidelines would reduce light and glare impacts to a less than significant level.

F. GEOTECHNICAL

Implementation of the Project would include the construction of retaining walls. Retaining walls along the left and right of the proposed USB SB on-ramp are proposed to reduce impacts to the adjacent private right-of-way (R/W) and existing buildings, and to help improve sight distance for SB US-101. Retaining walls (maximum height of approximately 7.5 feet) also are proposed along the left and right of the Regal Place on-ramp improvements to minimize impacts to adjacent private R/W and to compensate for the grade difference between the on-ramp and mainline allowing for mainline shoulder widening.

Retaining wall alternatives were studied in the PSR/PR for the Project. Given the significant existing improvements in the area, construction of such retaining walls are not expected to have any material geotechnical issues. Project design features and mitigation measures designed to reduce geologic hazard impacts have been required in the Evolution Plan MMRPs. Consistent with the MMRP, during the plans, specifications and estimate (PS&E) portion of the Project, site-specific geotechnical reports would be prepared for these improvements, pursuant to applicable regulations and Caltrans design standards. The recommendations contained in the site-specific geotechnical reports, including without limitation those pertaining to site preparation, fill placement, foundations, and sedimentation or erosion will be implemented. With implementation of recommendations outlined in the geotechnical reports for each of these improvements and adherence to Caltrans design standards, geotechnical impacts will be reduced to a less than significant level.

G. WATER RESOURCES

The Project is located in a highly urbanized area of the City of Los Angeles that is mostly covered with impervious surfaces. The very minor increase in impervious surface area from construction of the Project would result in an associated negligible increase in runoff flowing onto US-101. In addition, a small quantity of stormwater runoff that currently flows away from the US-101 would be directed onto the US-101 via the proposed USB SB on-ramp. Stormwater would then enter stormwater catch basins located along the US-101 and into the municipal stormwater drainage system to the Los Angeles River Flood Control Channel. The increase in impervious surface resulting from the Project and any associated increase in stormwater runoff would be negligible when compared to existing conditions.

Erosion control measures would be implemented as part of the Project's Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan to meet water quality discharge requirements. Examples of erosion control measures include, but are not limited to, hydro seeding, erosion control blankets, use of straw and fiber rolls. In addition, during construction, any potential leaks, drips and spills that could occur would be cleaned up immediately to prevent contaminated soil on paved surfaces that could be washed into the storm drains or impacts to underlying soils or groundwater. If any groundwater is encountered during construction it would be properly managed in accordance with pertinent local, state, and

federal regulations. In sum, impacts with respect to water resources would be less than significant.

H. AIR QUALITY

During construction of the Project, in accordance with standard Caltrans procedures, mitigation measures would be implemented to reduce air quality impacts. Project design features and mitigation measures designed to reduce air quality impacts have been required in the Evolution Plan MMRPs. Those project design features and mitigation measures include, but are not limited to: (i) implementation of fugitive dust control measures during Project construction in accordance with South Coast Air Quality Management District Rule 403 (Project Design Feature H-1); (ii) use of diesel-emitting construction equipment (over 200 horsepower) with diesel particulate filters having 85% removal efficiency based on California Air Resources Board verified technologies (Project Design Feature H-3); and (iii) a variety of air quality control measures required in construction contracts (Mitigation Measure H-1). Based on the regional emissions from construction of the Project estimated in the Evolution Plan EIR, it is expected that regional emissions from the Project would not exceed applicable air quality thresholds of significance.

Impacts with regard to localized air quality concentrations and toxic air contaminants also would be less than significant due to the anticipated quantity of emissions at any one location and the physical separation of the various components of the Project from one another. In particular, a localized carbon monoxide (CO) hotspot study was conducted for the Evolution Plan with mitigation measures, including the USB SB on-ramp, and that analysis concluded that no intersections would exceed SCAQMD significance thresholds for CO. In addition to the emissions discussed above, implementation of the Project could emit odors associated with painting new stripes on the roadways and from laying new/replacement asphalt. Any odors that could occur would occur for a relatively limited duration (i.e., anticipated to range from a few working days to a couple of weeks). As such, odor impacts from the implementation of the Project would be less than significant. Finally, the Project is not subject to the transportation conformity requirements stipulated by the Clean Air Act (as amended). In sum, operational air quality impacts attributable to the Project are less than significant.

I. BIOTA

The Project would occur at locations that are already developed with transportation uses in highly urbanized areas of the City of Los Angeles. Implementation of the Project, including compliance with the applicable project design features and mitigation measures, would have no adverse impacts to candidate, sensitive, or special status species, nesting birds and protected trees, riparian habitats, or wildlife migration corridors, resulting in a less than significant impact with regard to biotic resources.

J. CULTURAL RESOURCES

There are no historic resources within the Project area. If archaeological resources were encountered at the Project site, the uncovered resources would be treated in accordance with federal, state, and local guidelines, as appropriate. In addition, the Project would be required to comply with Mitigation Measures J.2-3 and J.2-4, which require certain procedures to be undertaken if potentially significant archaeological resources or human remains are encountered during Project development. Should paleontological resources be uncovered during construction, work would stop at those locations and the resources would be treated in accordance with federal, state and local guidelines, as well as Mitigation Measures J.3-1 through J.3-7. In addition, in accordance with Caltrans guidelines, if any of that the Project's construction activities occur outside areas of artificial fill, a qualified vertebrate paleontologist would be retained to develop a Paleontological Resources Impact Mitigation Program. The Paleontological Resources Impact Mitigation Program would include project specific measures to reduce impacts on any identified resources. Overall, with compliance with existing regulations, applicable Evolution Plan mitigation measures, and Caltrans policies, the Project would result in less than significant cultural resources impacts.

K. PUBLIC SERVICES

Implementation of the Project will have a less than significant impact on public services (fire protection, police/sheriff, schools, parks, and libraries).

L. UTILITIES

The Project would require some utility relocations, including two Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) pad mount transformers, a LADWP pad mount electrical switch, and a power pole. The relocation of these utilities would be conducted in accordance with standard practices and procedures and as such no disruptions to utility services are anticipated. Thus, implementation of the Project would result in less than significant impacts with regard to utilities.

M. ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY

A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment was conducted for the 3400 Cahuenga Property (Site Assessment) where the USB SB on-ramp is to be constructed, and is attached hereto as Appendix B. The Site Assessment determined that there is no evidence of any recognized environmental conditions in connection with that property. During PS&E for the Project, soils potentially affected by construction will be evaluated to determine whether such soils are impacted as a result of aerially deposited lead (ADL) associated with vehicle exhaust. If ADL or any other pollutant of concern is found, soils would be properly managed in accordance with pertinent local, state, and federal regulations.

N. EMPLOYMENT, HOUSING AND POPULATION

Aside from the positive impact of creating temporary construction jobs, the Project would have no impact on employment, housing and population. Although the Project will require the removal of a design feature from an existing business adjacent to the new USB SB on-ramp, it will not cause the displacement of any existing business or residence. The Project will not result in an increase in population.

O. CLIMATE CHANGE

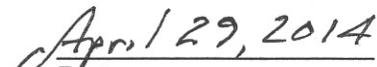
Greenhouse gas emissions attributable to the implementation of the Project would only occur during the construction of these improvements (i.e., post-construction impacts are solely related to the impacts of the Evolution Plan itself). During construction of the Project, the sources and quantities of greenhouse gas emissions would be limited and when amortized over the life of the improvements would represent a very small and minor incremental increase in terms of the total greenhouse emissions generated by the Evolution Plan. It is anticipated that the greenhouse gas reductions that would occur under the Evolution Plan would be sufficient to reduce emissions to an extent greater than 21.7 percent below "Business as Usual," even with the addition of greenhouse gas emissions generated during the construction of the Project. Therefore, implementation of the Project would result in a less than significant impact with regard to climate change (i.e. greenhouse gas emissions).

V. CONCLUSION

This addendum to the Evolution Plan EIR has been prepared in order for Caltrans to comply with CEQA with respect to the proposed Project described herein. This addendum concludes that none of the conditions set forth in Section 15162 of the state CEQA Guidelines¹ have occurred, and that the impact conclusions presented in the Evolution Plan EIR remain the same. As a result the preparation of a subsequent or supplemental EIR is not required.



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Date

¹ Cal. Code Regs., title 14, section 15162.