

State Route 216/Houston Avenue 4-Lane Widening

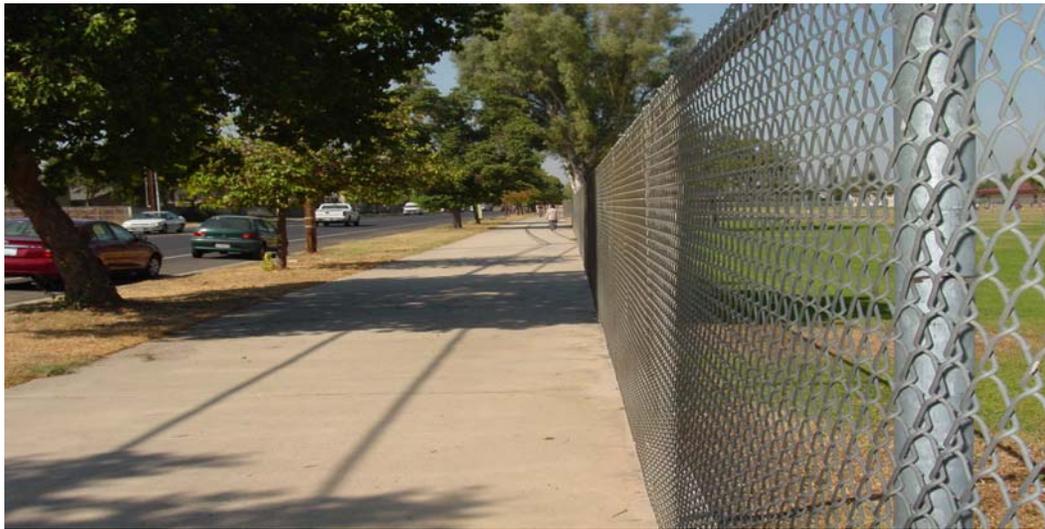
On State Route 216 from Lovers Lane to Road 152

06-TUL-216-PM 1.9/2.9

06-430700

SCH No.: 2007091006

Initial Study with Mitigated Negative Declaration



Prepared by the
State of California Department of Transportation

June 2008



General Information About This Document

What's in this document?

This document contains a Mitigated Negative Declaration, which examines the environmental effects of a proposed project on State Route 216 in Tulare County, California.

The Initial Study/Environmental Assessment and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration were circulated to the public from September 4, 2007 to October 4, 2007. Comment letters were received on the draft document. Responses to the circulated document are shown in the Comments and Responses section of this document (Appendix I), which has been added. Elsewhere throughout this document, a line in the margin indicates where changes have been made from the draft document.

What happens after this?

The proposed project has completed environmental compliance after the circulation of this document. When funding is approved, the California Department of Transportation can design and construct all or part of the project.

For individuals with sensory disabilities, this document is available in Braille, large print, on audiocassette, or computer disk. To obtain a copy in one of these alternate formats, please call or write to Caltrans, Attn: Sarah Gassner, Southern Sierra Environmental Analysis Branch, 2015 E. Shields Avenue, Suite 100, Fresno, CA 93726; (559) 243-8243 Voice, or use the California Relay Service TTY number, 1-800-735-2929.

State Route 216 (Houston Avenue) 4-lane widening from
Post Mile 1.9 to Post Mile 2.9 in the City of Visalia in Tulare County, California

**INITIAL STUDY
with Mitigated Negative Declaration**

Submitted Pursuant to: (State) Division 13, California Public Resources Code

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Transportation

6/16/2008
Date of Approval



Christine Cox-Kovacevich, Office Chief
Office of Environmental Management, North
Central Region Environmental Division
California Department of Transportation



Mitigated Negative Declaration

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to widen State Route 216 from Lovers Lane to McAuliff Road in the City of Visalia in Tulare County, California (post miles 1.9 to 2.9). The proposed project would convert the existing highway from a two-lane to a four-lane conventional highway with a median strip. The intersections at Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road would be upgraded with dedicated right-turn lanes and additional left-turn lanes.

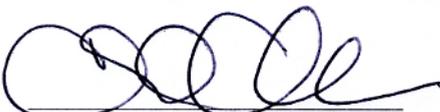
Determination

Caltrans has prepared an Initial Study for this project and, following public review, has determined from this study that the project would not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons.

The project would not affect planned land use and is consistent with the Tulare County and the City of Visalia General Plans. No hazardous waste materials were identified within the project area. The project would have no effect on agricultural resources, mineral resources, public services, recreation, or transportation and traffic. The project would not increase seismic hazards or result in substantial soil erosion. The project would have no effect on paleontological resources. The project would have no effect on air quality, hydrology and floodplain, water quality, or storm water runoff. The project would have no effect on natural communities, wetlands, animal and plant species, cultural resources, or noise.

In addition, the project would have no significantly adverse effect on homes, visual resources (oak trees), an educational complex, or threatened and endangered species because the following mitigation measures would reduce potential effects to insignificance:

- Relocation of residents would be done in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Properties Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended.
- Utilities affected by the project would be relocated in coordination with the City of Visalia and the appropriate company.
- Two heritage oak trees would be replaced in accordance with the City of Visalia's Oak Tree Preservation Ordinance (Municipal Code 12.24).
- The parking lot at the Visalia Adult School would be reconfigured.



Christine Cox-Kovacevich, Office Chief
Office of Environmental Management, North
Central Region Environmental Division
California Department of Transportation

6/16/2008
Date



Summary

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to widen State Route 216 from post mile 1.9 on Lovers Lane to post mile 2.9 in the City of Visalia. The proposed project would convert the existing highway from a two-lane to a four-lane conventional highway with a median strip. The intersections at Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road would be upgraded with dedicated right-turn lanes and additional left-turn lanes.

The purpose and need of this project are to improve operation, increase capacity and improve the safety of State Route 216.

Based on the environmental impacts and consideration of public comments, Alternative 1 has been selected as the overall Preferred Alternative through the project limits.

Alternative 1 fulfills the purpose and need of the project and has been determined to have the least environmental impacts.

Alternatives Considered

Three build alternatives are proposed to widen State Route 216 from a two-lane conventional highway to a four-lane conventional highway between Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road in the City of Visalia.

The three proposed build alternatives would widen the roadway from a two-lane conventional highway to a four-lane conventional highway with about 120 feet of right-of-way. The build alternatives would widen the existing roadway either to the north, the south, or symmetrically along the existing centerline.

Each of the three build alternatives would include:

- Installing a second left-turn lane at the intersections with Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road
- Relocating utilities
- Replacing and relocating existing sidewalk(s)
- Constructing new sidewalk(s) where none currently exist
- Replacing an existing bicycle path with a bicycle lane in both directions
- Replacing trees and landscaping

Alternative 1 would shift the existing highway about 30 feet north of the existing roadway between Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road.

Alternative 2 would shift the existing highway about 20 feet south of the existing roadway between Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road.

Alternative 3 would widen the existing roadway symmetrically, about 15 feet on either side of the existing centerline between Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road.

No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the existing two-lane highway and intersections would remain unchanged. The No-Build Alternative would result in continued higher-than-average accident rates and traffic congestion near the Golden West Educational Complex. If the No-Build Alternative were chosen, operational deficiencies would not be corrected.

Based on environmental impacts and after consideration of public comments, Caltrans selected Alternative 1 as the Preferred Alternative.

A summary of the potential impacts for each of the project alternatives is provided on the next page.

Summary of Major Potential Impacts from Alternatives

Potential Impact		Build Alternatives			No-Build Alternative
		Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	
Land Use	Consistency with the Visalia General Plan	Consistent with the City of Visalia General Plan			Does not conform with the City of Visalia General Plan
	Consistency with the County of Tulare General Plan	Consistent with the County of Tulare General Plan			Does not conform with the County of Tulare General Plan
Parks and Recreation		0.77 acre	No impact	0.21 acre	No impact
Growth		Consistent with the City of Visalia General Plan and the County of Tulare General Plan	Consistent with the City of Visalia General Plan and the County of Tulare General Plan	Consistent with the City of Visalia General Plan and the County of Tulare General Plan	No Impact
Relocations	Business displacements	0	0	0	No Impact
	Multi-family housing displacements	0	20 potential displaced multi-family units	8 potential displaced multi-family units	No Impact
	Single-family housing displacements	4 potential displaced single-family residences	12 potential displaced single-family residences	9 potential displaced single-family residences	
	Utility service relocation	Utilities would require relocation	Utilities would require relocation	Utilities would require relocation	No Impact
Traffic and Transportation/ Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities		Move the sidewalk and replace the bike path with a bike lane between Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road	Move the sidewalk and replace the bike path with a bike lane between Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road	Move the sidewalk and replace the bike path with a bike lane between Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road	Level of Service would continue to worsen

Potential Impact	Build Alternatives			No-Build Alternative
	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	
Parking spaces	53 parking stalls from Visalia Adult School and on-street parking on the north side of State Route 216 would be removed	On-street parking on the south side of State Route 216 would be removed	53 parking stalls from Visalia Adult School and on-street parking on both sides of State Route 216 would be removed	No Impact
Visual	Remove 110 trees	Remove 94 trees	Remove 94 trees	No Impact
Air Quality	May provide overall air quality benefit by improving Level of Service and reducing idling time at intersections	May provide overall air quality benefit by improving Level of Service and reducing idling time at intersections	May provide overall air quality benefit by improving Level of Service and reducing idling time at intersections	Air quality would worsen due to longer idling times
Noise and Vibration	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact
Schools	Remove sidewalks, trees, parking lot, and a bicycle path	No Impact	Remove sidewalks, trees, parking lot, and a bicycle path	No Impact
Construction	Temporary access delays during construction	Temporary access delays during construction	Temporary access delays during construction	No Impact
Biology	No Impacts	No Impacts	No Impacts	No Impact

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List of Abbreviated Terms

Caltrans
PM

California Department of Transportation
Post mile

Chapter 1 Proposed Project

1.1 Introduction

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to widen State Route 216 from post mile 1.9 on Lovers Lane to McAuliff Road (post mile 2.9) in the City of Visalia. State Route 216 serves as an intra-regional corridor between Visalia and the smaller communities of Ivanhoe, Woodlake, and Lemon Cove.

Throughout the project area, State Route 216 follows the alignment of a number of local roads and, therefore, is also known by city street names. At the beginning of the project limits, State Route 216 is also called Lovers Lane. In the vicinity of the Golden West Educational Complex east to the Visalia city limit it is called Houston Avenue (see Figures 1-1 and 1-2).

The proposed project would convert the existing highway from two lanes to four lanes with a median strip from post mile 1.9 on Lovers Lane to McAuliff Road (post mile 2.9). The intersections at Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road would be upgraded with dedicated right-turn lanes and additional left-turn lanes.

The project originally proposed to construct the project in two segments. Segment 1 would construct a four-lane conventional highway from Lovers Lane to post mile 2.99 near the Visalia city limit. Segment 2 would repave the existing highway, add 8-foot shoulders, and provide some intersection improvements at Road 152.

Lack of construction funding has required shortening the eastern end of the project from Road 152 to McAuliff Road. The Tulare County Association of Governments anticipates acquiring additional funding in the future and intends to construct improvements to the section of State Route 216 between McAuliff Road and Road 152. A separate environmental document would be required to evaluate the impacts of that project.

Upon completing environmental compliance for the project, Caltrans could decide to construct the project in phases. A decision to construct the project in phases would depend on the amount of funding available and the cost of the project.

1.2 Purpose and Need

1.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the proposed project is to:

- Improve the operation of State Route 216 from Lovers Lane to McAuliff Road in the city of Visalia.
- Increase the capacity of State Route 216 from Lovers Lane to McAuliff Road in the city of Visalia.
- Improve safety on State Route 216 from Lovers Lane to McAuliff Road in the city of Visalia.

1.2.2 Need

The proposed project lies between Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road, an area of the city that is experiencing urban development (see Figure 1-2).

State Route 216 is a two-lane conventional highway within the project area. The existing roadway has two 12-foot travel lanes and 8-foot outside shoulders. Sidewalks exist only in some areas, mostly in front of the Golden West Educational Complex, and they range from 4 to 10 feet wide. Intersections at Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road have traffic signals and dedicated left-turn lanes. Additional intersections in the project area include Sol Road and Comstock Street. Each of these intersections is a T-intersection with the side street controlled by a stop sign.

The existing highway serves growing residential, school, and commuter traffic, as well as the Groppetti football stadium (north of Golden West High School on McAuliff Road).

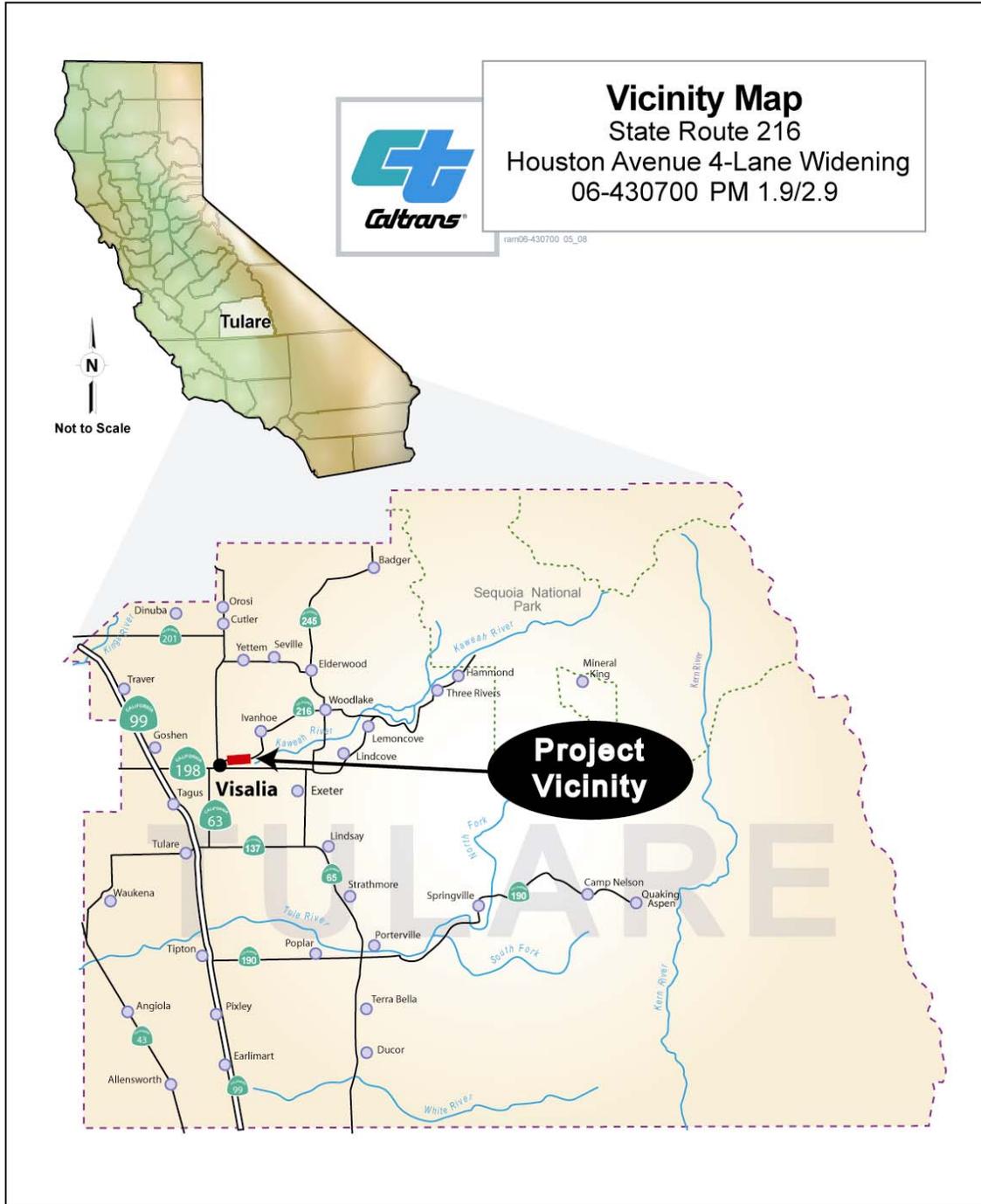


Figure 1-1 Project Vicinity Map



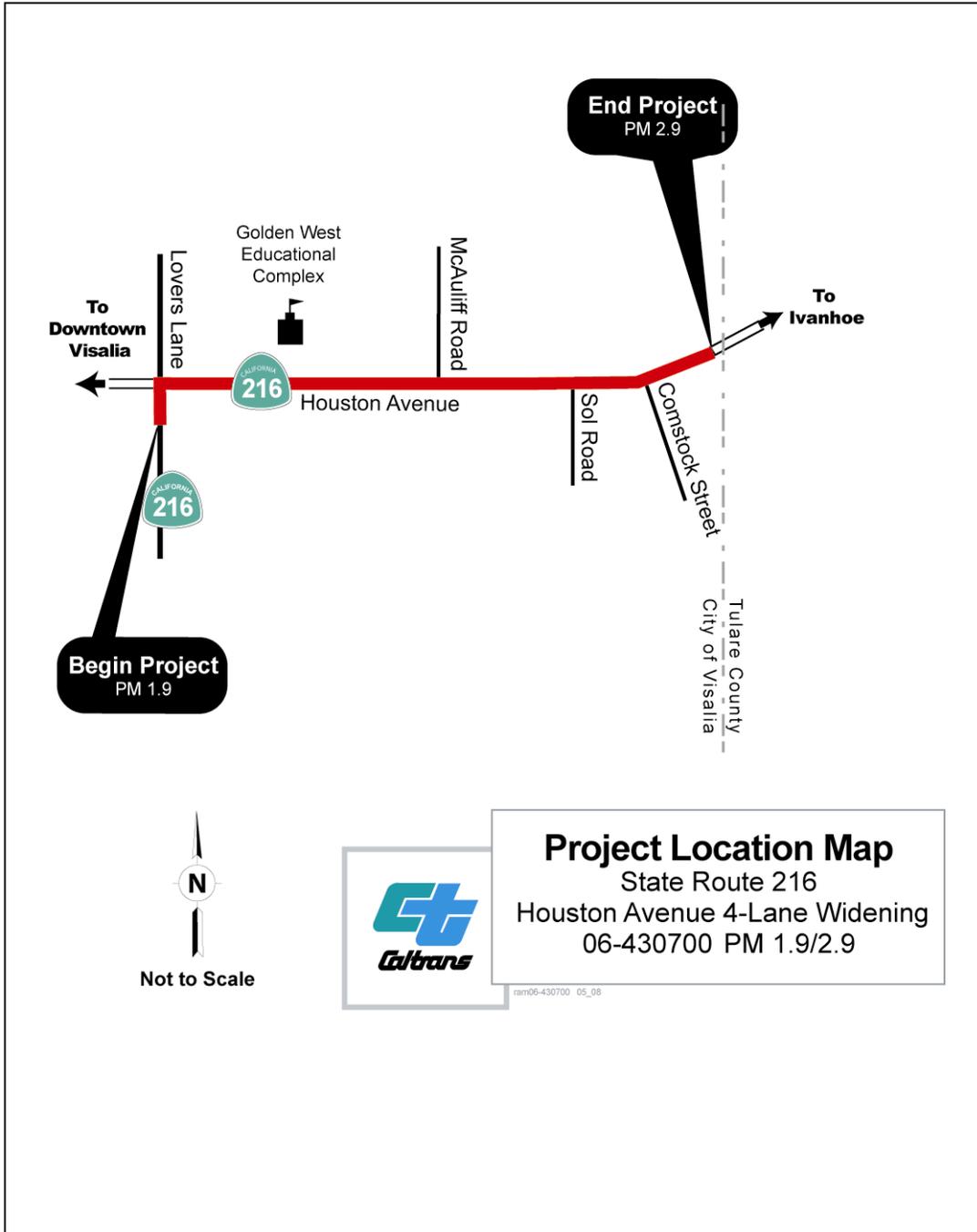


Figure 1-2 Project Location Map



1.2.2.1 Operations

Currently, State Route 216 operates satisfactorily throughout most of the day, except at peak hours. These peak hours coincide with the time children are arriving to school in the morning and the time children are released from school in the early afternoon. However, the same deficiencies affect traffic operations during special events taking place at the school and/or the Groppetti football stadium. These operational deficiencies mainly affect the highway between Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road.

Left-turn lanes at the intersections of State Route 216 (Houston Avenue) with Lovers Lane experience back-ups with waiting vehicles blocking the through lanes. Vehicles waiting to move in all directions must often wait through more than one red light before being able to continue on to their destination. Adding a second left-turn lane would add storage capacity at the intersections, remove stopped vehicles from the through traffic lanes, and consequently improve safety as well.

Turning vehicles block through traffic between intersections during peak hours. A second through lane in each direction would not only increase the capacity of the highway, but also would allow opportunities to pass slow-moving traffic and traffic waiting to make a turn. The added through lanes and left-turn lanes at intersections would enable vehicles to move around stopped vehicles, improving traffic flow. In addition, a raised median would control crossover traffic, also improving the flow of through traffic.

1.2.2.2 Capacity

Traffic volume is defined through the use of the Levels of Service rating. Levels of Service describe the operating conditions a motorist would experience while traveling on a highway. This rating system ranges from “A” to “F,” with “A” being free-flowing traffic and “F” being traffic with heavy congestion and considerable delays (see Figures 1-3 and 1-4 for a description of Level of Service).

The City of Visalia’s Circulation Element, the Tulare County General Plan, and Caltrans’ Draft Transportation Concept Report for State Route 216 designate the highway as a four-lane arterial with a minimum Level of Service “D.”

Table 1.1 gives current traffic volumes and predicted volumes for 2011 and 2031. Table 1.2 shows the current and predicted Levels of Service for State Route 216, as well as intersections in the project area without the project.

Table 1.1 Traffic Volumes (Annual Daily Traffic)

State Route 216	2005	2011	2031
Between post miles 1.9 and 2.9	11,200	29,000	40,000

Source: Caltrans Operational Analysis, January 2007

Table 1.2 Levels of Service (No-Build Alternative)

	2005		2011		2031	
	AM Peak	PM Peak	AM Peak	PM Peak	AM Peak	PM Peak
State Route 216 between post miles 1.9 and 2.9	C	B	C	C	D	F
State Route 216/ Lovers Lane	C	B	C	C	D	F
State Route 216/ McAuliff Road	B	B	C	C	D	E

Source: Caltrans Operational Analysis, April 2007

The average annual daily traffic count indicates that traffic volumes drop significantly east of McAuliff Road. However, this project proposes to widen State Route 216 to four lanes east of McAuliff Road to post mile 2.9 because the south side of the existing roadway has already been widened as part of an existing subdivision from Comstock Street (post mile 2.83) to post mile 2.94. Caltrans therefore proposes, as part of this project, to widen the north side of State Route 216 to four lanes in this developed area and transition back to two lanes. This would provide route continuity in this area and would create a symmetrical roadway.

State Route 216 within the project area is characterized by residential housing, a school complex, and agricultural land uses. Anticipated growth in the community is expected to add to the congestion of State Route 216 during peak travel times to and from the Golden West Educational Complex.

Traffic volumes in the project area would increase more than 250 percent between 2005 and 2011 and increase an additional 40 percent between 2011 and 2031 (Table 1.1), causing the Level of Service to deteriorate to a Level of Service “F” in 2031 (Table 1.2). Intersections at Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road would also fail during the 20-year planning horizon.

Table 1.3 Levels of Service (Build Alternatives)

	2005		2011		2031	
	AM Peak	PM Peak	AM Peak	PM Peak	AM Peak	PM Peak
State Route 216 between post miles 1.9 and 2.9	C	B	B	B	C	C
State Route 216/ Lovers Lane	C	B	B	B	C	C
State Route 216/ McAuliff Road	B	B	B	B	C	C

Source: Caltrans Operational Analysis, April 2007

Adding additional through lanes, turn lanes and shoulders would improve the Level of Service for State Route 216 and the intersections at Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road to Level of Service “B” at the beginning of the 20-year design period. The proposed improvements would allow the Level of Service to remain above the minimum Level of Service “D” through the 20-year design period (Table 1.3).

1.2.2.3 Safety

The accident history for the project area for the most recent three-year study period from October 1, 2004 to September 30, 2007 (see Table 1.4) indicates that the actual fatal and fatal-plus-injury accident rates are lower than the statewide average accident rate. However, the actual total accident rate is higher than the statewide average accident rate.

During the three-year study period, 17 accidents occurred on this highway section: zero fatal, five injury, and 12 property-damage-only type accidents. The accidents break down as follows: two for failure to yield (sideswipe), four for speeding (three rear-end and one broadside), two for improper turns (sideswipe), one unknown (hit object) and eight classified as “other violations” (three broadside, two rear-end, two hit objects, and one “other”).

Table 1.4 Accident Data for State Route 216 (October 1, 2004 to September 30, 2007)

Post Mile*	Actual			Statewide Average		
	Fatal	Fatal + Injury	Total**	Fatal	Fatal+ Injury	Total**
(PM 1.9 – PM 2.9)	0.000	0.47	1.65	0.026	0.64	1.50

* Accidents per million-vehicle-miles

** Total includes all accidents (fatal, fatal-plus-injury, and property damage only)

The actual total accident rate at Lovers Lane for the three-year period from October 1, 2004 to September 30, 2007 was above the statewide average for similar intersections. Accidents at this intersection accounted for 65% of all accidents that occurred in the project area during the three-year study period and 79% of the accidents that occurred at the three intersections in the project area. Eleven accidents (four injury and seven property damage only) were reported at this intersection: four for speeding (three rear-end and one broadside) and six classified as “other violations” (two rear-end, three broadsides, one hit object and one “other”).

The actual fatal plus injury accident rate at McAuliff Road for the three-year period from October 1, 2004 to September 30, 2007 is equal to the statewide average for similar intersections. The actual fatal and total accident rates were below the statewide average fatal and total accident rates. Two accidents (one injury and one property damage only) were reported at this intersection. Both accidents were caused by improper turns and resulted in sideswipes.

The actual total accident rate at Sol Road for the three-year period from October 1, 2004 to September 30, 2007 was equal to the statewide average for similar intersections. The actual fatal and fatal plus injury accident rates were below the statewide average fatal and fatal plus injury accident rates. One accident was reported at this intersection. The accident was caused by failure to yield and resulted in a sideswipe.

**Table 1.5 Accident Data for Intersections
(October 1, 2004 to September 30, 2007)**

Intersections of State Route 216 with*	Actual			Average		
	Fatal	Fatal + Injury	Total**	Fatal	Fatal+ Injury	Total**
Lovers Lane	0.000	0.25	0.68	0.001	0.17	0.43
McAuliff Road	0.000	0.08	0.17	0.002	0.08	0.19
Sol Road	0.000	0.00	0.19	0.002	0.08	0.19

* Accidents per million vehicles

** Total includes all accidents (fatal, fatal plus injury, and property damage only)

With continued development in the area, including three subdivisions, a potential fire station and one potential school, it is anticipated that the proposed improvements, such as additional left-turn lanes, would help lower accident rates in the future.

LEVELS OF SERVICE

for Two-Lane Highways

Level of Service	Flow Conditions	Operating Speed (mph)	Technical Descriptions
A		55+	Highest quality of service. Free traffic flow with few restrictions on maneuverability or speed. No delays
B		50	Stable traffic flow. Speed becoming slightly restricted. Low restriction on maneuverability. No delays
C		45	Stable traffic flow, but less freedom to select speed, change lanes or pass. Minimal delays
D		40	Traffic flow becoming unstable. Speeds subject to sudden change. Passing is difficult. Minimal delays
E		35	Unstable traffic flow. Speeds change quickly and maneuverability is low. Significant delays
F			Heavily congested traffic. Demand exceeds capacity and speeds vary greatly. Considerable delays

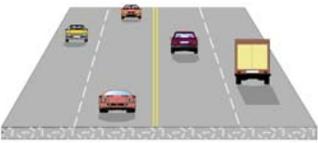
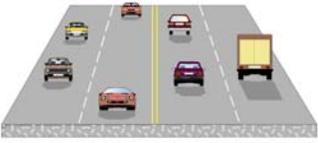
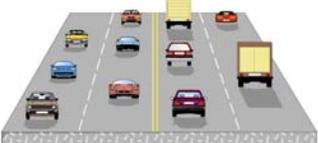
Source: 2000 HCM, Exhibit 20-2, LOS Criteria for Two-Lane Highways in Class 1

Figure 1-3 Level of Service, Two-Lane Highway



LEVELS OF SERVICE

for Multi-Lane Highways

Level of Service	Flow Conditions	Operating Speed (mph)	Technical Descriptions
A		60	Highest level of service. Traffic flows freely with little or no restrictions on maneuverability. No delays
B		60	Traffic flows freely, but drivers have slightly less freedom to maneuver. No delays
C		60	Density becomes noticeable with ability to maneuver limited by other vehicles. Minimal delays
D		57	Speed and ability to maneuver is severely restricted by increasing density of vehicles. Minimal delays
E		55	Unstable traffic flow. Speeds vary greatly and are unpredictable. Minimal delays
F		<55	Traffic flow is unstable, with brief periods of movement followed by forced stops. Significant delays

Source: 2000 HCM, Exhibit 21-3, Speed-Flow Curves with LOS Criteria for Multi-Lane Highways

Figure 1-4 Level of Service, Multi-Lane Highway



1.3 Alternatives

This section describes the proposed actions and the design alternatives that were developed to achieve the project purpose and need while avoiding or minimizing environmental impacts (see Appendix E: Alternative Cross-Sections and Layouts).

Multiple alternatives were developed for the project. Each of the alternatives would convert State Route 216 from a two-lane conventional highway to a four-lane conventional highway. The existing two-lane highway and intersections would remain unchanged under the No-Build Alternative.

The purpose of the proposed project is to improve operation and safety, and increase capacity on State Route 216 from Lovers Lane to McAuliff Road in the city of Visalia.

1.3.1 Build Alternatives

Common Design Features of the Build Alternatives

A four-lane conventional highway (120 feet of right-of-way) would be constructed on State Route 216 between Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road. Three build alternatives are under consideration for the project.

Each of the three build alternatives would have four 12-foot lanes, up to a 23-foot-wide raised center median, 2-foot inside shoulders, and 8-foot outside shoulders. Sidewalks that would vary in width from 6 to 12 feet would be constructed on both sides of State Highway 216 between the intersection with Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road. The sidewalks in front of the school complex on the north side would remain 12 feet wide and would narrow to 10- and 8-foot wide toward and east of McAuliff Road. Sidewalk widths on the south side vary from 6 feet wide on the west side of the project area to 10 feet wide on the east side around McAuliff Road. The widths of sidewalks would vary to minimize impacts to property owners (6-foot width) and reflect the higher pedestrian traffic in front of the school. The existing sidewalks would be replaced in kind.

Additional 12-foot left-turn lanes would be constructed at the intersections of State Route 216 at Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road. A 10-foot-wide planter strip would be constructed on the north side of the highway between the sidewalk and the roadway from the intersection with Lovers Lane to the east end of the Visalia Adult School. Trees and landscaping would be installed. A 4-foot-wide planter strip would be constructed on the south side of the highway between the sidewalk and the roadway

from the intersection with Lovers Lane to McAuliff Road. A 5-foot bicycle lane would be striped on both shoulders.

Unique Features of the Build Alternatives

Cross-sections of the build alternatives can be found in Appendix E.

1.3.1.1 Build Alternative 1

An additional 30 feet of roadway width would be added to the existing State Route 216 (Houston Avenue) with a proposed roadway width of 88 feet. Ultimate roadway right-of-way would be 120 feet, which would include the roadway, median, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, and landscape areas. The proposed southern right-of-way line would mostly match the existing south property line at the Lovers Lane intersection (the existing block wall), with the remaining right-of-way width being acquired to the north. East of McAuliff Road, State Route 216 would transition into a two-lane conventional highway. With construction scheduled to begin in 2011, the estimated project cost for this alternative, including acquisition of right-of-way and relocation of utilities, is \$10.6 million (in 2011 dollars).

1.3.1.2 Build Alternative 2

An additional 20 feet of right-of-way would be added to the existing State Route 216 (Houston Avenue) with a proposed roadway width of 88 feet. Ultimate roadway right-of-way would be 120 feet, which would include the roadway, median, curbs, gutters, sidewalks and landscape areas. The proposed northerly right-of-way line would match the existing north property line at the Lovers Lane intersection (the school property), with the remaining right-of-way width being acquired to the south. East of McAuliff Road, State Route 216 would transition into a two-lane conventional highway. With construction scheduled to begin in 2011, the estimated project cost for this alternative, including acquisition of right-of-way and relocation of utilities, is \$15.1 million (in 2011 dollars).

1.3.1.3 Build Alternative 3

An additional 30 feet of roadway width, about 15 feet to the north and 15 feet to the south, would be added to the existing State Route 216 (Houston Avenue) with a proposed roadway width of 88 feet. Ultimate roadway right-of-way would be 120 feet, which would include roadway, median, curbs, gutters, sidewalks and landscape areas. The proposed right-of-way lines would be mostly symmetrical from the existing centerline of Houston Avenue for the segment from Lovers Lane to McAuliff Road. East of McAuliff Road, State Route 216 would transition into a two-lane

conventional highway. With construction scheduled to begin in 2011, the estimated project cost for this alternative, including acquisition of right-of-way and relocation of utilities, is \$15.0 million (in 2011 dollars).

1.3.2 No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the existing two-lane highway and intersections would remain unchanged. The No-Build Alternative would result in continued higher-than-average accident rates and traffic congestion. Operational deficiencies would not be corrected. This alternative would not meet the purpose and need for the project.

1.3.3 Comparison of Alternatives

The main criteria used to compare the alternatives under consideration for the proposed project include the number of relocations required for the improvements and impacts on the Golden West Educational Complex. Additional criteria include removal of parking spaces, improved operation of the highway, and project cost. The alternatives are compared below and in Table 1.6.

Three build alternatives are being considered for the project. All build alternatives would decrease traffic conflicts by adding two through lanes and dedicated left- and right-turn lanes, plus construct a raised median on State Route 216. All build alternatives would satisfy the purpose and need of the proposed project by improving the traffic flow and operation and by increasing capacity and improving safety. All build alternatives would also provide passing opportunities around slower-moving traffic along State Route 216 by:

- Adding an additional through lane in each direction of travel
- Separating oncoming traffic and reducing conflicting traffic movements with a raised center median
- Adding additional left-turn lanes at two intersections with traffic signals (Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road)
- Adding continuous sidewalks from Lovers Lane to McAuliff Road on both sides of State Route 216.

Alternative 1 would shift the roadway about 30 feet north of the existing roadway and affect four residential buildings (see Table 2.4). Partial acquisition of a sliver of land from 22 parcels would also be needed. The Golden West Educational Complex would be affected because a sliver of school property would be needed to move the sidewalk north. However, this impact would not restrict the future use of the school property.

The Visalia Adult School parking lot adjacent to Houston Avenue, trees, a sidewalk, and street parking along Houston Avenue would also be affected.

Alternative 2 would shift the roadway 20 feet to the south and affect 32 residential units. Partial acquisition of a sliver of land from 18 parcels would also be needed. A privacy wall would need to be replaced at the Burgundy House Apartments. Trees, a sidewalk, a bicycle path, and street parking along Houston Avenue would also be affected.

Alternative 3 would construct the proposed improvements symmetrically, requiring about 15 feet of land from both sides of the roadway. Twenty residential units would be affected. Partial acquisition of a sliver of land from 24 parcels would also be needed. The Golden West Educational Complex would be affected because a sliver of school property would be needed to move the sidewalk north. However, this impact would not restrict the future use of the school property. The Visalia Adult School parking lot adjacent to Houston Avenue, the Burgundy House Apartments, trees, a sidewalk, and street parking along Houston Avenue would also be affected.

No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative would mean no change from the existing condition of State Route 216 in the project area. The No-Build Alternative does not conform to the City of Visalia's and the County of Tulare's general plans or Caltrans' ultimate plan for State Route 216. The No-Build Alternative does not improve operation or safety and does not meet the purpose and need of the project.

Table 1.6 Comparison of Alternatives

Criteria	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	No-Build Alternative
Number of partial property acquisitions	22	18	24	None
Number of full property acquisitions	4	32	17	None
Affect Golden West Educational Complex	Sliver of property needed	No	Sliver of property needed	No
Improves safety and traffic flow	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Adds capacity	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Removes Parking Spaces	53 parking stalls from Visalia Adult School and on-street parking on the north side of State Route 216	On-street parking on the south side of State Route 216	53 parking stalls from Visalia Adult School and on-street parking on both sides of State Route 216	None
Conforms with state and local planning	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Improves air quality	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Visual	Removes 110 trees	Removes 94 trees	Removes 94 trees	No Impact
Cost	\$10.6 million (in 2011 dollars)	\$15.1 million (in 2011 dollars)	\$15.0 million (in 2011 dollars)	Maintenance and repair costs only

After the public circulation period, all comments were considered, and Caltrans selected the preferred alternative and made the final determination of the project's effect on the environment. In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act, no immitigable significant adverse impacts were identified, and Caltrans prepared a Mitigated Negative Declaration.

1.3.4 Identification of a Preferred Alternative

Based on environmental impacts and after consideration of public comments, Caltrans selected Alternative 1 as the preferred alternative. With construction scheduled to start in 2011, the estimated cost of the preferred alternative would be \$10.6 million (2011 dollars).

Alternative 1

Alternative 1 is the preferred alternative for the project. Alternative 1 would result in the fewest (four) full property acquisitions. Alternative 2 would require 32 full property acquisitions, and Alternative 3 would require 17 full property acquisitions.

Caltrans identified a low-income minority community on the south side of State Route 216 between the Burgundy House Apartments and McAuliff Road. Alternative 1 is the only alternative that would not cause disproportionately high and adverse effects on a minority or low-income population.

The preferred alternative meets the purpose and need for the project. Alternative 1 would improve operation of State Route 216 by adding additional left-turn lanes at Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road, increase capacity by adding additional through lanes in both directions and improve safety by adding 8-foot shoulders additional left-turn lanes and a median.

1.4 Alternatives Considered and Withdrawn

During the project development process, one alternative was withdrawn from consideration.

The project originally proposed to acquire enough right-of-way between McAuliff Road and Road 152 to build a four-lane highway in the future. The proposed improvements would have included repaving the existing two-lane conventional highway and adding 8-foot shoulders. The skewed intersection at Road 152 would also have been reconfigured at a right angle. In addition, however, right-of-way would have been purchased to allow for future widening of State Route 216 to four lanes from just east of the city limits near post mile 2.99 to Road 152 (post mile 3.7).

At a Public Information Meeting/Open House held on February 23, 2006, members of the public asked Caltrans to construct an 8-foot shoulder in the area just east of the city limits near post mile 2.99 to Road 152 (post mile 3.7) without acquiring additional right-of-way for construction of a four-lane conventional highway in this

portion of the project. Caltrans agreed with the request from the public at a subsequent Project Development Team meeting because construction of four lanes in Segment 2 would not occur for about 20 years.

Lack of construction funding has required shortening the eastern end of the project from Road 152 to McAuliff Road. The Tulare County Association of Governments anticipates acquiring additional funding in the future and intends to construct improvements to the section of State Route 216 between McAuliff Road and Road 152. A separate environmental document would be required to evaluate the impacts of that project.

1.5 Permits and Approvals Needed

The following permit would be required:

- National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System storm water permit



Chapter 2 Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

This chapter explains the impacts that the project would have on the human, physical, and biological environments in the project area. It describes the existing environment that could be affected by the project, potential impacts from each of the alternatives, and proposed avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures. Any indirect or cumulative impacts are included in the general impact analysis and discussion that follow.

As part of the scoping and environmental analysis conducted for the project, the following environmental issues were considered but no adverse impacts were identified so there is no further discussion regarding these issues in this document:

- Farmland/Timberland—There are no farmlands or timberlands in the project area.
- Paleontology—There are no expected impacts to paleontological resources due to the low sensitivity of the area. (Paleontology memo dated May 13, 2006).
- Wetlands and Other Waters of the United States—There are no wetlands or other Waters of the United States within the project limits as stated in the Caltrans Natural Environment Study dated November 2006.
- Plant Species—There are no sensitive plant species in the project area. See the Natural Environment Study dated November 2006 for additional documentation.
- Wild and Scenic Rivers—There are no wild and scenic rivers in the project area. (Field visit, December 25, 2006).
- Coastal Zone—The project is not located in the coastal zone.

2.1 Human Environment

2.1.1 Land Use

2.1.1.1 Existing and Future Land Use *Affected Environment*

Visalia lies in west-central Tulare County, about five miles east of State Route 99. Visalia is the oldest city in the southern San Joaquin Valley and has been the county seat of Tulare County since 1853.

Land use in the project area is in transition from agriculture to urban uses. See Figure 2-1. The City of Visalia’s General Plan designates the area adjacent to State Route 216 for high density, low density, rural residential, public institutional, convenience commercial, and agricultural uses. See Figure 2-2. Zoning reflects the land uses described above. See Figure 2-3.

Construction of new housing units in the project area is occurring near the Golden West Educational Complex and on the south side of Houston Avenue across from the Visalia Adult School.

Table 2.1 shows the status of larger developments along State Route 216 in the project area. River Run Ranch, a planned development that contains a variety of residential choices, contains 289 single-family and 51 multi-family residences on 135 acres near McAuliff Road and the Saint Johns River across from Golden West High School.

East Oaks Estates contains 67 single-family residences on 27 acres near State Route 216 and Comstock Street. Development in this custom home subdivision has been ongoing for a number of years, but is reaching final build-out.

Two new subdivisions have been approved on the south side of State Route 216. Madison Heights is located just east of the Burgundy Home Apartments, and Golden Crest Estates is just east of McAuliff Road.

Table 2.1 Status of Development Along State Route 216

Name	Jurisdiction	Proposed Uses	Status
East Oak Estates	City of Visalia	67 single-family homes on 27 acres	Under construction
River Run Ranch	City of Visalia	340 parcels (289 single-family homes and 51 multiple-family residences) on 135 acres	Under construction
Golden Crest Estates	City of Visalia	17 single-family residences on 4 acres	Tentative subdivision map approved. Not all conditions for approval met at this time.
Madison Heights	City of Visalia	17 single-family residences on 5 acres	Under construction

Source: City of Visalia, Community Development Department, Planning Division

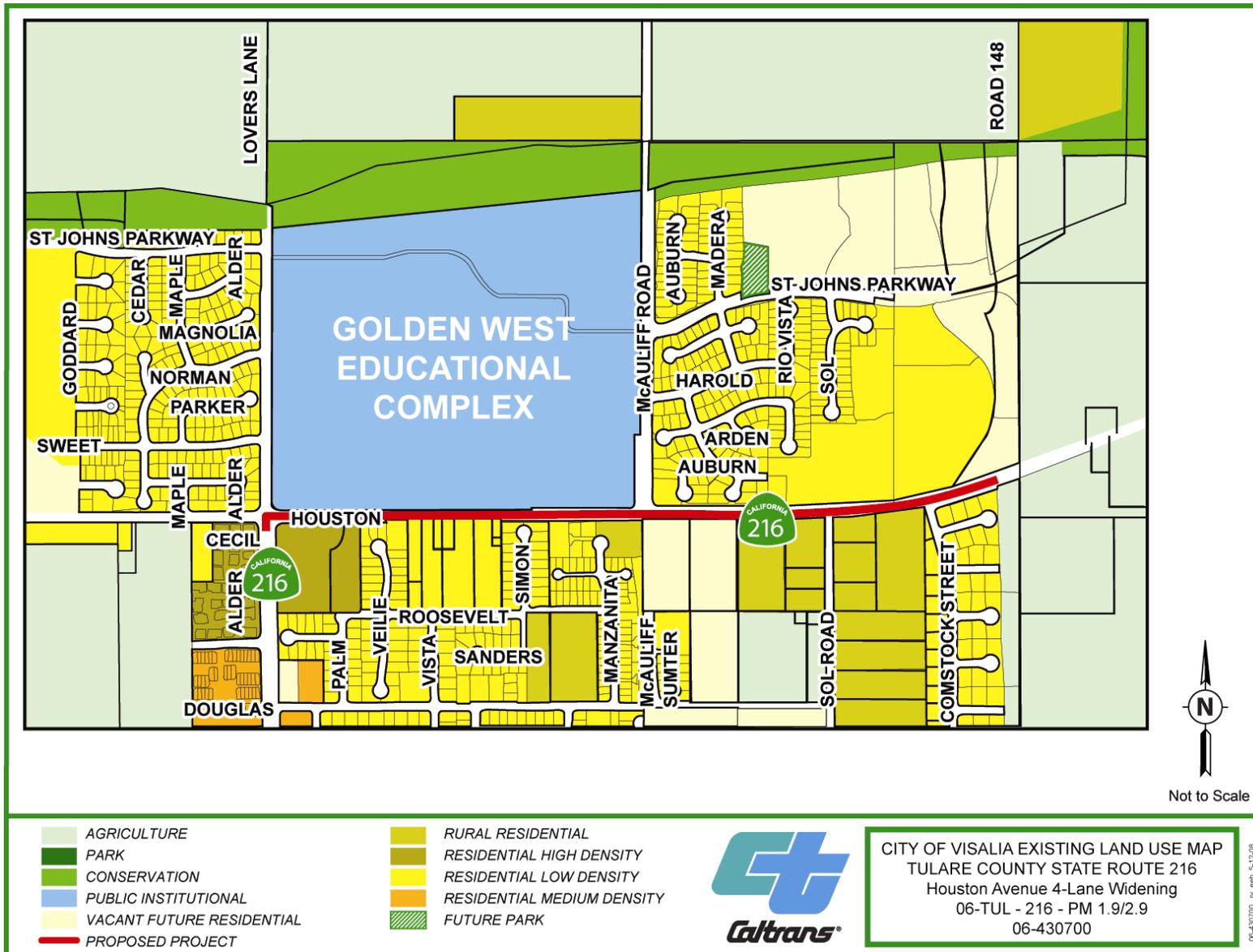


Figure 2-1 Existing Land Use Map



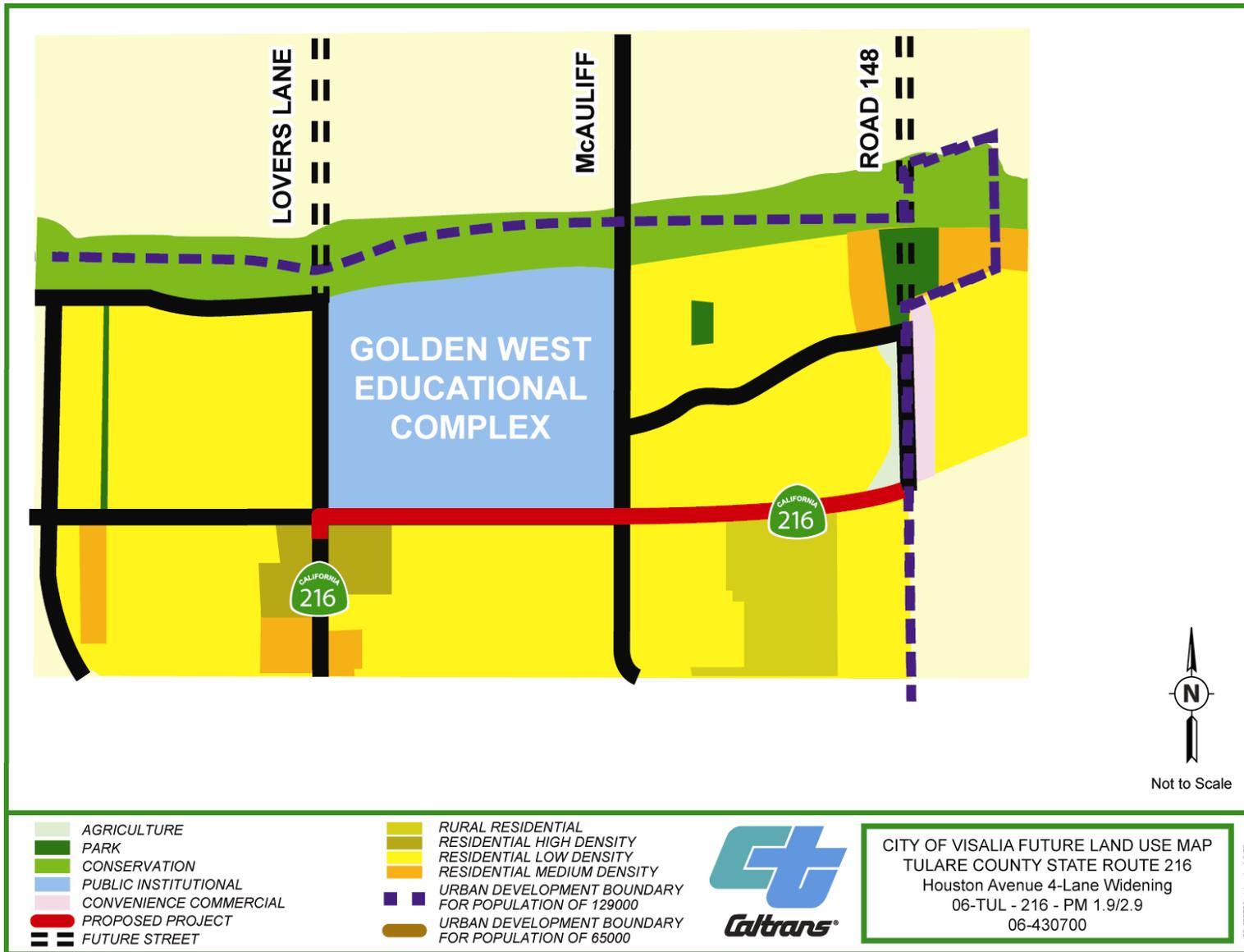
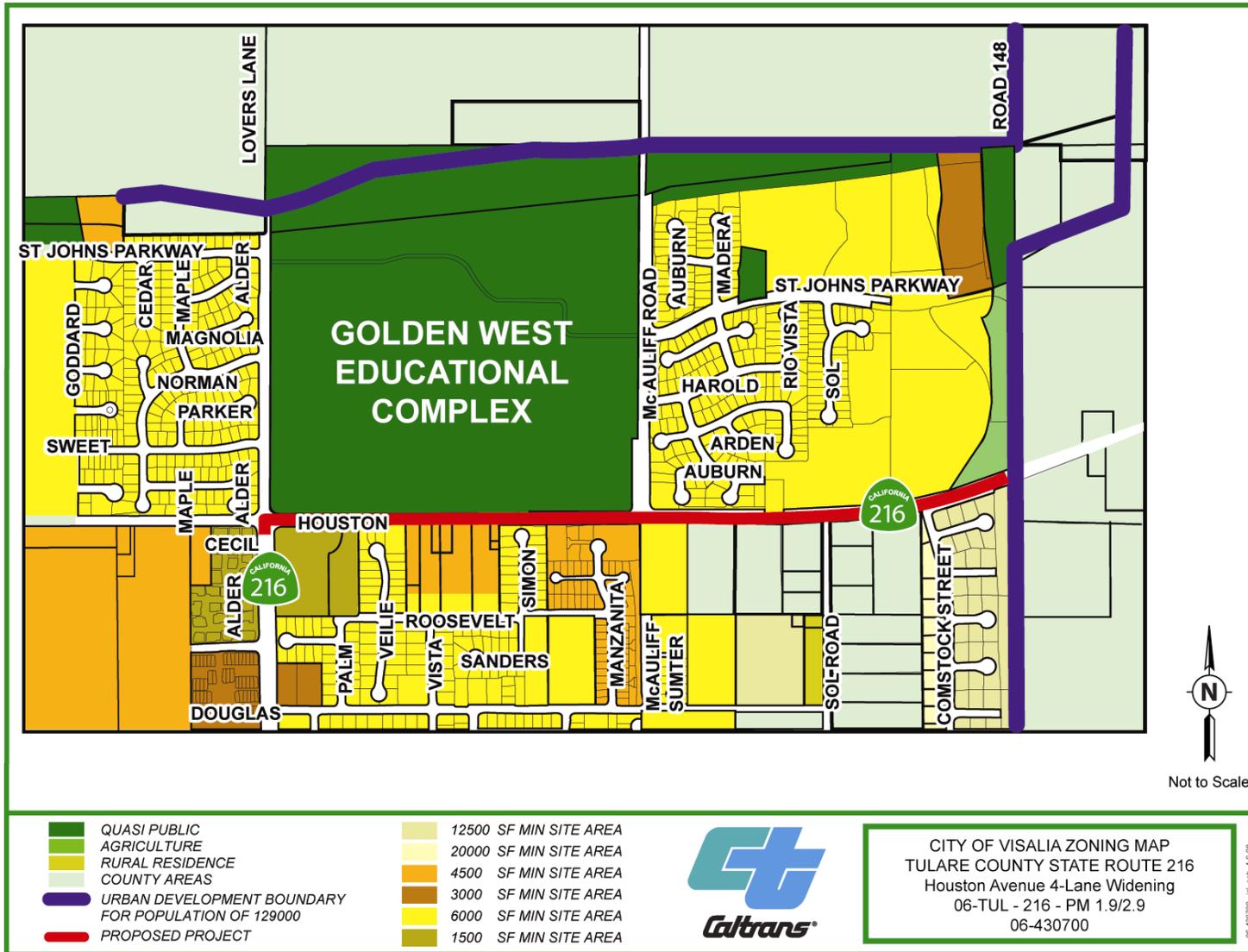


Figure 2-2 Future Land Use Map





SF MIN = square feet minimum

Figure 2-3 Zoning Map



Golden Crest Estates has received approval of a tentative subdivision map, but has not met all of the conditions of approval, including annexation of the parcel into the City of Visalia.

Madison Heights contains 17 single-family residences on five acres. Construction of this subdivision is now underway.

The project area sits inside the urban growth boundary of the City of Visalia's General Plan for the year 2020. The general plan designates the area for the continuation of the pattern of low-density residential development that is dominant throughout the city. The Tulare County General Plan designates the project area as being within the 20-year Urban Development Boundary of the City of Visalia. See Figure 2-2. Projected growth is planned for in the Tulare County Comprehensive Policy Plan, which includes the Rural Valley Land Plan and the urban development boundaries.

Environmental Consequences

The project would acquire strips of land from the front of parcels adjacent to State Route 216. Adding two lanes to State Route 216 would accommodate expected urban growth in Visalia and would not change the land use patterns. The relationship between the proposed project and growth in the area is one of accommodation of planned growth rather than growth inducement. Local development, in conformance with existing city and county plans, can be expected to occur, particularly in areas designated for future urban development.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required.

2.1.1.2 Consistency with State, Regional and Local Plans

Affected Environment

The Visalia General Plan and the Tulare County General Plan dictate land use in the project area. The circulation element of the Visalia General Plan (2001) designates State Route 216 as an arterial within the project limits. Standards for arterial streets established by the general plan call for a typical right-of-way of 110 feet.

The circulation element of the Tulare County General Plan (1963) designates State Route 216 as a "County Primary Road" within the project limits. A standard right-of-way is not established by the general plan.

Tulare County is currently in the process of updating its general plan. Final adoption of the new general plan is expected in 2008. The future designation for State Route 216 is unknown at this time; however, proposed roadway standards call for a right-of-way of 84 to 110 feet depending on the adopted designation of the roadway in the general plan.

Both the Visalia General Plan and the Tulare County General Plan envision State Route 216 as a four-lane highway within the project limits. This project supports the land use and circulation elements of these plans.

Environmental Consequences

All of the build alternatives are consistent with local land use plans and support planned growth.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures would be required.

2.1.1.3 Parks and Recreation

Affected Environment

The Visalia Unified School District owns about 154 acres on the north side of State Route 216 between Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road. On this property, the district operates five schools, including one elementary school, one middle school, a high school, a school for the physically disabled (kindergarten through eighth grade) and an adult school. There are areas for competitive athletic events, physical education classes, and recess activities throughout the school complex. A chain link fence runs along State Route 216 except in front of the Visalia Adult School parking lot. All schools except the adult school are fenced. Figure 2-4 provides an aerial view of the area, known as the Golden West Educational Complex.

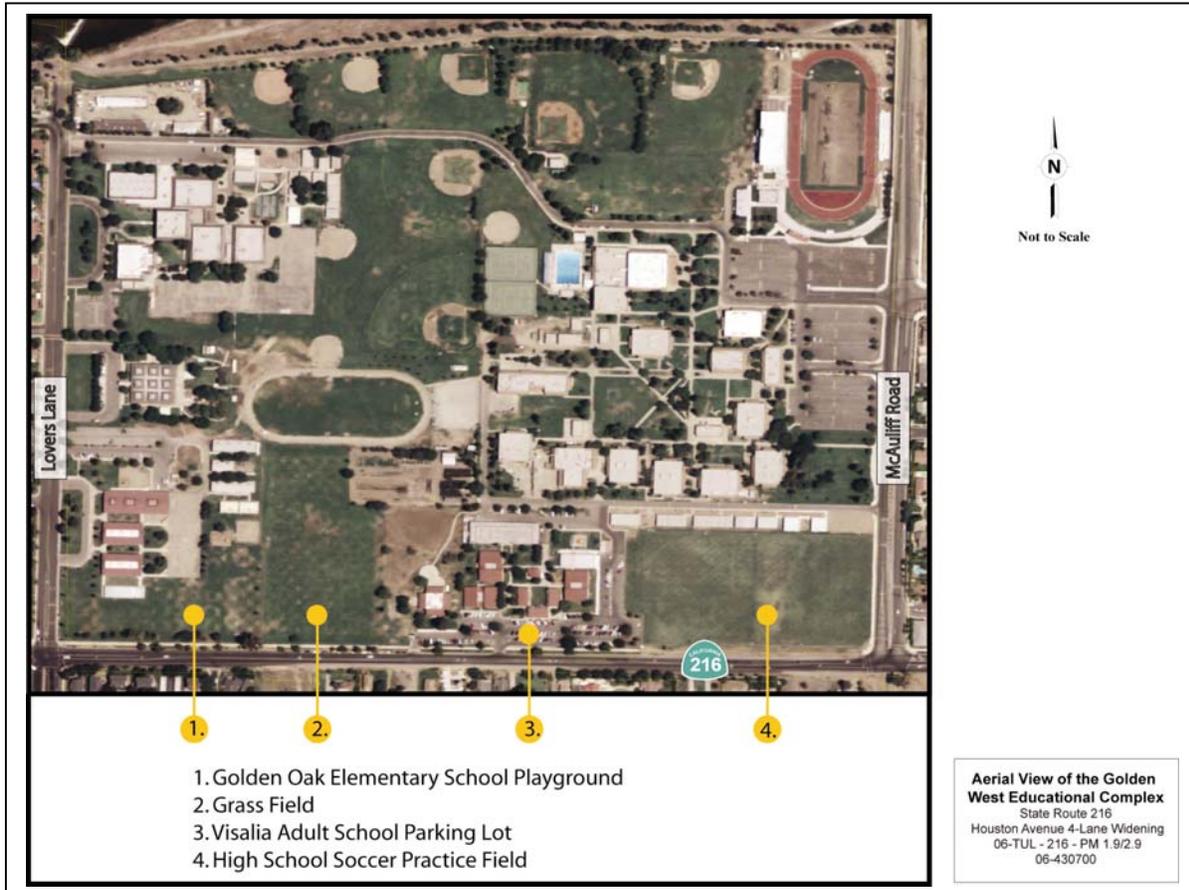


Figure 2-4 Aerial View of the Golden West Educational Complex

Environmental Consequences

Alternative 1 would require the use of about a 20-foot strip of land (1.02 acres) behind the existing chain link fence adjacent to State Route 216. The area is composed of grass, 16 trees (0.77 acre), and a parking lot for the adult school (0.25 acre). See Table 2.2.

Alternative 2 would not require any property from the school complex. See Table 2.2.

Alternative 3 would require the use of about a 5-foot strip of land (0.42 acre) behind the chain link fence adjacent to State Route 216. The area is composed of grass, 16 trees (0.17 acre), and a parking lot for the adult school (0.25 acre). See Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Acreage Required from Golden West Educational Complex

Alternative	Golden Oak Elementary School Playground	Grass Area	Parking Lot	High School Soccer Practice Field	Total*
1	0.24	0.21	0.25	0.32	1.02
2	0	0	0	0	0
3	0.08	0.05	0.25	0.08	0.46

* Total acreage does not include the sidewalk area.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The Visalia Unified School District would be compensated the fair market value for any land or improvements required for the proposed project.

All activities would be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended (see Appendices C and D). The Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act is a requirement of the project. Caltrans must comply with all requirements of the act.

During project design, Caltrans would coordinate construction activities with the Visalia Unified School District to minimize disruption of the district’s activities and services. This would include scheduling construction in this portion of the project during school vacations to the degree that that is feasible. Otherwise, night construction may be necessary to lessen impacts on the school district.

The 16 trees along the south side of the school playground would be replaced at a 1:1 ratio. Caltrans has worked with the Visalia Unified School District to minimize harm to the playground and the grass area with the following additional mitigation measures: 1) visual/aesthetics (see Section 2.1.6); 2) parking (see Section 2.1.3.4); and 3) pedestrian and bicycle circulation (see Section 2.1.5).

2.1.2 Growth

Regulatory Setting

The Council on Environmental Quality regulations, which implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, require evaluation of the potential environmental consequences of all proposed federal activities and programs. This provision includes a requirement to examine indirect consequences, which may occur in areas beyond the immediate influence of a proposed action and at some time in the future. The Council on Environmental Quality regulations, 40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.8, refer to these consequences as secondary impacts. Secondary impacts may include changes in land use, economic vitality, and population density, which are all elements of growth.

The California Environmental Quality Act also requires the analysis of a project's potential to induce growth. California Environmental Quality Act guidelines, Section 15126.2(d), require that environmental documents "...discuss the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment..."

Affected Environment

Refer to Section 2.1.1 Land Use for information on local plans and policies that control growth in the project area. Tulare County's population has grown at a moderate, steady pace in recent years (see Table 2.3 and Section 2.1.1 for information on local plans and policies). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the county's population was about 311,932 in 1990 and grew to 368,021 in 2000, for an annual growth rate of 1.8 percent. In contrast, statewide population growth averaged 1.5 percent over the same period. In May 2004, the California Department of Finance projected a population of 650,466 by 2030 for Tulare County.

Much of Tulare County's recent growth has occurred in the City of Visalia, the county's largest city. The City of Visalia's population increased from 76,659 in 1990 to 91,565 in 2000, an average annual growth rate of 2.5 percent. Like the countywide

growth rate, the City of Visalia’s average annual growth rate is expected to increase between 2000 and 2020. As shown in Table 2.3, the projected average annual growth rate of 4.0 percent between 2000 and 2020 would result in a population of 165,000 by 2020.

Table 2.3 Historic, Existing, and Projected Population Growth in California, Tulare County, and Visalia

Area of Concern	1990	2000	2010	2020	Average Annual Growth Rate 1990-2000
California	29,760,021	33,871,648	39,958,000	45,449,000	1.4%
Tulare County	311,932	368,021	470,000	570,000	1.8%
Visalia	76,659	91,565	129,000	165,000	1.9%

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census 2000

Factors affecting growth patterns depend on a range of economic forces that can be local, regional, statewide, or national in scope. Ultimately, the amount and location of population growth and economic development that occurs in a specific area is controlled, to some extent, by local and county governments through zoning, land use plans and policies, and decisions regarding development applications.

Environmental Consequences

The urban development boundaries in Visalia’s general plan are linked to population growth projections and development levels in the city and is anticipated to provide adequate quantities of land for development through 2020.

The proposed project conforms to the circulation element of the city and county general plans, and to Caltrans’ plan for the highway contained in the draft Route Concept Report for State Route 216. The project does not open any new areas to development by removing barriers to access.

Given the coordinated growth-control mechanisms in place, the proposed project would not encourage unplanned development in the area or shift growth eastward along the State Route 216 corridor. Planned development of vacant and agricultural parcels along State Route 216 will likely occur within the Visalia urban development boundaries. The proposed project is designed to accommodate growth, and increase

safety and circulation based on local plans and growth projections. The project would not induce unplanned development and is consistent with local and regional land use and transportation planning.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No impacts are expected; therefore, no mitigation is required.

2.1.3 Community Impacts

2.1.3.1 Community Character and Cohesion

Regulatory Setting

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, established that the federal government use all practicable means to ensure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings [42 United States Code 4334(b)(2)]. The Federal Highway Administration in its implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act (23 United States Code 109(h)) directs that final decisions regarding projects are to be made in the best overall public interest. This requires taking into account adverse environmental impacts, such as destruction or disruption of human-made resources, community cohesion, and the availability of public facilities and services.

Under the California Environmental Quality Act, an economic or social change by itself is not to be considered a significant effect on the environment. However, if a social and economic change is related to a physical change, then social or economic change may be considered in determining whether the physical change is significant. Since this project would result in physical change to the environment, it is appropriate to consider changes to community character and cohesion in assessing the significance of the project's effects.

Affected Environment

State Route 216 is an 18-mile-long highway that begins at State Route 198 in the City of Visalia and ends at State Route 198 in Tulare County. It is a Federal-Aid Primary State Highway that serves as an intra-regional corridor between the City of Visalia and the smaller communities of Ivanhoe, Woodlake, and Lemon Cove. Within the Visalia city limits, State Route 216 follows (and shares the alignment with) two main roads: Lovers Lane and Houston Avenue. These roads serve residential communities and five schools. Traffic is mostly school commuters and agriculture oriented.

Agriculture is the predominant land use in Tulare County, with orchards, vineyards, and field crop acreages. Tulare County currently ranks second in the nation and state, behind neighboring Fresno County, in agricultural output.

The proposed project begins in northeast Visalia at Lovers Lane and ends to the east of the intersection of McAuliff Road. Housing development is playing an ever-increasing role in the development of the area, as agricultural fields are being taken out of production and developed for residential use.

Five schools and various residential subdivisions are located in the project area within the Visalia city limits. Two county islands on the south side of the highway have additional subdivisions.

The major community facility within the project area is the Golden West Educational Complex. The complex contains five schools ranging from kindergarten through adult education on about 154 acres. The educational complex is also used for occasional public meetings and youth sports. All Valley Youth Football League football and American Youth Soccer Organization soccer are played at the south end of the complex near State Route 216.

Other community amenities and facilities such as commercial uses are located outside of the project area. The nearest shopping center is located a mile west of the project at Ben Maddox Way and Houston Avenue.

The 2000 U.S. Census reported that there were roughly 32,700 housing units in the City of Visalia. Owner-occupied housing units made up 63 percent of the housing stock and renter-occupied housing, 37 percent, with a 5 percent vacancy rate.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 336 housing units sit in the project corridor. These are made up of owner-occupied housing units (56 percent) and renter-occupied housing stock (39 percent). Five percent of the housing units in the project corridor were vacant at the time of the census.

The schools and most of the homes in the project area were built after 1970. New housing subdivisions are being developed in two areas next to the city limits:

- River Run Ranch spans 135 acres with 340 planned lots: 289 for single-family homes and 51 for multi-family units.
- East Oak Estates has been under construction for a number of years and contains 67 lots for custom homes on 27 acres.

More new housing is scheduled to be developed on vacant land within the city limits near State Route 216 by 2010.

The existing residences in the area provide a variety of housing types. Caltrans surveyed the area on April 9, 2007. Dwelling units in the urban portion of the area included a large apartment complex at the southeast corner of Lovers Lane and State Route 216. Adjacent to the apartments is a cluster of dilapidated mobile homes, single-family residences, and a Quonset hut that borders the highway and stretches to the east and south. The average assessed value of the properties in this area is \$94,664 (<http://maps.digitalmapscentral.com> -DMP –Microsoft Internet Explorer).

Newer single-family residences that ranged in size from about 1,600 square feet to 2,600 square feet were also located in the area. The price of these homes ranged from \$269,000 to over \$500,000. The smaller, less expensive homes are located at the northeast corner of State Route 216 and McAuliff Road. The larger homes are located south of the intersection of State Route 216 and Comstock Street. There is also an area of rural residential lots with large homes located on Sol Road.

Each of these residential types appears to form a separate, distinct neighborhood with internal cohesion, but no clear connection to any other neighborhood in the area.

The City of Visalia's population was 91,565 in 2000 and grew to an estimated 108,467 in 2005. The population in the project area was 1,018 in 2000. The project area is made up of the U.S. census blocks that most closely border State Route 216. The U.S. Census does not have a population estimate for the project area for 2005. The study area's population was about 50.3 percent White, 37.3 percent Hispanic, 7.4 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 2.4 percent Other, 2.2 percent Black/African American, and 0.4 percent American Indian/Alaska Native according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

The new subdivisions and the Golden West Educational Complex attract families with school-age children to the area. About 9.8 percent of the project area's population was under 5 years old; 24.3 percent were school-age (5-17); 61.2 percent were 18-64; and 4.7 percent were 65 years of age or older. The percentage of children, 17 years old and younger, in the project area (34.1 percent) is greater than either the City of Visalia (31.3 percent) or Tulare County (33.7 percent) as a whole; while the percentage of people 65 years and over in the project area is less (4.7

percent) than in the City of Visalia as a whole (10.9 percent) or Tulare County (9.8 percent) as a whole.

The percentage of disabled persons in the project area (7.8 percent) is virtually the same as in Tulare County as a whole (7.5 percent). The percentage of disabled persons is higher in the City of Visalia as a whole (10.5 percent) than either the county as a whole or the project area.

Environmental Consequences

The project is located in a growth area on the northeast side of Visalia. The area is in transition from rural use to urban use. None of the proposed build alternatives would isolate the Golden West Educational Complex from the surrounding neighborhoods in the project area. Even though all of the build alternatives would result in a wider highway, the project would improve traffic circulation and air quality in the community; improve access to the Golden West Educational Complex and other community amenities such as commercial uses; improve safety for motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists; and allow for faster emergency vehicle response. No impacts would be expected to community character and cohesion since no established cohesive community is currently present in the project area.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No impacts to community cohesion and character are expected. Therefore, no mitigation is required.

2.1.3.2 Relocations

Regulatory Setting

Caltrans' Relocation Assistance Program is based on the Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended, and Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 24. The purpose of the Relocation Assistance Program is to ensure that persons displaced as a result of a public transportation project are treated fairly, consistently, and equitably so that such persons will not suffer disproportionate injuries as a result of projects designed for the benefit of the public as a whole. Please see Appendix C for a summary of the Relocation Assistance Program.

All relocation services and benefits are administered without regard to race, color, national origin, or sex in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (42 United

States Code 2000d, et seq.). Please see Appendix B for a copy of Caltrans' Title VI Policy Statement.

Affected Environment

Caltrans prepared a Draft Relocation Impact Report for the project dated May 16, 2007. Caltrans prepared a Final Relocation Impact Report for the project dated November 20, 2007.

The proposed project lies in the northeast section of the City of Visalia, on the edge of rural and suburban development. Existing structures that border the highway in the project area include the Golden West Educational Complex and the Burgundy House Apartments, while two residential subdivisions continue to be constructed at River Run Ranch and East Oak Estates.

Environmental Consequences

Table 2.4 compares the number of businesses and residential units displaced by each alternative. Caltrans could acquire as many as 20 multi-family units and 12 single-family residences for the widening of State Route 216.

Table 2.4 Estimated Number of Displacements

Types of Use	Alternative		
	1	2	3
Single-Family Residences	4	12	9
Multi-Family Residential Units	0	20	8
Businesses	0	0	0
Total Units	4	32	17

Source: Department of Transportation Draft Relocation Impact Report, May 2007.

Alternative 1 could displace four single-family residences.

Caltrans would acquire a 30-foot strip of land from the Golden West Educational Complex along the north side of Houston Avenue. The land acquired from the school complex would include about 0.69 acre with a grass area with trees along the fence line and 53 parking stalls at the Visalia Adult School. See the following sections for additional related items: parking (Section 2.1.3.4), pedestrian and bicycle circulation (Section 2.1.5), and visual (Section 2.1.6).

Alternative 2 could displace 32 residential units, including 12 single-family residences and 20 multi-family residential units.

The multi-family residential units that would be affected by Alternative 2 are located in the Burgundy House Apartments complex at the southeast corner of State Route 216 and Lovers Lane. The apartment buildings are two stories, with two- and three-bedroom units. Two townhouse residences with private drives and two-car garages in the Burgundy House Apartments must also be acquired and cleared.

Caltrans would acquire a 20-foot strip of land along the south side of Houston Avenue and reconstruct 0.11 mile of an existing privacy/block wall in front of the apartment complex.

Alternative 3 could displace 17 residential units, including 9 single-family residences and 8 multi-family residential units.

The multi-family residential units that would be affected by Alternative 3 are located in the Burgundy House Apartments complex at the southeast corner of State Route 216 and Lovers Lane. The apartment buildings are two stories, with two- and three-bedroom units.

Caltrans would acquire strips of land along both sides of State Route 216. On the north side of State Route 216, Caltrans would acquire a 15-foot strip of land from the Golden West Educational Complex along the north side of Houston Avenue. The land acquired from the school complex would affect about 0.17 acre of grass area with trees along the fence line and 53 parking stalls at the Visalia Adult School. On the south side of State Route 216, Caltrans would acquire a 15-foot strip of land and reconstruct 0.11 mile of an existing privacy/block wall in front of the apartment complex.

The multi-family residential units affected by Alternative 3 are located in the Burgundy House Apartments complex at the southeast corner of State Route 216 and Lovers Lane. The apartment buildings are two stories, with two- and three-bedroom units. Two townhouse residences with private drives and two-car garages in the Burgundy House Apartments must also be acquired and cleared.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The Final Relocation Impact Report concluded that there would be ample replacement housing available in the City of Visalia within a five-mile radius of the

project area for sale and rent that would be decent, safe and sanitary, and comparable in terms of amenities, public utilities, and accessibility to public services, transportation, and shopping for households that might be displaced by the project.

Funding would be available to relocate or re-establish any residents or businesses affected by the project. The Residential Relocation Assistance Program would help eligible residential occupants by providing advisory services, replacement housing payments and moving costs, down payment assistance and incidental costs to the purchase or rental of replacement housing.

The Non-Residential Relocation Assistance Program provides assistance to businesses, farms, and nonprofit organizations in locating suitable replacement property and reimbursement for certain costs involved in re-establishing a business. The Relocation Assistance Program would provide current lists of properties offered for sale or lease, suitable for a particular business' specific needs.

If business displacements incur increased costs as a result of being relocated, they would be given the opportunity to file a claim for re-establishment, moving expenses and loss of goodwill. Any person (individual, family, corporation, partnership, or association) who qualifies and who moves from real property or moves personal property from real property as a result of the acquisition of the real property, or is required to relocate as a result of a written notice from the California Department of Transportation from the real property acquired for a transportation project is eligible for "Relocation Assistance."

All activities would be conducted in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended (see Appendices B and C). The Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act is a requirement of the project. Caltrans must comply with all requirements of the act.

The Visalia Unified School District would be compensated the fair market value for any land or improvements required for the proposed project.

Caltrans would coordinate construction activities with the Visalia Unified School District to minimize disruption of the district's activities and services. This could include scheduling construction in this portion of the project during vacation.

The Final Relocation Impact Report studied the impact of the preferred alternative and concluded that relocation impacts within the project area would not be complex and that adequate resources would be available for all displacements. The Final Relocation Impact Report indicated that for the preferred alternative, four parcels could be eligible for the Relocation Assistance Program.

2.1.3.3 Environmental Justice

Regulatory Setting

All considerations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes have been included in this project. Caltrans' commitment to upholding the mandates of Title VI is evidenced by its Title VI Policy Statement, signed by the Director of Caltrans, which can be found in Appendix B of this document.

Under CEQA, appropriate and necessary steps are taken to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse effects of projects on the health or environment of minority and low-income populations. This is done so that the significance of impacts of physical changes caused by the project can be determined (CEQA Guidelines Section 15131(b)).

Affected Environment

U.S. Census demographic data was analyzed for the project area. The environmental justice assessment focused on an examination of the two census tracts that surround the project site and compose the study area. Income and ethnicity variables for the combined census tracts were compared to Tulare County's and the City of Visalia's income and ethnic composition to determine whether the census tracts had a relatively large low-income or minority composition.

The U.S. Census Bureau does not provide income and poverty information at the block level. Caltrans used mapping of the block groups to display the population demographics of the project corridor to determine the ethnic population of the project corridor. Only data from blocks affected by the proposed project were used for the analysis.

Caltrans' Draft Relocation Impact Report was reviewed for information related to multi-family housing in the project area.

Caltrans reviewed the area on the south side of State Route 216 between the Burgundy House Apartments and McAuliff Road on April 9, 2007. The purpose of the field review was to survey the manager and residents of the Burgundy House

Apartments and to take a close look at the adjacent 12 parcels between the apartments and McAuliff Road. These parcels front on the south side of State Route 216, and appear to comprise a low-income enclave within the larger project area.

The Burgundy House Apartments are located at the southeast corner of Lovers Lane and State Route 216. The complex contains 133 units, including town homes with attached garages. The complex appeared to be clean and well maintained. There was no clear indicator of the ethnic makeup of the apartment complex. The manager and the residents that were interviewed were split on whether the majority of residents are Hispanic or evenly split between Hispanics and Whites. The manager indicated that residents who received Section 8 assistance occupied five units (3.8 percent) in the apartment complex. Within the last year, a block of apartments was rented to a company that housed Asian farm workers at the complex.

A Hispanic/Latino surname was on all but one of the mailboxes that had a name on them for the 12 parcels that front on the south side of State Route 216 between the Burgundy House Apartments and McAuliff Road. The individuals observed in this area all appeared to be Hispanic.

Caltrans staff looked at the square footage and the asking price of some existing houses for sale in the project area. These homes ranged in size from 1,500 to 2,600 square feet, and the asking prices ranged from \$269,000 to over \$500,000. None of the properties that appeared to comprise a low-income area were for sale, but a review of Tulare County Assessor records indicated that the assessed value of the 12 parcels ranged from \$21,521 to \$250,811, with eight of the 12 parcels valued below \$100,000. Two parcels were valued between \$100,000 and \$199,999, and two parcels were valued between \$200,000 and \$251,811. One of the two properties with an assessed value over \$200,000 contained four housing units. The mean value of the 12 properties was \$94,664 (<http://maps.digitalmapscentral.com> -DMP –Microsoft Internet Explorer).

In general, the residences located on the south side of State Route 216 were older and in poor condition. The residences in the area that were recorded as part of the Historic Resource Evaluation Report were built between 1915 and 1955. A few of the residences were moved into the area during the early 1960s as a part of the construction of the State Route 198 freeway through the city. This contrasts to the Golden West Educational Complex and the residential subdivisions in the area that have been built since the late 1970s.

A review of the Historic Resource Evaluation Report and observation of the parcels during the field review indicated that at least four of the parcels contained multiple residential units. Many of these units appeared to be small and in dilapidated condition.

Environmental Consequences

Based on the 2000 U.S. Census data by census tract block, the project corridor has a population that is about 48.8 percent White, 38.7 percent Hispanic, 7.6 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 2.3 percent Black/African American, 2.2 percent Other, and 0.4 percent American Indian/Alaska Native. An evaluation of the 2000 U.S. Census data shown in Table 2.5 indicates that the percentage of people of Hispanic origin living in the study area (38.7 percent) is about equal to the Hispanic population in the City of Visalia (35.6 percent); however, the percentage is low when compared to the total Hispanic population living in Tulare County (50.8 percent). The percentages of Black/African Americans, Asians, and other races living in the project area are greater than in the City of Visalia or Tulare County. The largest ethnic group in the project area is White (48.8 percent). The percentage of Whites in the City of Visalia as a whole (54.9 percent) is larger than in the project area. The percentage of Whites in the project area is much higher than in Tulare County as a whole (41.8 percent).

Table 2.5 Ethnicity Data

Ethnicity Data* (Census Bureau 2000)						
Ethnicity	Tulare County		City of Visalia		Project Area	
	Population	%	Population	%	Population	%
Hispanic or Latino	186,846	50.8	32,619	35.6	375	38.7
White	153,916	41.8	50,269	54.9	473	48.8
Black – African-American	5,122	1.4	1,558	1.7	22	2.3
American Indian/Alaska Native	3,011	0.8	675	0.7	4	0.4
Asian	11,457	3.1	4,472	4.9	74	7.6
Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander	257	0.1	79	0.1	0	0.0
Other	7,412	2.0	1,893	2.1	21	2.2
Total	368,021	100*	91,565	100*	969	100*

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, 2000

As shown in Table 2.6, the project corridor had an average median annual household income of \$43,665 in 2000, which according to census data is higher than for Tulare County and the City of Visalia.

Table 2.6 1999 Household and Income

Area	Total Households	Persons per Household	Median Household Income \$ (year)
Project Corridor	2,980	3.0	\$43,665 (1999)
Tulare County	110,385	3.3	\$33,983 (1999)
City of Visalia	30,883	2.9	\$41,349 (1999)

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 2000

When viewed as a whole, the project area has a higher income and more diverse population than the City of Visalia or Tulare County.

Caltrans identified beneficial and adverse impacts of the project. The beneficial effects resulting from this project would affect the entire population within the project area. Those beneficial effects are as follows:

- Improving safety and operation
- Increasing capacity would relieve traffic congestion and reduce idling time for vehicles, which would improve air quality in the project area (see Section 2.2.4)
- Providing designated bike lanes that would be incorporated into the shoulders of the highway between Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road
- Constructing a continuous sidewalk on both sides of State Route 216 between Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road would provide for safe pedestrian travel.

Adverse effects from this project include the following:

- Short-term construction impacts (noise and air quality)
- Noise would increase by moving the highway closer to existing residences (see Section 2.2.6)
- Residential relocations

Short-term construction impacts and impacts from increased noise levels would occur throughout the entire project area and would not disproportionately affect minority and low-income populations.

All three alternatives under consideration could result in relocations. Alternative 1 could acquire 4 single-family residences. Alternative 2 could acquire 12 single-family residences and 20 multi-family units. Alternative 3 could acquire 9 single-family residences and 8 multi-family units. Alternative 1 would affect 4 structures and would be less severe than Alternative 2 (17 structures) or Alternative 3 (11 structures).

Two parcels that could qualify for acquisition, demolition and clearance of a single-family residence and relocation of tenants in Alternative 1 would affect a minority or “low-income” population. Five parcels that could qualify for acquisition, demolition and clearance of a single-family residence and relocation of tenants in Alternative 2 and four parcels that could qualify for acquisition, demolition and clearance of a single-family residence and relocation of tenants in Alternative 3 would affect a minority or low-income population.

The three parcels in Alternative 1 that affect a minority or low-income population constitute 25 percent of the parcels between the Burgundy House Apartments and McAuliff Road that Caltrans identified as part of a potential low-income area. The five parcels in Alternative 2 constitute 42 percent and the four parcels in Alternative 3 constitute 34 percent of the parcels between the Burgundy House Apartments and McAuliff Road that Caltrans identified as part of a potential low-income area.

Based on the above discussion and analysis, Build Alternatives 2 and 3 would cause disproportionately high and adverse effects on a minority or low-income population.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Caltrans would minimize harm to the identified low-income minority community between the Burgundy House Apartments and McAuliff Road by designing the proposed project to avoid fully acquiring as many parcels from the south side of the highway as practical. Construction of the proposed project to the north of the existing highway would require the acquisition of four homes, but it would avoid 20 multi-family units and reduce the number of single-family residences that would need to be fully acquired by as many as eight.

2.1.3.4 Parking

Affected Environment

Designated striped parking stalls are provided for about 200 vehicles immediately adjacent to the highway at the Visalia Adult School located on the north side of State Route 216. Parking is also provided for students at Golden West High School off of

McAuliff Road. This parking lot is striped for about 475 vehicles. In addition, parking is provided in other areas of the Golden West Educational Complex for students, faculty, staff, volunteers, and parents. A grass parking area is provided for events at the Groppetti football stadium.

On-street parking is restricted in various areas throughout the project area. Onsite parking is provided throughout the Burgundy House Apartments.

Environmental Consequences

Alternative 1 would shift the roadway about 30 feet north of the existing roadway and would remove about 53 parking stalls from the Visalia Adult School parking lot. Approximately 100 existing non-marked on-street parking spaces on the north side of State Route 216 would also be removed.

Alternative 2 would shift the roadway about 20 feet south of the existing roadway. Approximately 100 existing non-marked on-street parking spaces on the south side of State Route 216 would be removed.

Alternative 3 would widen the existing roadway symmetrically, about 15 feet on each side of the existing centerline. Alternative 3 would remove about 53 parking stalls from the Visalia Adult School parking lot. Approximately 200 existing non-marked on-street parking spaces, which are on both sides of State Route 216, would also be removed.

Impacts to parking could change during the final design of the project.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Alternative 1 and Alternative 3 would remove about 53 parking spaces at the Visalia Adult School. A field review of the project indicated that these stalls could be replaced onsite. Detailed design would be closely coordinated with the Visalia Unified School District during the next phase of the project.

2.1.4 Utilities/Emergency Services

Affected Environment

A number of companies and the City of Visalia have utilities located within the project area. Southern California Edison Company operates utility poles and aerial service lines. Southern California Gas Company operates high-pressure gas lines within the project area. American Telephone & Telegraph operates aerial telephone

lines. Underground utilities in the project area include fiber optic lines and Comcast cable television lines. Additional underground utilities include Kaweah Delta Irrigation District lines, California Water Service Company water lines, and City of Visalia sewer and storm drain lines.

No emergency responders are stationed on State Route 216. The Tulare County Fire Department and the Visalia City Fire Department both provide emergency services within the proposed project area. The Tulare County Fire Department provides services from its Station #19 at 1968 South Lovers Lane between Paradise and Walnut avenues. Additional fire service is provided from a station 3.9 miles away at 309 South Johnson Street. The Visalia City Police Department and the Tulare County Sheriff's Department provide police service.

The Tulare County Fire Department, Mobile Life Support, and American Ambulance Service provide emergency medical service.

Environmental Consequences

Construction and acquisition of right-of-way for this project would require utility facilities to be relocated within the project limits. A detailed study would be conducted during the final design phase of this project.

Before construction, public utilities affected by the project would be relocated. Although utility poles and service lines would be relocated, minimal service interruption may occur. During construction, traffic in each direction of travel would remain open.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Scheduling construction work that would require lane closures during non-peak hours would minimize traffic delays. Pre-construction meetings with emergency services agencies and the local school district would be conducted. Meetings would continue throughout construction of the project as needed.

A Transportation Management Plan would be required for the project before construction. Transportation Management Plans are prepared for projects on the state highway system to reduce traffic delays and congestion associated with construction activities. Emergency providers would be asked to participate in developing the plan, which would describe how emergency responders would handle detours or delays. Emergency vehicles would receive preference through any detours and lane closures.

2.1.5 Traffic and Transportation/Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Regulatory Setting

Caltrans, directs that full consideration should be given to the safe accommodation of pedestrians and bicyclists during the development of federal-aid highway projects (see 23 Code of Federal Regulations 652). It further directs that the special needs of the elderly and the disabled must be considered in all federal-aid projects that include pedestrian facilities. When current or anticipated pedestrians and/or bicycle traffic presents a potential conflict with motor vehicle traffic, every effort must be made to minimize the detrimental effects on all highway users who share the facility.

Caltrans is committed to carrying out the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act by building transportation facilities that provide equal access for all persons. The same degree of convenience, accessibility, and safety available to the general public would be provided to persons with disabilities.

Affected Environment

Caltrans prepared a *Traffic Operational Analysis Report*, dated November 18, 2002, which was updated on May 12, 2003, May 11, 2006 and April 3, 2007. Existing State Route 216 within the project area is a two-lane conventional highway, which passes through urban residential areas.

The City of Visalia expects substantial urban growth in the project area in the coming years. The anticipated growth in the community as well as projected increased traffic volumes are expected to affect the operation of State Route 216, causing the Level of Service of the existing highway to deteriorate. The project area is urban and developing rapidly, with heavy traffic between McAuliff Road and Lovers Lane during school hours.

State Route 216 currently operates at Level of Service C in the project area and, without improvements, would deteriorate to Level of Service F before the end of the 20-year planning horizon (see Table 2.7).

Table 2.7 Levels of Service for State Route 216 in the Project Area

Location	Existing		2011				2031			
			No-Build		Build		No-Build		Build	
	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
State Route 216 between post miles 1.9 and 2.9	C	B	C	C	B	B	D	F	C	C
State Route 216/Lovers Lane	C	B	C	C	B	B	D	F	C	C
State Route 216/McAuliff Road	B	B	C	C	B	B	D	E	C	C

Source: Caltrans Operational Analysis, April 2007

With the proposed improvements, this portion of State Route 216 would improve to a Level of Service B on opening day (year 2011) and would remain at a Level of Service C through the end of the 20-year planning horizon. This is also true for the intersections of State Route 216 with Lovers Lane and with McAuliff Road.

Areas with sidewalks are located on the north and south sides of State Route 216 in the project area. Narrow planting strips adjoin both sidewalks, separating them from the roadway. The 10-foot sidewalk on the north side of State Route 216 runs from Lovers Lane to about 100 feet east of McAuliff Road. This sidewalk accommodates both pedestrian and bicycle traffic and transitions to an asphalt path from the Visalia Adult School to the corner of McAuliff Road. There are currently no curbs and gutters in the area of the asphalt path.

The 4-foot sidewalk on the south side of State Route 216 runs from Lovers Lane about 50 feet to the east of the Burgundy House Apartments. Pedestrians and bicyclists share this sidewalk. There are additional pieces of discontinuous sidewalk on the south side of State Route 216 that have been constructed as new development has occurred in the area.

The intersection of State Route 216 and Lovers Lane has traffic signals and a pedestrian crosswalk. The intersection of State Route 216 and McAuliff Road also has traffic signals, but pedestrian crosswalks are only on the north and east sides of the intersection at this time.

In February 2006, the Visalia City Council approved a Bicycle Facilities Plan that includes plans for bicycle lanes along State Route 216. The plan shows the proposed number of routes in the community and on the existing route along Houston Avenue

in Visalia. One of the proposed routes along Houston Avenue (State Route 216) would continue to the new Santa Fe Trail that is being established near the Lincoln Oval west of the proposed project.

Environmental Consequences

Each of the proposed build alternatives would improve the Level of Service to acceptable levels. Improved Level of Service within the project area would benefit the operation and safety of the highway due to the increased capacity and decreased conflicting traffic movements.

Adding a second left-turn lane at the intersections of State Route 216 with Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road would increase storage capacity for left-turning vehicles and improve the overall Level of Service for those intersections.

Constructing continuous sidewalks and a median with pedestrian refuges (waiting areas) and adding bicycle lanes on both sides of State Route 216 from the intersection of Lovers Lane to McAuliff Road would improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

During construction, a traffic management plan would help reduce traffic delays, congestion, and accidents. Standard Caltrans construction practices include providing information on roadway conditions, portable changeable message signs, lane and road closures, advance warning signs, alternate routes, reverse and alternate traffic control, and a traffic contingency plan for unforeseen circumstances and emergencies. The Caltrans Public Affairs Office would keep the local media informed of construction progress and information pertaining to delays, closures, and major changes in traffic patterns with information provided by the resident engineer.

Under the California Vehicle Code (Sec. 21200), bike riders have the same rights as operators of motor vehicles. They cannot be excluded from traveling on a roadway during construction unless motor vehicles are also prohibited from traveling those same roadways. “Share The Road” signs within the construction area alert motorists of the potential presence of bicyclists on the roadway.

A Construction Zone Enhanced Enforcement Program may be appropriate during portions of this project. The program involves the continuous presence of the California Highway Patrol in construction zones to serve as a reminder to motorists to slow down and use caution when traveling through work areas. The Caltrans Construction Division would be consulted to determine if the program is warranted for this project.

Improvements such as sidewalks and curb ramps would be constructed to conform to the requirements of the Americans With Disabilities Act.

2.1.6 Visual/Aesthetics

Regulatory Setting

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, establishes that the federal government use all practicable means to ensure all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and *aesthetically* (emphasis added) and culturally pleasing surroundings [42 United States Code 4331(b)(2)]. To further emphasize this point, the Federal Highway Administration in its implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act [23 United States Code 109(h)], directs that final decisions regarding projects are to be made in the best overall public interest taking into account adverse environmental impacts, including among others, the destruction or disruption of aesthetic values.

Likewise, the California Environmental Quality Act also establishes that it is the policy of the state to take all action necessary to provide the people of the state “with...enjoyment of *aesthetic*, natural, scenic, and historic environmental qualities.” [California Public Resources Code Section 21001(b)].

This section assesses the visual change and the potential impacts that would result from the proposed project.

Affected Environment

Caltrans prepared a Visual and Scenic Resources Evaluation dated May 22, 2006 for the proposed project, which was updated on May 7, 2007.

The regional landscape around the project area is characterized as rural, with new residential development replacing agricultural lands and open fields.

The project area starts at Lovers Lane and ends at McAuliff Road. The development in this area includes an educational school complex to the north and residential development to the northeast and south of the project. Street trees line the area between Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road. Telephone and electrical poles are located on both sides of State Route 216 between Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road.

Environmental Consequences

The proposed project would remove about 64 trees along the street, including valley oak, redbud, tallow, and eucalyptus. Most of the trees that would be removed range from 3 to 14 inches in trunk diameter at breast height, except for two heritage oaks that have diameters at breast height of about 34 inches. In addition, about 16 trees inside the fence of the Golden West Educational Complex might be affected along with about 30 trees on private properties.

As shown in Table 2.8, Alternative 1 would remove about 110 trees within the proposed project area, including about 16 within the educational complex. Alternatives 2 and 3 would remove about 94 trees and would avoid the 16 trees inside the Golden West Educational Complex.

All tree removal would occur between Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road, except for two oak trees classified as heritage oaks by the City of Visalia. Both oak trees, located on the north side of State Route 216 at about post mile 2.6 are of substantial size with diameters of 34 inches at breast height. These trees are visual resources and are valued by the City of Visalia. They are covered under the City of Visalia's Oak Tree Preservation Ordinance (Municipal Code 12.24).

Table 2.8 Number of Trees Affected by Alternatives

Selected Trees	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	No-Build Alternative
North Side City Trees	25	25	25	0
South Side City Trees	37	37	37	0
Heritage Oak Trees	2	2	2	0
Trees on Private Properties*	30	30	30	
Golden West Educational Complex Trees	16	0	0	0
Total	110	94	94	0

Source: Caltrans Visual and Scenic Resources Evaluation, May 2007.

*Trees on private properties that may be removed would be covered through right-of-way acquisition.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Existing vegetation would be preserved and protected to the maximum extent feasible in accordance with the Highway Design Manual. Appropriate replacement planting would be provided when native or specimen trees are removed or planting installed by others is damaged or removed by state highway construction activity.

Caltrans would replace planting installed by others in conformance with the Encroachment Permits Manual, Chapter 506.3, including irrigation modification and/or replacement.

If mitigation replacement planting is not installed with this project, it must be accomplished within two years of its completion. Funds would be set aside for the mitigation replacement planting. A plant establishment period would be provided and a cooperative/maintenance agreement would be required with the City of Visalia to ensure the survival of the newly planted landscaping.

The proposed landscape concept for this project consists of landscape and irrigation design as allowed by the Highway Design Manual. Trees and grass could be planted along the sidewalk planting strips on both sides of State Route 216.

In addition, Caltrans would also provide aesthetic treatment of the raised median, which could include tree planting and textured paving. Between Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road, the raised median could include stamped concrete paving and/or landscaping. Caltrans would work with the City of Visalia and the Visalia Unified School District to develop an acceptable design for the improvements.

Tree Replacement

Trees with a diameter at breast height ranging from 3 inches to 14 inches would be removed for the project: about 110 trees for Alternative 1, about 94 trees for Alternative 2 and about 94 trees for Alternative 3. The Caltrans Landscape Architecture Branch would determine the need for replacement planting to mitigate for the removal of trees. Replacement planting should be done within the project limits or as close to the project site as possible.

Heritage Oak Replacement

Mitigation for the removal of the two heritage valley oak trees would also be included in the project. Oak trees would be incorporated in the proposed landscape concept where possible.

Heritage oak trees would be replaced in accordance with the City of Visalia's Oak Tree Preservation Ordinance (Municipal Code 12.24). The ordinance applies to oak trees with a diameter at breast height of 2 inches or greater.

Section 12.24.120 of the Oak Tree Preservation Ordinance addresses the preservation and maintenance of existing oak trees through implementation of measures to ensure protection of the root zone. As a state agency, Caltrans is not subject to the city ordinance, but would make an effort to be consistent with it.

2.1.7 Cultural Resources

Regulatory Setting

The cultural document was prepared in compliance with all applicable federal, as well as state, laws because the project was originally proposed to include federal funding. "Cultural resources" as used in this document refers to historic and archaeological resources, regardless of significance. Laws and regulations dealing with historic and archaeological resources include the following:

The National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, sets forth national policy and procedures regarding historic properties, defined as districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects included in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on such properties and to allow the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation the opportunity to comment on those undertakings, following regulations issued by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (36 Code of Federal Regulations 800). On January 1, 2004, a Section 106 Programmatic Agreement among the Advisory Council, the Federal Highway Administration, the State Historic Preservation Officer, and Caltrans went into effect for Caltrans projects, both state and local, with Federal Highway Administration involvement. The Programmatic Agreement implements the Advisory Council's regulations, 36 Code of Federal Regulations 800, streamlining the Section 106 process and delegating certain responsibilities to Caltrans. The Federal Highway Administration's responsibilities under the agreement have been assigned to Caltrans as part of the Surface Transportation Delivery Pilot Program (23 Code of Federal Regulations 773) (July 1, 2007).

Historic properties may also be covered under Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act, which regulates the "use" of land from historic properties.

Historical resources are defined as those properties that meet the criteria for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources and are considered under the California Environmental Quality Act, as well as California Public Resources Code Section 5024, which established the California Register of Historical Resources. Section 5024 of the Public Resources Code requires state agencies to identify and protect state-owned resources that meet National Register of Historic Places listing criteria. It further specifically requires Caltrans to inventory state-owned structures in Caltrans' rights-of-way.

Affected Environment

Caltrans prepared a Historic Property Survey Report dated April 5, 2006 for the proposed project.

The Area of Potential Effects for the project coincides with the right-of-way required for all ground-disturbing activities, including road construction, realignment and installation of utilities, and vehicle and equipment storage, as well as those areas which have the potential to be affected indirectly either temporarily or permanently by construction activities.

Standard sources of information were consulted for the proposed project, including the following: the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register of Historical Resources, California Historical Landmarks, California Inventory of Historic Resources, California Points of Historical Interest, State Historic Resources Commission, Caltrans Historic Highway Bridge Inventory, and the Archaeological Information Center for the Southern San Joaquin Valley at California State University, Bakersfield.

Additional resources used included the Annie Mitchell Room of the Tulare County Library, Tulare County Assessor's office, the archive of Vintage Resources in Exeter, the Special Collections Library at the Henry Madden Library at California State University, Fresno, and the California State Library and the Caltrans Structures Division Archives, both in Sacramento.

Native American consultation efforts included contacts with the Native American Heritage Commission, Kern Valley Indian Community, Tule River Indian Tribe, and Wukchumni Tribal Council. No Native American concerns with respect to the project have been received to date.

Archaeological field surveys were conducted in March and April 2001. No prehistoric or archaeological resources were identified within the Area of Potential Effects.

Field reviews for potential historic architectural and engineering resources, such as buildings, bridges, or canals, occurred between 2003 and 2005. Seventeen properties within the Area of Potential Effects were formally evaluated. None of the evaluated resources meet the eligibility criteria for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. None of the resources evaluated are considered historical resources for the purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act.

On April 27, 2006, the State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with Caltrans' finding in the Historic Property Survey Report that there are no cultural resources in the project area that are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. See the letter in Appendix G.

Environmental Consequences

No impacts to cultural resources that are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places are anticipated.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

If cultural materials were discovered during construction, all earth-moving activity within and around the immediate discovery area would be diverted until a qualified archaeologist could assess the nature and significance of the find.

If human remains were discovered, State Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 states that further disturbances and activities would stop in any area or nearby area suspected to overlie remains, and the County Coroner would be contacted. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5097.98, if the remains were thought to be Native American, the coroner would notify the Native American Heritage Commission, who would then notify the Most Likely Descendent. At this time, the person who discovered the remains would contact Caltrans or the District 6 Native American Coordinator, so that they may work with the Most Likely Descendent on the respectful treatment and disposition of the remains. Further provisions of Public Resources Code Section 5097.98 are to be followed as applicable.

2.2 Physical Environment

2.2.1 Hydrology and Floodplain

Regulatory Setting

Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management) directs all federal agencies to refrain from conducting, supporting, or allowing actions in floodplains unless it is the only practicable alternative. Requirements for compliance are outlined in 23 Code of Federal Regulations 650 Subpart A.

To comply, the following must be analyzed:

- The practicability of alternatives to any longitudinal encroachments
- Risks of the action
- Impacts on natural and beneficial floodplain values
- Support of incompatible floodplain development
- Measures to minimize floodplain impacts and to preserve/restore any beneficial floodplain values affected by the project

The base or 100-year floodplain is defined as “the area subject to flooding by the flood or tide having a one percent chance of being exceeded in any given year. An encroachment is defined as “an action within the limits of the 100-year floodplain.” The 500-year floodplain is defined as areas where there is a 0.2 percent chance of being flooded in any given year.

Affected Environment

A Location Hydraulic Study was completed on September 29, 2003.

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Flood Insurance Rate Map indicates that from just east of Lovers Lane (post mile 2.0) to just east of the Visalia city limit (post mile 3.0), the existing highway borders the northern boundary of an area designated as a Zone X flood area. Zone X is defined as “an area inundated by 500-year flooding; an area inundated by 100-year flooding with average depths of less than 1 foot or with drainage areas less than 1 square mile; and areas protected by levees from 100-year flooding.”

Environmental Consequences

The proposed project consists of a longitudinal encroachment towards the Zone X floodplain, but it would not increase the base flood backwater elevation. Caltrans proposes converting the existing two-lane conventional highway into a four-lane conventional highway with a raised median. None of the build alternatives proposed for the project would constitute a significant floodplain encroachment as defined under 23 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 650.105(q).

The risks associated with the implementation of the proposed action are not significant. The proposed action would not support probable incompatible floodplain development. There are no significant impacts on the natural and beneficial floodplain values. Routine construction procedures would minimize impacts on the floodplain. No special mitigation measures would be necessary to minimize impacts or restore and preserve natural and beneficial floodplain values.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The proposed project would not have a significant impact on the floodplain since the roadway alignment would be maintained at the same elevation; therefore, no mitigation measures would be required.

2.2.2 Water Quality and Storm Water Runoff

Regulatory Setting

Section 401 of the Clean Water Act requires water quality certification from the State Water Resources Control Board or from a Regional Water Quality Control Board when the project requires a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit. Section 404 of the Clean Water Act requires a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to discharge dredge or fill material into waters of the United States.

Along with Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, Section 402 of the Clean Water Act establishes the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit for the discharge of any pollutant into waters of the United States. The federal Environmental Protection Agency has delegated administration of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System program to the State Water Resources Control Board and nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards. The State Water Resources Control Board and Regional Water Quality Control Boards also regulate other waste discharges to land within California through the issuance of waste discharge requirements under authority of the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act.

The State Water Resources Control Board has developed and issued a statewide National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit to regulate storm water discharges from all Caltrans activities on its highways and facilities. Caltrans construction projects are regulated under the statewide permit, and projects performed by other entities on Caltrans right-of-way (encroachments) are regulated by the State Water Resources Control Board's Statewide General Construction Permit. All construction projects over 1 acre require a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan to be prepared and implemented during construction. Caltrans activities of less than 1 acre require a Water Pollution Control Permit.

Affected Environment

Caltrans prepared a Water Quality Report dated January 12, 2007.

Regional

The project lies in the San Joaquin Valley. The San Joaquin Valley is a topographic and structural trough, which has received a thick accumulation of sediments from the Sierra Nevada on the east and the Coast Range on the west. The east side of the valley, bounded by the Sierra Nevada fault block, dips gently to become flat over the granite rocks of the Sierra Nevada. The west side of the valley dips steeply at its extreme western boundary along the base of the Coast Range, where it lies over the Franciscan formation.

Surface Water

The project is located in the Tulare Lake Basin. The Basin is made up of six subunits, called management areas. The project is located in the Kaweah River Basin Management Area. Major water bodies in this part of the watershed include the Kaweah River, Saint John's River, Mill Creek, and the Friant-Kern Canal. The Kaweah River and the Friant-Kern Canal are not in the immediate vicinity of the project, and any water discharge from the project in the form of runoff or spills would not discharge into these water bodies. The Saint John's River and Mill Creek are located about one mile to the north and south of the project area respectively.

Groundwater

The underlying groundwater in the Kaweah River Basin Management Area is impacted due to agricultural practices, the closed nature of the basin, and the lack of a laterally extensive clay layer.

Storm Water Quality

Storm water runoff is a major source of storm water pollution. Runoff from Caltrans sites in a particular watershed composes less than one percent of the total runoff generated from the entire watershed.

Environmental Consequences

Impacts from the project would be the same for all build alternatives. Potential sources of water pollution from this project include runoff containing sediment from soil erosion, petroleum distillates, and wear products from motor vehicle operation, landscaping chemicals, and hazardous material spilled along the highway during an accident. These materials would usually be transported offsite by runoff from rainfall.

Short-term impacts to surface water could occur during construction, mainly from exposure of loose soil during construction. Suspended solids, dissolved solids, and organic pollutants in surface water bodies could increase while soils are disturbed and dust is generated. These conditions would likely persist until construction has been completed and erosion control measures have been implemented. Proper selection and implementation of best management practices during construction would prevent or greatly reduce these short-term impacts. It is unlikely that any discharge from the proposed project would detrimentally affect these water bodies except during a possible 50- to 75-year flood event. A 50-year flood has a two percent probability of occurring in any given year, and a 75-year flood has a 1.5 percent annual probability.

Long-term water quality impacts can occur due to changes in storm water drainage. The primary pollutants in the storm water are anticipated to be sediments, petroleum distillates, and metals. These substances are washed off the highway during storms and become runoff. With implementation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan during construction and the inclusion of design pollution best management practices, no long-term impacts to surface water quality would be expected as a result of this project.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

During construction, a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan would be implemented to identify the sources of sediment and other pollutants that affect the quality of storm water discharges. The plan would also describe and ensure the implementation of best management practices to reduce or eliminate sediment and other pollutants in storm water as well as non-storm water discharges.

Standard Specifications, Section 7-1.01G requires the construction contractor to implement pollution control practices related to construction projects via a Water Pollution Control Plan and Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan.

Presently, when a project is expected to disturb more than one acre of soil, the following is required:

1. A Notification of Construction is to be submitted to the appropriate Regional Water Quality Control Board at least 30 days prior to the start of construction. The Notice of Construction forms ask for tentative start date and duration, location, description of project, estimate of affected area, resident engineer with telephone number, etc.
2. A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan is to be prepared and implemented during construction to the satisfaction of the Resident Engineer.
3. A Notice of Construction Completion is to be submitted to the Regional Water Quality Control Board upon completion of the construction and stabilization of the site. A project will be considered complete when the criteria for final stabilization in the State General Construction Permit are met.

2.2.3 Hazardous Waste

Regulatory Setting

Hazardous materials and hazardous wastes are regulated by many state and federal laws. These include not only specific statutes governing hazardous waste, but also a variety of laws regulating air and water quality, human health, and land use.

The primary federal laws regulating hazardous wastes/materials are the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980. The purpose of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, often referred to as Superfund, is to clean up contaminated sites so that public health and welfare are not compromised. The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act provides for “cradle to grave” regulation of hazardous wastes. Other federal laws include:

- Community Environmental Response Facilitation Act of 1992
- Clean Water Act
- Clean Air Act
- Safe Drinking Water Act

- Occupational Safety & Health Act
- Atomic Energy Act
- Toxic Substances Control Act
- Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act

In addition to the acts listed above, Executive Order 12088, Federal Compliance with Pollution Control, mandates that necessary actions be taken to prevent and control environmental pollution when federal activities or federal facilities are involved.

Hazardous waste in California is regulated primarily under the authority of the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 and the California Health and Safety Code. Other California laws that affect hazardous waste are specific to handling, storage, transportation, disposal, treatment, reduction, cleanup, and emergency planning.

Worker health and safety and public safety are key issues when dealing with hazardous materials that may affect human health and the environment. Proper disposal of hazardous material is vital if it is disturbed during project construction.

Affected Environment

The study area consists of 36 parcels within and adjacent to the proposed right-of-way. Parcels include rural single-family residences, individual domestic groundwater wells, individual sewage systems, an educational complex owned by the Visalia Unified School District, and single- and multiple-family residential uses.

Aerially Deposited Lead

An Aerially Deposited Lead Investigation Report was completed for the project on October 2, 2002, to evaluate the presence and concentration of aerially deposited lead in shallow soil within the work area of the project.

Hazardous Waste

Caltrans completed an Initial Site Assessment on March 13, 2002. The study focused on potential hazardous waste issues in the project area, including hazardous waste sites, underground storage tanks, asbestos, and lead-based paint.

The Initial Site Assessment indicated that there were no known hazardous waste sites or underground storage tank facilities in the project area based on a review of the Leaking Underground Storage Tank Information System database and the VISTAinfo Inc. report.

There is a potential, due to the age and condition of some of the buildings and homes along State Route 216, to encounter lead-based paint and asbestos.

Utilities within the proposed right-of-way include electrical power lines, fiber-optic cable, and telephone lines. Power transformers associated with the power lines or other electrical or hydraulic equipment may contain polychlorinated biphenyls, a chemical that could affect human health.

Yellow thermoplastic paint may be present in yellow painted traffic stripes and pavement markings.

Environmental Consequences

The Aerially Deposited Lead study found lead in soil samples collected from the site, but not in hazardous concentrations. The source of the lead is not known, but is believed to be related to the accumulation of dust and debris containing lead from leaded gasoline emissions. In addition, lead concentrations generally decreased with increasing depth.

Based on the total and soluble lead analytical results, soil generated from individual layers or as a whole, would be considered non-hazardous. If the soil had been found to exceed the regulatory threshold outlined in Title 22, California Code of Regulations, it would have to be classified as hazardous waste and disposed of at a permitted hazardous waste landfill. The soil can be reused on the project or relinquished to the contractor without restriction.

Older homes that might have lead-based paint or asbestos would be affected by all build alternatives. Asbestos and lead are a threat to human health. Further investigation would be required prior to the demolition of any structure to determine if lead-based paint or asbestos is present.

Where yellow thermoplastic paint is to be removed, it may contain heavy metals in concentrations that exceed established thresholds and may produce toxic fumes when heated.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Prior to any excavation or soil disturbance within project boundaries, a project-specific Lead Compliance Plan must be developed and implemented for earthwork as part of Caltrans non-standard special provisions.

Steps would be taken to reduce or eliminate any airborne dust. Water should be available at all times where work activities are being performed.

The contractor would use proper health and safety measures to minimize the exposure of workers to potential asbestos or lead-based paint from affected buildings and structures.

The demolition of water wells within the project limits must be in accordance with standards prepared by the Department of Water Resources (Bulletins 74-90) Title 23, California Code of Regulations and local regulatory standards.

Where yellow thermoplastic paint is to be removed, the contractor would comply with standard special provision 15-300.

2.2.4 Air Quality Regulatory Setting

The Clean Air Act, as amended in 1990, is the federal law that governs air quality. Its counterpart in California is the California Clean Air Act of 1988. These laws set standards for the concentration of pollutants that can be in the air. At the federal level, these standards are called National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Standards have been established for six criteria pollutants that have been linked to potential health concerns: carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), ozone (O₃), particulate matter (PM), lead (Pb), and sulfur dioxide (SO₂).

Under the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments, the U.S. Department of Transportation cannot fund, authorize, or approve federal actions to support programs or projects that are not first found to conform to the State Implementation Plan for achieving the goals of the Clean Air Act requirements. Conformity with the Clean Air Act takes place on two levels: first, at the regional level, and second, at the project level. The proposed project must conform at both levels to be approved.

Regional level conformity is concerned with how well the region is meeting the standards set for carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, and particulate matter. California is in attainment for the other criteria pollutants. At the regional level, Regional Transportation Plans are developed that include all of the transportation projects planned for a region over a period of years, usually at least 20. Based on the projects included in the Regional Transportation Plan, an air quality model is run to determine whether or not the implementation of those projects would conform to

emission budgets or other tests showing that attainment requirements of the Clean Air Act are met. If the conformity analysis is successful, the regional planning organization, such as the Tulare County Association of Governments; air pollution regulatory agencies, such as the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District; and the appropriate federal agencies, such as the Federal Highway Administration, make the determination that the Regional Transportation Plan is in conformity with the State Implementation Plan for achieving the goals of the Clean Air Act. Otherwise, the projects in the Regional Transportation Plan must be modified until conformity is attained. If the design and scope of the proposed transportation project are the same as described in the Regional Transportation Plan, then the proposed project is deemed to meet regional conformity requirements for purposes of the project-level analysis.

Conformity at the project-level also requires “hot spot” analysis if an area is in “nonattainment” or “maintenance” for carbon monoxide (CO) and/or particulate matter. A region is a “nonattainment” area if one or more monitoring stations in the region fail to attain the relevant standard. Areas that were previously designated as non-attainment areas but have recently met the standard are called “maintenance” areas. “Hot spot” analysis is essentially the same, for technical purposes, as carbon monoxide or particulate matter analysis performed for National Environmental Policy Act and California Environmental Quality Act purposes. Conformity does include some specific standards for projects that require a hot spot analysis. In general, the project must not cause the carbon monoxide standard to be violated, and in “nonattainment” areas, the project must not cause any increase in the number and severity of violations. If a known carbon monoxide or particulate matter violation is located in the project vicinity, the project must include measures to reduce or eliminate the existing violation(s) as well.

Affected Environment

Caltrans prepared an Air Quality Analysis for this project dated March 7, 2006.

The project area lies in the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin. Mountain ranges bordering the air basin influence the wind speed and direction, affecting both the climate and the dispersion of air pollutants in the valley, where temperature inversions frequently occur. In an inversion, upper air becomes warmer than the air beneath it. Because warm surface air cannot rise into an even warmer layer, surface air and its pollutants get trapped at ground level. Inversions are more prevalent and of greater magnitude in late summer and fall.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District administers air quality regulations developed at the federal, state, and local levels. For Tulare County, ozone, carbon monoxide, and particulate matter are of particular concern. Ozone is considered a regional pollutant; carbon monoxide and particulate matter are considered project-level pollutants.

Regional Air Quality Conformity

The proposed project is fiscally constrained and is in the 2007 Tulare County Regional Transportation Plan, which was found to conform by the Tulare County Association of Governments on May 21, 2007. The Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration adopted the air quality conformity finding on June 29, 2007. The project is also included in the Tulare County Association of Governments constrained 2006/2007 Regional Transportation Improvement Program (on page 32). The Tulare County Association of Governments' 2007 Regional Transportation Improvement Program was found to conform by the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration on June 29, 2007.

The design concept and scope of the proposed project is consistent with the project description in the 2007 Regional Transportation Plan, the 2007 Regional Transportation Improvement Program, and the assumptions in the Tulare County Association of Governments' regional emissions analysis.

Lack of construction funding required the Tulare County Association of Governments to approve an administrative amendment on May 5, 2008 dividing the project into two projects. Caltrans approved the amendment on May 16, 2008.

Project-Level Air Quality Conformity

For federal standards, Tulare County is considered non-attainment /severe for ozone, attainment/unclassified for carbon monoxide, and non-attainment for particulate matter. For state standards, Tulare County is considered non-attainment for ozone and particulate matter, and attainment for carbon monoxide (see Table 2.9).

Table 2.9 Air Quality Standards and Conformity Status

Criteria Pollutant	Federal Standard (National Ambient Air Quality Standards)	Federal Attainment Status	State Standard	State Attainment Status
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	35 ppm (1-hour average)	Attainment/ Unclassified	0.0	Attainment
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO ₂)	0.053 ppm	Attainment/ Unclassified	-	Attainment
Ozone (O ₃)	0.12 ppm (1-hour average)	Severe	0.09 ppm (1-hour average)	Non-attainment
	0.08 ppm (8-hour average)	Non-attainment	0.07 ppm (8-hour average)	Non-Attainment
Particulate Matter (PM _{2.5})	15 ug/m ³ (24-hour average)	Non-attainment	12 ug/m ³ (24-hour average)	Non-attainment
Particulate Matter (PM ₁₀)	150 micrograms (24-hour average)	Non-attainment	50 micrograms (24-hour average)	Non-attainment
Sulfur Dioxide (SO ₂)	0.03 ppm (annual average) 0.14 ppm (24-hour average)	No federal standard	-	Attainment

ppm = part per million

Carbon Monoxide

The project is located in an attainment/unclassified area for the federal carbon monoxide standard. The ambient carbon monoxide levels monitored at the Visalia-monitoring station (the closest station with monitored carbon monoxide data) showed no violations in the last three years. See Figure 2-5. Therefore, hot spot analysis is not warranted.

Particulate Matter Hot Spot Analysis

Particles less than 10 micrometers (PM₁₀) pose a potential public health concern because these small particles can be inhaled and accumulated in the respiratory system. Particles less than 2.5 micrometers (PM_{2.5}) are thought to be the greatest health risk because of their small size.

The Environmental Protection Agency has designated Tulare County as a non-attainment area for PM₁₀. The PM₁₀ monitoring station nearest the project area is the Visalia-North Church Street station, located at 310 North Church Street in Visalia. See Figure 2-5. Between 2003 and 2005, the monitored PM₁₀ particulate matter concentrations have not exceeded the federal PM₁₀ (150 micrograms per cubic meter) standards. The state standard (50 micrograms per cubic meter) was exceeded on 17 days in 2003, 15 days in 2004 and 24 days in 2005.

The Environmental Protection Agency has designated Tulare County as a non-attainment area for PM_{2.5}. The PM_{2.5} monitoring station nearest the project area is the Visalia-North Church Street monitoring station. See Figure 2-5. Between 2003 and 2005, the monitored PM_{2.5} particulate matter concentrations have not exceeded the federal standards (15 micrograms per cubic meter). The state standard (12 micrograms per cubic meter) was exceeded on 23 days in 2003 and 2004, and 20 days in 2005.

Caltrans prepared a PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} Hot Spot Conformity Assessment for the Tulare 216/Houston Avenue 4-Lane Widening project for consultation with the San Joaquin Valley Modeling Coordinating Committee. On January 26, 2007, the Committee concurred with Caltrans' finding that future new or worsened PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ violations of any standards are not anticipated in the project area. Therefore, the build and no-build alternatives are considered conforming projects under the PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} conformity hot-spot regulations. The project therefore complies with the control measures, as applicable, in the respective air quality plans.

The proposed project is in conformity with the Clean Air Act and the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀. The project would provide for better traffic circulation and would reduce idling time throughout the project limits.

Mobile Source Air Toxics

The Federal Highway Administration has developed a tiered approach for analyzing mobile source air toxics. The Federal Highway Administration has identified three levels of analysis depending on specific project circumstances:

- No analysis for exempt projects with no potential for meaningful mobile source air toxic effects;
 - Qualitative analysis for projects with low potential mobile source air toxic effects;
- or

- Quantitative analysis to differentiate alternatives for projects with higher potential for mobile source air toxic effects.

The proposed project is considered to be a project with no meaningful impacts because it does not significantly increase vehicle miles traveled. The proposed project widens a small segment of State Route 216, which will relieve traffic congestion and improve traffic flow, which will reduce emissions of volatile organic carbon-based mobile source air toxics.

Environmental Consequences

The proposed project would not result in any local carbon monoxide hot spot. None of the projected carbon monoxide concentrations, with or without the project changes, would exceed state or federal standards.

It is not anticipated that this project would create a new violation or worsen an existing violation of carbon monoxide. Therefore, based on the above analysis, no major local carbon monoxide impacts would occur as a result of the proposed project.

Under the new transportation conformity rule criterion (Code of Federal Regulations 93.123(b)(1)), the Houston Avenue 4-Lane Widening project is not considered a Project of Air Quality Concern. Caltrans prepared a PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} Hot Spot Conformity Assessment for the Tulare 216/Houston Avenue 4-Lane Widening project for consultation with the San Joaquin Valley Modeling Coordinating Committee. On January 26, 2007, the committee concurred with Caltrans' finding that future new or worsened PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ violations of any standards are not anticipated in the project area. Paved shoulders should decrease the amount of PM₁₀ emissions due to re-entrained road dust. Improved traffic flow would be expected to improve (decrease) carbon monoxide emissions, which would help keep Tulare County in attainment for this pollutant.

During construction, the proposed project would generate air pollutants. Construction equipment exhaust contains hydrocarbons, oxides of nitrogen, carbon monoxide, suspended particulate matter, and odors. However, the largest percentage of pollutants would be windblown dust generated during excavation, grading, hauling, and various other activities. The impacts of these activities would vary each day as construction progresses. Occasional dust and odors at some residences close to the right-of-way could cause occasional annoyance and complaints.

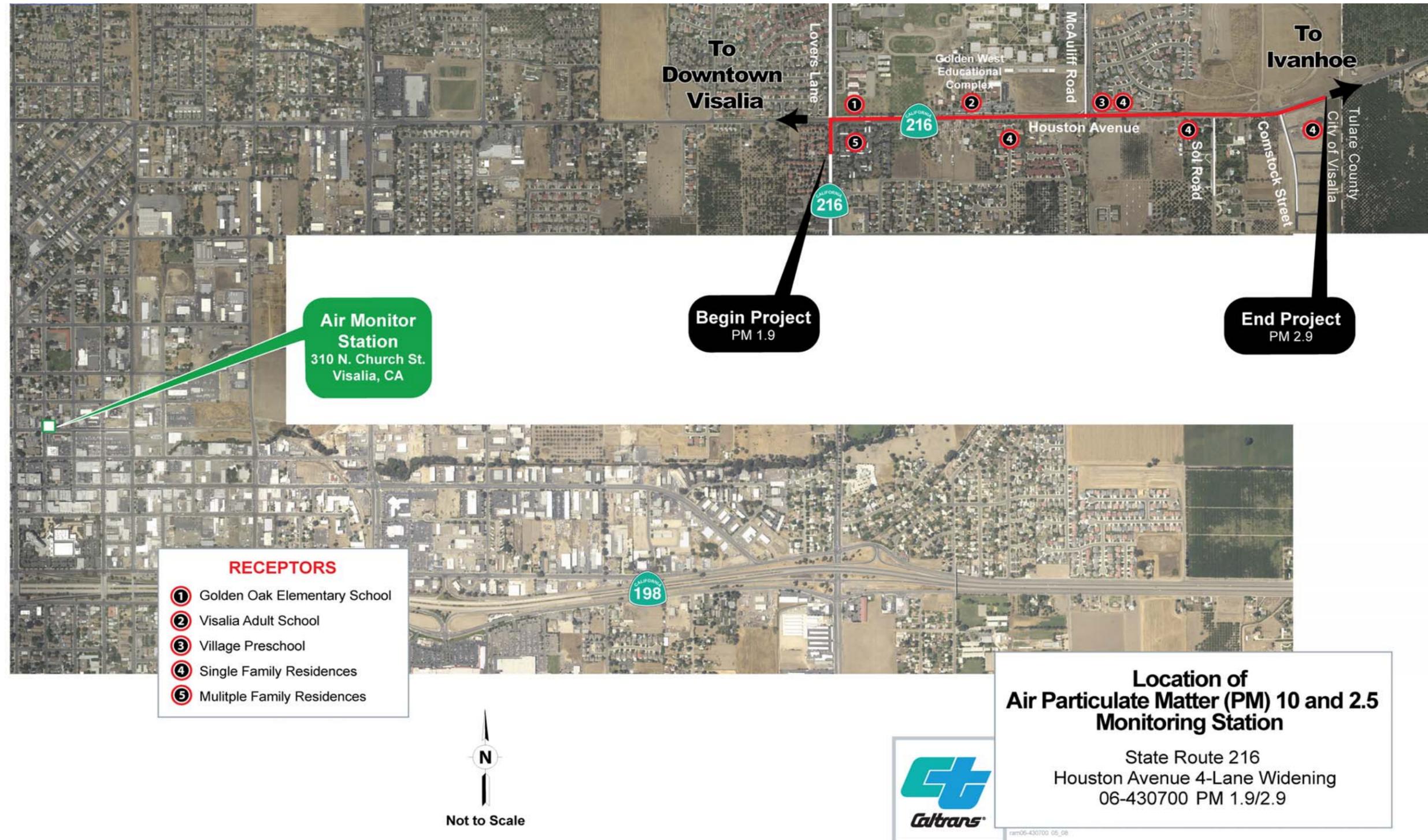


Figure 2-5 Location of Air Particulate (PM) 10 and 2.5 Monitoring Station



The California Environmental Quality Act requires that local air districts set thresholds of significance for construction emissions. The San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District has set a 10-ton per project significance threshold for both oxides of nitrogen and reactive organic gasses. The Urban Emissions pollutant emissions modeling program is the model suggested for use by the air district. Using this model, the estimated emissions for the construction phase of the project would be 2.13 tons of oxides of nitrogen and 0.82 tons of reactive organic gases. The results indicate that this project would not cause a significant impact.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Caltrans Standard Specifications pertaining to dust control and dust palliative requirement is a required part of all construction contracts and should effectively reduce and control emission impacts during construction. The provisions of Caltrans Standard Specifications, Section 7-1.01F “Air Pollution Control” and Section 10 “Dust Control” requires the contractor to comply with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District’s rules, ordinances, and regulations. With respect to diesel emissions during construction, Caltrans will take all minimization measures that are listed in Caltrans Standard Specifications to reduce particulate emissions. A dust control plan is required for this project because it would disturb five or more acres of land. The plan would be submitted to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District before construction begins. Typical dust and emission control methods include watering the construction site, cleaning paved streets, providing runoff and erosion control, using traps on diesel exhaust systems, and using emission control retrofits on older, higher polluting vehicles.

An Air Impact Analysis for Indirect Source Review Rule 9510 must be submitted to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District for evaluation of potential construction emissions of PM₁₀ and oxides of nitrogen. The Air Impact Analysis would calculate emissions resulting only from the construction phase of the project. Mitigation is required in the form of payment for tons of pollutants emitted during the construction phase of the project or by other methods such as mandating a construction fleet that is “newer than the state average.”

2.2.5 Climate Change under the California Environmental Quality Act *Regulatory Setting*

While climate change has been a concern since at least 1988 as evidenced by the establishment of the United Nations and World Meteorological Organization’s

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the efforts devoted to greenhouse gas emissions reduction and climate change research and policy have increased dramatically in recent years. In 2002, with the passage of Assembly Bill 1493, California launched an innovative and proactive approach to dealing with greenhouse gas emissions and climate change at the state level. Assembly Bill 1493 requires the Air Resources Board to develop and implement regulations to reduce automobile and light truck greenhouse gas emissions; these regulations will apply to automobiles and light trucks beginning with the 2009-model year. Greenhouse gases related to human activity include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, tetrafluoromethane, hexafluoroethane, sulfur hexafluoride, HFC-23 (fluoroform), HFC-134a (1,1,1,2-tetrafluoroethane), and HFC-152a (difluoroethane).

On June 1, 2005, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed Executive Order S-3-05. The goal of this executive order is to reduce California's greenhouse gas emissions to: 1) 2000 levels by 2010, 2) 1990 levels by the 2020, and 3) 80 percent below the 1990 levels by the year 2050. In 2006, this goal was further reinforced with the passage of Assembly Bill 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006. Assembly Bill 32 sets the same overall greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals while further mandating that the Air Resources Board create a plan, which includes market mechanisms, and implement rules to achieve "real, quantifiable, cost-effective reductions of greenhouse gases." Executive Order S-20-06, signed on October 17, 2006, further directs state agencies to begin implementing Assembly Bill 32, including the recommendations made by the state's Climate Action Team.

Climate change and greenhouse gas reduction is also a concern at the federal level; however, at this time, no legislation or regulations have been enacted specifically addressing greenhouse gas emissions reductions and climate change.

Affected Environment

According to *Recommendations by the Association of Environmental Professionals on How to Analyze Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Global Climate Change in CEQA Documents* (March 5, 2007), an individual project does not generate enough greenhouse gas emissions to significantly influence global climate change. Global climate change is a cumulative impact; a project participates in this potential impact through its incremental contribution combined with the cumulative increase of all other sources of greenhouse gases.

Caltrans and its parent agency, the Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency, have taken an active role in addressing greenhouse gas emissions reduction and climate change. Recognizing that 98 percent of California's greenhouse gas emissions are from the burning of fossil fuels and 40 percent of all human-made greenhouse gas emissions are from transportation, Caltrans has created and is implementing the Climate Action Program at Caltrans (December 2006).

One of the main strategies in Caltrans' Climate Action Program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is to make California's transportation system more efficient. The highest levels of carbon dioxide from mobile sources, such as automobiles, occur at stop-and-go speeds (0 to 25 miles per hour) and speeds over 55 miles per hour. Relieving congestion by enhancing operations and improving travel times in high congestion travel corridors will lead to an overall reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Carbon dioxide is a common indicator of the various greenhouse gases. Carbon dioxide and most of the greenhouse gases are not currently listed in the Clean Air Act as Priority Pollutants. Therefore, there is no federal or state ambient air quality limit for these gases. To obtain a general idea of the comparison between the build/no-build alternatives, Caltrans has modeled the proposed project using CT-EMFAC (Emission Factor 2007). This data cannot be used as a health risk analysis. It is being provided to show a relative difference between the build and no-build alternative.

The assumptions used in the model assume a non-peak hour prevailing free-flow speed of 35-45 miles per hour for the No-Build Alternative and 45-55 miles per hour for the Build Alternative. Ten hours were assumed for peak traffic and 14 hours per day were presumed for non-peak traffic. The results show that, during the opening year, carbon dioxide levels would decrease 0.07 ton and by the end of the design period in 2031 carbon dioxide levels would decrease 0.71 ton. See Table 2.10.

Table 2.10 Tons per Year Carbon Dioxide Estimates

Year	No-Build Alternative	Build Alternative
	Tons per year	Tons per year
2005	6.01	N/A
2011	15.48	15.41
2031	42.82	42.11

Source: Caltrans District 6, Office of Traffic Engineering

Environmental Consequences

The purpose of the proposed project includes improving the operation and increasing the capacity of State Route 216 from Lovers Lane to McAuliff Road in the city of Visalia.

The City of Visalia expects substantial urban growth in the project area in the coming years. The anticipated growth in the community, as well as projected increased traffic volumes, is expected to affect the operation of State Route 216, causing the Level of Service of the existing highway to deteriorate.

No-Build Alternative

Traffic volumes in the project area would increase more than 250 percent between 2005 and 2011 and increase an additional 40 percent between 2011 and 2031 (Table 1.1), causing the Level of Service to deteriorate to a Level of Service “F” in 2031 (Table 1.2). The Level of Service at the intersections at Lovers Lane would drop to “F” (Table 1.2) and to “E” at the intersection at McAuliff Road during the 20-year planning horizon. This is below the minimum Level of Service “D” designated for this roadway by the City of Visalia’s Circulation Element, the Tulare County General Plan, and Caltrans’ Draft Transportation Concept Report.

Build Alternatives

With the proposed improvements in the project area, this portion of State Route 216 would improve to a Level of Service B on opening day (year 2011) and would remain at a Level of Service C through the end of the 20-year planning horizon. This is also true for the intersections of State Route 216 with Lovers Lane and with McAuliff Road.

Because the proposed project would reduce vehicle hours traveled and improve traffic flow, carbon dioxide emissions should be reduced despite an increase in vehicle miles traveled.

Caltrans recognizes the concern that carbon dioxide emissions raise for climate change. However, modeling and gauging the impacts associated with an increase in greenhouse gas emission levels, including carbon dioxide, at the project level is not currently possible. No federal, state, or regional regulatory agency has provided methodology or criteria for greenhouse gas emissions and climate change impact analysis. Therefore, Caltrans is unable to provide a scientific- or regulatory-based conclusion regarding whether the project's contribution to climate change is cumulatively considerable.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Caltrans continues to be actively involved on the Governor's Climate Action Team as the Air Resources Board works to implement Assembly Bills 1493 and 32. As part of the Climate Action Program at Caltrans (December 2006), Caltrans is supporting efforts to reduce vehicle miles traveled by planning and implementing smart land use strategies: job/housing proximity, transit-oriented communities, and high-density housing along transit corridors. Caltrans is working closely with local jurisdictions on planning activities; however, Caltrans does not have local land use planning authority. Caltrans is also supporting efforts to improve the energy efficiency of the transportation sector by increasing vehicle fuel economy in new cars and light and heavy-duty trucks. However, it is important to note that control of fuel economy standards is held by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Air Resources Board. Lastly, the use of alternative fuels is also being considered; Caltrans is participating in funding for alternative fuel research at the University of California, Davis.

2.2.6 Noise and Vibration

Regulatory Setting

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and the California Environmental Quality Act provide the broad basis for analyzing and abating the effects of highway traffic noise. The intent of these laws is to promote the general welfare and to foster a healthy environment. The requirements for noise analysis and consideration of noise abatement and/or mitigation, however, differ between the National Environmental Policy Act and the California Environmental Quality Act.

California Environmental Quality Act

The California Environmental Quality Act requires a strictly baseline versus build analysis to assess whether a proposed project will have a noise impact. If a proposed project is determined to have a significant noise impact under the California Environmental Quality Act, then the act dictates that mitigation measures must be incorporated into the project unless such measures are not feasible.

National Environmental Policy Act and 23 Code of Federal Regulations 772

For highway transportation projects with Federal Highway Administration (and Caltrans as assigned), involvement, the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1970 and the associated implementing regulations (23 Code of Federal Regulations 772) govern the analysis and abatement of traffic noise impacts. The regulations require that potential noise impacts in areas of frequent human use be identified during the planning and design of a highway project. The regulations contain noise abatement criteria that are used to determine when a noise impact would occur. The noise abatement criteria differ depending on the type of land use under analysis. For example, the criterion for residences (67 decibels) is lower than the criterion for commercial areas (72 decibels).

Table 2.11 lists the noise abatement criteria for use in the National Environmental Policy Act and 23 Code of Federal Regulations 772 analysis, and Table 2.12 shows the noise levels of typical activities.

Table 2.11 Activity Categories and Noise Abatement Criteria

Activity Category	Noise Abatement Criteria, A-weighted Noise Level, Leq(h)	Description of Activities
A	57 Exterior	Lands on which serenity and quiet are of extraordinary significance and serve an important public need and where the preservation of those qualities is essential if the area is to continue to serve its intended purpose
B	67 Exterior	Picnic areas, recreation areas, playgrounds, active sport areas, parks, residences, motels, hotels, schools, churches, libraries, and hospitals
C	72 Exterior	Developed lands, properties, or activities not included in Categories A or B above
D	--	Undeveloped lands
E	52 Interior	Residences, motels, hotels, public meeting rooms, schools, churches, libraries, hospitals, and auditoriums

Source: Caltrans Traffic Noise Analysis Manual, 1998

A-weighted decibels are adjusted to approximate the way humans perceive sound. Leq(h) is the steady A-weighted level that is equivalent to the same amount of energy as that contained in the actual time-varying levels over 1 hour.

In accordance with Caltrans' *Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol for New Highway Construction and Reconstruction Projects, October 2006*, a noise impact occurs when the future noise level with the project results in a substantial increase in noise level (defined as a 12-decibel or more increase) or when the future noise level with the project approaches or exceeds the noise abatement criteria. Approaching the noise abatement criteria is defined as coming within 1 decibel of the criteria.

If it is determined that the project would have noise impacts, then potential abatement measures must be considered. Noise abatement measures that are determined to be reasonable and feasible at the time of final design are incorporated into the project plans and specifications. This document discusses noise abatement measures that would likely be incorporated in the project.

Table 2.12 Typical Noise Levels

Common Outdoor Activities	Noise Level (dBA)	Common Indoor Activities
Jet Fly-over at 300m (1000 ft)	110	Rock Band
Gas Lawn Mower at 1 m (3 ft)	100	
Diesel Truck at 15 m (50 ft), at 80 km (50 mph)	90	Food Blender at 1 m (3 ft)
Noisy Urban Area, Daytime	80	Garbage Disposal at 1 m (3 ft)
Gas Lawn Mower, 30 m (100 ft)	70	Vacuum Cleaner at 3 m (10 ft)
Commercial Area		Normal Speech at 1 m (3 ft)
Heavy Traffic at 90 m (300 ft)	60	Large Business Office
Quiet Urban Daytime	50	Dishwasher Next Room
Quiet Urban Nighttime	40	Theater, Large Conference Room (Background)
Quiet Suburban Nighttime	30	Library
Quiet Rural Nighttime	20	Bedroom at Night, Concert Hall (Background)
	10	Broadcast/Recording Studio
Lowest Threshold of Human Hearing	0	Lowest Threshold of Human Hearing

Caltrans' *Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol* sets forth the criteria for determining when an abatement measure is reasonable and feasible. Feasibility of noise abatement is basically an engineering concern. A minimum 5-decibel reduction in the future noise level must be achieved for an abatement measure to be considered feasible. Other considerations include topography, access requirements, other noise sources, and safety considerations. The reasonableness determination is basically a cost-benefit analysis. Factors used in determining whether a proposed noise abatement measure is reasonable include residents' acceptance, the absolute noise level, build versus existing noise, environmental impacts of abatement, public and local agencies input, newly constructed development versus development pre-dating 1978, and the cost per benefited residence.

Affected Environment

Caltrans prepared a Noise Study Report for this project dated August 9, 2006.

The traffic noise analysis for the proposed project was prepared according to the Caltrans Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol. Caltrans identified nine sensitive noise receptors within the project limits.

The Golden Oak Elementary School, Visalia Adult School, Burgundy House Apartments (representing six multiple-family units), Village Preschool, and three single-family residences (representing multiple single-family homes) were identified as sensitive receptors. See Figure 2-6.

Table 2.13 gives the existing noise level for each receptor as well as the predicted noise levels for the year 2031 with the project. For the purpose of the noise analysis, it was assumed that all build alternatives would have the same impacts due to the minimal difference in distance from the highway.

Table 2.13 Existing and Predicted Noise Levels

Receptor Number	Type of Development	Existing Noise Level Leq (decibels)	Predicted Noise Levels (2031) without Project Leq (decibels)	Predicted Noise Levels (2031) with Project Leq (decibels)*	Noise Increase (decibels)
1	Golden Oak Elementary School	57.5 (Exterior)	60.9 (Exterior) 40.9 (Interior)	60.9 (Exterior) 40.9 (Interior)	+3.4
2	Visalia Adult School	55.3 (Exterior)	62.2 (Exterior) 42.2 (Interior)	62.2 (Exterior) 42.2 (Interior)	+6.9
3	Burgundy House Apartments	58.2	63.6 (Exterior)	63.6	+5.4
4	3143 E. Houston Avenue	62.7	71.9	71.9	+9.2
5	1341 Simon Court	59.9	64.1	64.1	+4.2
6	Village Preschool 1414 N. McAuliff Road	35.4 (Interior)	43.0 (Interior)*	43.0 (Interior)	+7.6
7	1416 N. Sumter Court	55.1	63.0	63.0	+7.9

*Since there would be no significant difference in traffic volumes for build or no-build options, the predicted noise levels for the build and no-build scenario are assumed to be the same.

**The Noise Level with Abatement is based on using a six-foot soundwall.

***No soundwall is recommended as it restricts access to residences.

Leq = A measure of the average noise level during a specified period of time.

Source: Caltrans' Noise Analysis Study, dated February 15, 2007

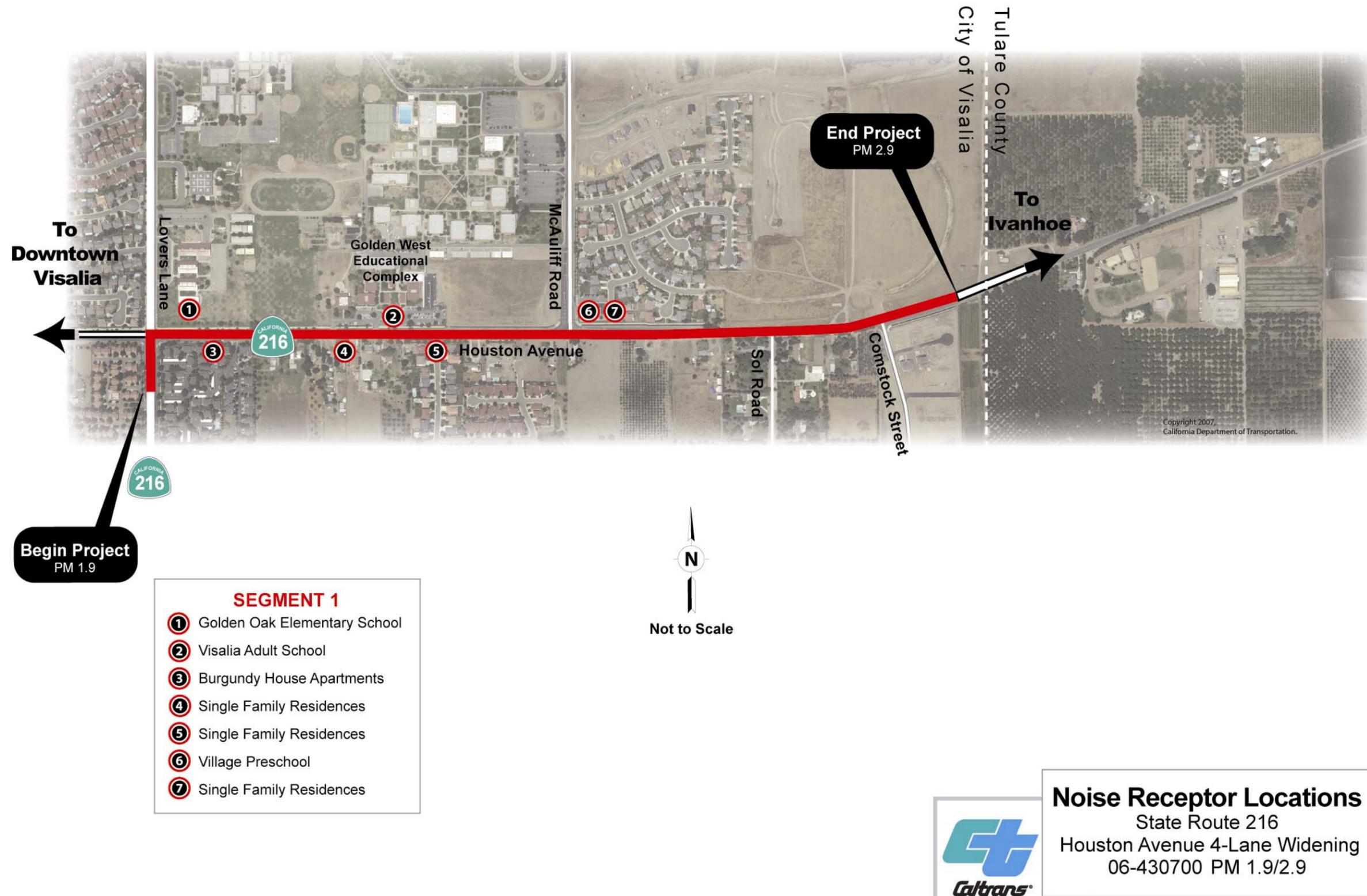


Figure 2-6 Noise Receptor Location Map



Environmental Consequences

In accordance with Caltrans' *Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol for New Highway Construction and Reconstruction Projects, October 1998*, a noise impact occurs when the future noise level with the project results in a substantial increase in noise level (defined as a 12-decibel or more increase).

The traffic noise analysis for the proposed project was prepared according to the Caltrans Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol. Caltrans identified seven sensitive noise receptors (two schools, an apartment complex, a pre-school, and three single-family residences) within the project limits.

Existing and predicted noise levels at all seven sensitive receptors shown in Figure 2-6 are described below.

Receptor 1 – Golden Oak Elementary School

Golden Oak Elementary School sits about 186 feet north of the existing edge of the roadway. The current exterior noise level there is 57.5 decibels. Future exterior noise levels for design year 2031 are predicted to be 60.9 decibels. Noise attenuation provided by the existing structure and windows is typically 20 decibels, so the predicted future interior noise level within a classroom would be 40.9 decibels. See Table 2.13.

Receptor 2 – Visalia Adult School

The Visalia Adult School is about 134 feet north of the existing edge of the roadway for State Route 216. The current exterior noise level is 55.3 decibels. Future exterior noise levels for design year 2031 are predicted to be 62.2 decibels. Noise attenuation provided by the existing structure and windows is typically 20 decibels, so the predicted future interior noise level within the classroom would be 42.2 decibels. See Table 2.13.

Receptor 3 – Burgundy House Apartments

The Burgundy House Apartments sit on the south side of State Route 216. A 6-foot masonry wall surrounds the apartment complex. The receptor, located about 51 feet from the existing edge of the roadway, represents six multiple-family residential units closest to the project area. This receptor also represents three similarly situated single-family residences under construction in the Madison Heights subdivision immediately to the east of the Burgundy House Apartments. The existing noise level

is 58.2 decibels. The exterior noise level for 2031 with the 6-foot masonry wall in place is predicted to be 63.6 decibels. See Table 2.13.

Receptor 4 – Single-Family Residence

Receptor 4 is a single-family residence on the south side of State Route 216. This receptor represents nine residences in the project area and is about 35 feet from the existing edge of the roadway. The current noise level of 62.7 decibels is expected to increase to 71.9 decibels by design year 2031 an increase of 9.2 decibels. See Table 2.13.

Receptor 5 – Single-Family Residence

Receptor 5 is a single-family residence on the south side of State Route 216. This receptor represents two residences in the project area and is about 52 feet from the existing edge of the roadway. The existing noise level is 59.9 decibels. The predicted future noise level for this receptor by design year 2031 is predicted to be 64.1 decibels. See Table 2.13.

Receptor 6 – Village Preschool

The Village Preschool sits at the northeast corner of State Route 216 and McAuliff Road. A 6-foot masonry wall surrounds the preschool. The preschool is about 65 feet from the existing edge of the roadway. The existing interior noise level was measured at 35.4 decibels. Future noise levels for design year 2031 were predicted to be 43.0 decibels. See Table 2.13.

Receptor 7 – Single-Family Residence

Receptor 7 represents three single-family residences on the north side of State Route 216. A 6-foot masonry wall surrounds the subdivision. This receptor is about 30 feet from the existing edge of the roadway. The existing noise level is 55.1 decibels. Future noise levels for design year 2031 were predicted to be 63.0 decibels. See Table 2.13.

None of the sensitive noise receptors identified for the project were predicted to have a noise increase of 12 decibels or more; therefore, construction of the proposed project would not result in a significant noise impact under the California Environmental Quality Act.

Construction Noise

Construction noise includes temporary noise from equipment and machinery during each phase of construction. The project would remove the existing street/sidewalk and relocate utilities. Grubbing and earthwork are necessary for constructing the new lanes/shoulders, relocating utilities, and constructing new sidewalks. The project would involve intermittent construction activities, so no single location would experience an extended period of construction-related noise. Construction would last for about six months.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Noise Abatement

No impacts are expected under the California Environmental Quality Act; therefore, no abatement is required.

2.3 Biological Environment

2.3.1 Natural Communities

Regulatory Setting

This section of the document discusses natural communities of concern. The focus of this section is on biological communities, not individual plant or animal species. This section also includes information on wildlife corridors and habitat fragmentation. Wildlife corridors are areas of habitat used by wildlife for seasonal or daily migration. Habitat fragmentation involves the potential for dividing sensitive habitat and thereby lessening its biological value.

Affected Environment

A Natural Environment Study covering natural communities, animals, plants, invasive, and threatened and endangered species was completed for the project in November 2006.

The project lies in the northeast portion of the City of Visalia in west-central Tulare County. The City of Visalia sits at an elevation of about 330 feet.

The climate of the Visalia area is semiarid and is characterized as Mediterranean with long, hot, dry summers. Winters are cool and have varying periods of rain, fog, and clear frosty weather. The average maximum temperature ranges from 55 degrees Fahrenheit to 97 degrees Fahrenheit. The average low temperature ranges from 37

degrees Fahrenheit to 64.5 degrees Fahrenheit. Average rainfall in the area is just over 10 inches per year.

Three vegetation types and associated wildlife habitats occur within the biological study area:

- Non-native grasslands/fallow agricultural lands
- Orchards
- Irrigated row crops

The remaining land is classified as “urban/developed land” and is not considered a vegetation type, but does provide limited wildlife habitat for common species. All habitats within the biological study area have been substantially altered by human activity and generally support non-native plant species with a low diversity of native wildlife.

Non-native Grasslands/Fallow Agricultural Lands

Non-native grasslands within the biological study area are composed primarily of annual grasses and forbs. Common plant species include wild oats (*Avena fatua*), ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*), common groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*), yellow star-thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), bermudagrass (*Cynodon dactylon*), and common Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*).

Fallow agricultural fields provide habitat for the mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), western scrub jay (*Aphelocoma californica*), northern mocking bird (*Mimus polyglottos*), and the house finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*). This habitat also supports small mammals such as the California ground squirrel (*Spermophilus beecheyi*), deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*), house mouse (*Mus musculus*), Botta pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*), and other burrowing mammals. Non-native roof rats (*Rattus rattus*) and feral cats (*Felis catus*) may also use this habitat for foraging and refuge.

Orchards

Walnut, plum, and citrus orchards are present within the biological study area. Wildlife habitat provided by this type of habitat varies greatly with the management practices used. The orchards in the biological study area appear to be heavily managed. Lack of cover makes the orchards less suitable for small mammals occurring in the disturbed areas. Intensive management practices also make the orchards unsuitable for most bird species common to the area.

Irrigated Row Crops

Irrigated row crops such as cotton, corn, and alfalfa exist within the biological study area. Non-native grasses and forbs are confined to narrow strips near the edge of the fields. Wildlife species are not likely to use these areas except for occasional foraging and movement.

Urban and Residential Development

The remaining portion of the biological study area is dominated by urban and residential development. Buildings, parking lots, and roads that support very little natural vegetation occupy these areas. These areas are not suitable for most wildlife species due to frequent disturbance, the presence of cats and dogs (*Canis familiaris*), and the lack of foraging, nesting, and breeding habitats. Wildlife species that use this habitat type include the opossum (*Didelphis marsupialis*), common crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), European starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), and various sparrow species.

Migration Corridors

A literature search and a field survey were conducted for the project, and it was determined that the biological study area is not within any migration corridors. A search of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service list and California Department of Fish and Game Natural Diversity Database concluded that no special-status natural communities were within the biological study area or adjacent lands. A field survey of the biological study area was conducted, and no natural habitat was observed.

Waterways

No aquatic resources, including wetlands or other waters of the United States, exist within the project area.

Environmental Consequences

No natural communities of special concern or critical habitat would be affected by the proposed project.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No natural communities of special concern or critical habitat exist within the project area. Therefore, no mitigation is anticipated.

2.3.2 Animal Species

Regulatory Setting

Many state and federal laws regulate impacts to wildlife. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Fisheries Service, and the California Department of Fish and Game are responsible for implementing these laws. This section discusses potential impacts and permit requirements associated with wildlife not listed or proposed for listing under the state or federal Endangered Species Act. Species listed or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered are discussed in Section 2.3.3. All other special-status animal species are discussed here, including California Department of Fish and Game fully protected species and species of special concern, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Fisheries Service candidate species.

Federal laws and regulations pertaining to wildlife include the following:

- National Environmental Policy Act
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act
- Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act
- Marine Mammal Protection Act

State laws and regulations pertaining to wildlife include the following:

- California Environmental Quality Act
- Sections 1601–1603 of the Fish and Game Code
- Sections 4150 and 4152 of the Fish and Game Code

In addition to state and federal laws regulating impacts to wildlife, there are often local regulations (example: county or city) that need to be considered when developing projects. If work is being done on federal land (Bureau of Land Management or Forest Service, for example), then those agencies' regulations, policies, and Habitat Conservation Plans are followed.

Affected Environment

According to the sensitive-species lists obtained from the Sacramento Field Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game Natural Diversity Database list, a total of 65 special-status animal species have the potential to occur within the Exeter and Visalia 1:24,000 U.S. Geological Survey topographical quadrangles.

Two special-status animal species have the potential to occur within the biological study area: the San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*) and the valley elderberry longhorn beetle (*Desmocerus californicus dimorphus*). The San Joaquin kit fox and the valley elderberry longhorn beetle are discussed in Section 2.3.3 Threatened and Endangered Species.

In addition to these two special-status species, the listings obtained from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game contain 23 bird species subject to protection under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (15 U.S. Code 703 - 711).

Environmental Consequences

No direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to animal species are anticipated due to the following:

- Current records of listed species do not exist within the biological study area or adjacent lands.
- No observations of special-status species were made during field surveys and visits.
- Pre-construction surveys would be performed to confirm the findings of the Natural Environment Study.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Protection measures for migratory birds would be included in the construction contract special provisions. Pre-construction surveys would be performed to confirm the findings of the Natural Environment Study.

2.3.3 Threatened and Endangered Species

Regulatory Setting

The primary federal law protecting threatened and endangered species is the Federal Endangered Species Act: 16 United States Code, Section 1531, et seq. See also 50 Code of Federal Regulations Part 402. This act and subsequent amendments provide for the conservation of endangered and threatened species and the ecosystems on which they depend. Under Section 7 of this act, federal agencies, such as the Federal Highway Administration, are required to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Fisheries Service to ensure that they are not undertaking, funding, permitting, or authorizing actions likely to

jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat. Critical habitat is defined as geographic locations critical to the existence of a threatened or endangered species. The outcome of consultation under Section 7 is a Biological Opinion or an incidental take statement. Section 3 of the Federal Endangered Species Act defines take as “harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect or any attempt at such conduct.”

California has enacted a similar law at the state level, the California Endangered Species Act, California Fish and Game Code, Section 2050, et seq. The California Endangered Species Act emphasizes early consultation to avoid potential impacts to rare, endangered, and threatened species and to develop appropriate planning to offset project-caused losses of listed species populations and their essential habitats. The California Department of Fish and Game is the agency responsible for implementing the California Endangered Species Act. Section 2081 of the Fish and Game Code prohibits “take” of any species determined to be an endangered species or a threatened species. Take is defined in Section 86 of the Fish and Game Code as “hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill.” The California Endangered Species Act allows for take incidental to otherwise lawful development projects; for these actions, an incidental take permit is issued by the California Department of Fish and Game.

For projects requiring a Biological Opinion under Section 7 of the Federal Endangered Species Act, the California Department of Fish and Game may also authorize impacts to the California Endangered Species Act species by issuing a Consistency Determination under Section 2080.1 of the Fish and Game Code.

Affected Environment

A Natural Environment Study was completed for the proposed project in November 2006. There are two special-status species that were studied within the biological study area: San Joaquin kit fox and valley elderberry longhorn beetle.

San Joaquin Kit Fox

The San Joaquin kit fox is a small, nocturnal fox resembling a small lanky dog with disproportionately large ears. It is a federally endangered and state threatened animal. For cover and denning, the San Joaquin kit fox may dig its own den in loose soil, use existing dens, or use human-made structures such as culverts and pipes.

This species' current range consists of suitable habitat on the San Joaquin Valley floor and in the surrounding foothills of the Coast Range and the Sierra Nevada and Tehachapi mountains. The San Joaquin kit fox lives in the following plant communities: valley sink scrub, interior Coast Range saltbush scrub, upper Sonoran subshrub scrub, annual grasslands, and the remaining native grasslands.

The proposed project lies in the central portion of the San Joaquin kit fox range. Large portions of this area have been converted into agricultural lands. In these areas, the San Joaquin kit fox is known to inhabit grazed, non-irrigated grasslands. The San Joaquin kit fox may also live next to and forage in tilled or fallow fields, irrigated row crops, orchards, and vineyards.

Surveys for San Joaquin kit fox occurred in September 2002. The surveys were conducted in accordance with the *California Department of Fish and Game, Region 4 Approved Survey Methodologies for Sensitive Species, San Joaquin kit fox (1990)*. A California Department of Fish and Game Natural Diversity Database search of the Exeter and Visalia U.S. Geological Surveys quadrangles was done before the San Joaquin kit fox surveys that indicated no recorded occurrences of San Joaquin kit fox near the project area. No sign of San Joaquin kit fox was recorded during the daytime transect surveys or nighttime spotlight surveys.

Transect surveys were conducted in two portions of the project area. Both areas were isolated and small in size and consisted of disturbed non-native vegetation that was mowed and disked.

The first area surveyed had been mowed to ground level. No burrows large enough to support San Joaquin kit fox and no San Joaquin kit fox sign were found during the transect survey. The area is surrounded by urban development, including private residences and two schools.

The second survey site, east of the first, contained disturbed non-native vegetation during the survey, but the site has since been disked. The city limit bisects this site. Private residences lie to the west, and walnut orchards to the south and east. High voltage transmission lines cross the site near the eastern boundary, and a large portion of the site to the north is currently being developed for a private housing tract. Several California ground squirrel burrows were found during transect surveys; there was no sign of San Joaquin kit fox.

Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle

The valley elderberry longhorn beetle lives and depends on its host plant, blue elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*). Although primarily associated with riparian habitats, elderberries grow in a variety of upland sites. Valley elderberry longhorn beetles depend on elderberry shrubs for all of their life stages: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. Females lay their eggs on the bark and, after hatching, the larvae burrow into the stems where they live and feed for up to two years, before entering the pupal stage and transforming into adults. Adult beetles are active from March to June, feeding and mating. Frequently, the only exterior evidence of this species is the presence of exit holes created by the larvae just before the start of the pupal stage.

No elderberry shrubs were identified within or adjacent to the proposed project impact area.

Environmental Consequences

San Joaquin Kit Fox

None of the alternatives proposed for the project, including the No-Build Alternative, would affect potential San Joaquin kit fox habitat. Most of the proposed project area has been developed for housing or for agricultural use. The one parcel of undeveloped land left in the project area contains disturbed, non-native vegetation that has subsequently been disked. Although California ground squirrels are present, none of the burrows are of sufficient size to provide refuge for the San Joaquin kit fox. There is no recent documentation of San Joaquin kit fox in the project vicinity (California Department of Fish and Game Natural Diversity Database 2006). The proposed project would have no effect on the San Joaquin kit fox.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

San Joaquin Kit Fox

All of the build alternatives proposed for the project would avoid potential San Joaquin kit fox habitat found within the project area. No additional avoidance or minimization efforts would be required for this project.

A qualified biologist would perform pre-construction surveys to confirm the findings of the Natural Environment Study.

2.3.4 Invasive Species

Affected Environment

The following invasive plant species were found within the biological study area: yellow-star thistle, common Russian thistle, bermudagrass, Johnsongrass (*Sorghum halepense*), and puncturevine (*Tribulus terrestris*). These species were identified on the State of California Department of Food and Agriculture Noxious Weed List. Common Russian thistle, bermudagrass, Johnsongrass, and puncturevine are classified as category “C” species, which means that they are not subject to state enforcement except to provide cleanliness in nurseries.

No invasive species from the federal weed list were identified.

Environmental Consequences

Five invasive plant species were identified in the project area during the biological studies. Some of these invasive plant species may be removed due to construction of the project.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The landscaping and erosion control included in the project would not use species listed as noxious weeds. In areas of particular sensitivity, extra precautions would be taken if invasive species were found in or adjacent to the construction areas. These include the inspections and cleaning of construction equipment and eradication strategies to be implemented should an invasion occur.



Chapter 3 Comments and Coordination

Early and continuing coordination with the general public and appropriate public agencies is an essential part of the environmental process to determine the scope of environmental documentation, the level of analysis, potential impacts and mitigation measures, and related environmental requirements. Agency consultation and public participation for this project have been accomplished through a variety of formal and informal methods, including project development team meetings, and interagency coordination meetings. This chapter summarizes the results of Caltrans efforts to identify, address, and resolve project-related issues through early and continuing coordination.

Early Coordination

Since early 2000, Caltrans project managers and various members of the project development team have met with the City of Visalia, County of Tulare, and the Visalia Unified School District. All agencies are interested in this project and support its construction.

California Department of Fish and Game

On June 10, 2003, Caltrans staff discussed the project with the California Department of Fish and Game Associate Wildlife Biologist for the Visalia District. Caltrans staff and California Department of Fish and Game staff discussed occurrences of the San Joaquin kit fox in the Visalia area.

California State Historic Preservation Officer

The California State Historic Preservation Officer concurred on April 27, 2006, that 17 properties within the proposed State Route 216 (Houston Avenue 4-Lane Widening) project were not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. See the letter in Appendix G.

City of Visalia

City of Visalia staff provided information on land use, zoning, circulation, proposed development, public works projects, transit service, emergency services, Williamson Act parcels in the project area, and the City's Oak Tree Preservation Ordinance and permit process.

Native American Groups

A Caltrans archaeologist sent a letter about the project to the Native American Heritage Commission. The response from the Native American Heritage Commission stated that no Native American cultural resources were known within the project vicinity.

San Joaquin Valley Modeling Coordinating Committee

Under the new transportation conformity rule criterion (Code of Federal Regulations 93.123(b)(1)), the Houston Avenue 4-Lane Widening project is not considered a Project of Air Quality Concern. Caltrans prepared a PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} Hot Spot Conformity Assessment for the Tulare 216/Houston Avenue 4-Lane Widening project for consultation with the San Joaquin Valley Modeling Coordinating Committee. On January 26, 2007, the committee concurred with Caltrans' finding that future new or worsened PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ violations of any standards are not anticipated in the project area.

Tulare County Planning Department

Tulare County staff provided information on land use and zoning on unincorporated parcels in the project area, circulation, proposed development, and parcels under Williamson Act contract in the project area.

Visalia Unified School District

Visalia Unified School District staff provided information on the Golden West Educational Complex, including the number of existing parking spaces, ownership of the sidewalk, and uses of the play fields and the grass area on the south side of the complex.

The Visalia Unified School District sent a letter, dated November 28, 2006, to Caltrans supporting Alternative 1 as the preferred alternative for the project. Alternative 1 would construct project improvements to the north of the existing highway, requiring the use of about a 1.02-acre strip of land from the 154-acre Golden West Educational Complex.

Public Information Meeting

Caltrans held a Public Information Meeting/Open House on February 23, 2006. Invitations were sent to federal, state, and local officials as well as property owners and businesses located within the project area. The announcement for the public information meeting was advertised in both English and Spanish in the *Visalia Times-*

Delta on February 9, 2006. Thirty people attended the public information meeting/open house.

The comments covered a number of subjects. Many of the comments expressed concerns about the potential impacts to existing rural housing east of the Visalia city limit. The original project was divided into two segments. Segment 1 was located west of the Visalia city limit, and Segment 2 was located to the east of it.

Members of the public asked Caltrans if it would be possible to construct an eight-foot shoulder in Segment 2 without acquiring additional right-of-way for construction of a four-lane conventional highway in this portion of the project. Caltrans agreed with the request because construction of four lanes in Segment 2 would not occur for about 20 years.

Additional concerns expressed included:

- Displacement of one home-based business
- Displacement of single- and multi-family housing (i.e., Burgundy House Apartments)
- Impacts to parking at the Visalia Adult School
- Removal of trees along Segment 2
- Removal of producing trees from an orchard, and replacing an agricultural well

There appears to be no open opposition to the construction of the proposed project at this time.

Public Hearing

Caltrans held a public hearing on September 19, 2007 at the Golden Oak Elementary School at 1700 Lovers Lane in Visalia. The meeting, held from 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., was conducted in an open house format to receive as much input from the public as possible.

Invitations were sent to federal, state, and local officials as well as property owners in the project area. The announcement for the meeting was published in English in the *Visalia Times-Delta* newspaper on September 4 and September 12, 2007 and in Spanish in *El Sol* newspaper on September 7 and 14, 2007.

The public hearing took place in the cafeteria on the ground level for easy access. Signs were placed outside, directing visitors to the meeting. Caltrans personnel were seated inside the entrance of the cafeteria to greet members of the public and

encourage them to take handouts. Handouts included a project information sheet, comment cards for submission at the public hearing or by return mail, and various right-of-way materials. The public was directed to view displays and encouraged to ask questions and provide testimony on the project either in writing or to the court reporter that was present at the hearing.

Approximately 28 local residents, property owners and local government representatives attended the public hearing. Caltrans Design, Environmental Planning and Right-of-Way staff addressed the questions and concerns raised.

Various displays around the room explained the proposed project, the environmental process and the potential impacts of each alternative/alignment. Thirty-foot-long aerial photographs in the center of the room showed the design of each of the project alternatives. Cross-sections of the build alternatives as well as layouts of major intersections were also displayed.

Public input was encouraged. Comment cards were provided so attendees could provide their written comments that evening or submit them by mail (or email) no later than October 4, 2007. Three written comments were received at the hearing. The court reporter recorded oral comments from two individuals during the hearing. One comment was mailed to Caltrans after the hearing.

In addition, letters were received from three public agencies. One letter was received before the hearing, and two comments were received after the hearing.

The comments covered a number of subjects. Two property owners were concerned about building fences on their property without knowing which alternative was going to be chosen in Segment 1. The principal of the Visalia Adult School was concerned about the possible loss of onsite parking. One individual wanted to know why the project included realigning the State Route 216/Road 152 intersection.

Many of the people who attended the public hearing and expressed an opinion about the project favored Alternative 1. One couple that lives in Segment 2 stated that they were glad that Caltrans had changed the project so that the acquisition of additional right-of-way for a four-lane conventional highway was not needed.

A representative of the Burgundy House Apartments urged Caltrans to choose Alternative 1 because the other alternatives would remove a large percentage of the rental units at the Burgundy House Apartments, the cost of repairing residual units

would be prohibitive, and the other alternatives would be disruptive to the residents of the apartment complex. Also, the apartment representative pointed out that taking apartment units would have an adverse impact on the entire community because of the loss of affordable housing.



Chapter 4 List of Preparers

The following Caltrans Central Region staff prepared this document:

Allam Alhabaly, Transportation Engineer. B.S., Industrial Engineering, California State University, Fresno; 3 years environmental technical studies experience. Contribution: Air, Noise, and Water Quality Assessment.

Abdul Baker, Senior Transportation Engineer. B.S., Civil Engineering, University of Nebraska, Omaha; 20 years engineering design experience and 6 years of engineering management experience. Contribution: Design team supervisor.

Louis L. Birdwell, Associate Right-of-Way Agent. B.A., Banking and Finance, Texas Technology University; 18 years with Caltrans Right-of-Way. Contribution: Draft Relocation Impact Report and the Project Right-of-Way Cost Estimate.

Christopher Brewer, Associate Environmental Planner (Architectural Historian). M.A., Public Administration, California State University, Bakersfield; 25 years experience in architectural history. Contribution: Historic Architectural Survey Report/Historical Resource Compliance Report.

Abdul Rahim Chafi, Transportation Engineer. Ph.D., Engineering Management, California Coast University, Santa Ana; 10 years environmental technical studies experience. Contribution: Wrote the Air Quality technical report.

Floyd E. Davis, Jr, Project Engineer. B.A., Mathematics and Natural Science, Thomas Edison State College, Trenton, NJ; B.S., Mathematics/B.S., Civil Engineering, Columbia Pacific University, San Rafael, CA.; M.S., Mathematics/M.S., Civil Engineering, Columbia Pacific University, San Rafael, CA; M.B.A., California State University, Fresno, California; Registered Civil Engineer; American Institute of Certified Planner; 26 years experience as a Registered Civil Engineer; 39 years in Civil Engineering field; 7 years experience as a Certified Land Use Planner. Contribution: Design Engineer.

Michael W. Dennison, Project Engineer. B.S., Civil Engineering, California State University, Fresno, California; 3 years experience as a Registered Civil Engineer, 7 years in Civil Engineering field. Contribution: Design Engineer.

Ken Doran, Engineering Geologist. M.S., Geology, California State University, Fresno; 5 years paleontology/geology experience; 8 years hazardous waste experience. Contribution: Wrote the Initial Paleontology Study.

Rajveev Dwivedi, Associate Engineering Geologist. Ph.D., Environmental Engineering, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater; 15 years environmental technical studies experience. Contribution: Noise Study and Water Quality Report.

Sarah Gassner, Acting Chief, Southern Sierra Environmental Analysis Branch. B.A., Anthropology, California State University, Fresno; M.A., Cultural Resources Management, Sonoma State University; 12 years archaeological experience; 7 years cultural resource management and environmental planning experience with Caltrans. Contribution: Environmental Unit Supervisor.

Theresa Goewert, Air Quality Specialist. B.S., Food Science, Colorado State University; 3 years environmental planning experience; 8 years air quality experience. Contribution: Wrote the PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ Hot Spot Conformity Assessment.

Rachel Kleinfelter, Associate Environmental Planner (Natural Sciences). B.A., Environmental Studies, Mills College; 11 years biology experience. Contribution: Conducted biological studies and wrote the Natural Environment Study.

Joseph Llanos, Graphic Designer I. B.A., Graphic Design, California State University, Fresno; 10 years visual design and public participation experience. Contribution: Prepared graphics.

Bao Luong, P.E., Transportation Engineer. M.S., Civil Engineering, Portland State University; 7 years traffic engineering experience. Contribution: Wrote the Operational Analysis and the Safety Analysis.

Duc Ken Ly, P.E., Transportation Engineer. M.S., Civil Engineering, California State University, Fresno; 9 years transportation engineering experience. Contribution: Wrote the Transportation Management Plan.

Darshan Mann, Transportation Engineering Technician. B.S., Punjab University; 6 years experience in civil engineering. Contribution: Drafted plans, calculated and measured right-of-way.

Annie McCuen, Graphic Designer III. Fine Arts, Graphic Design, Fresno City College, California State University, Fresno; 23 years visual design and public participation experience. Contribution: Prepared graphics.

Karen Nissen, Associate Environmental Planner (Archaeology). Ph.D., Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley; 34 years professional experience in anthropology/archaeology. Contribution: Native American Coordination.

Alfredo V. Osuna, Transportation Engineering Technician. B.S., Mechanical Engineering, FEATI University, Manila, Philippines; 3 years Traffic Engineering experience. Contribution: Safety Analysis.

Steven Ptomey, Associate Environmental Planner. B.A., Anthropology, California State University, Bakersfield; 13 years California and Great Basin archaeology. Contribution: Cultural Resources Evaluation (Negative Archaeological Survey Report and the Negative Historic Property Survey Report).

Richard Putler, Associate Environmental Planner. M.A., City and Regional Planning, California State University, Fresno; 8 years environmental planning experience. Contribution: Wrote the Initial Study/Environmental Assessment.

Gloria Ramirez, Landscape Associate. M.A., Landscape Architecture, University of California, Berkeley; B.A., Landscape Architecture, University of California, Berkeley; 5 years landscape associate experience. Contribution: Scenic Resource Evaluation.

Michael C. Robbins, Transportation Engineer. B.S.C.E., Oregon State University, 1982; 20 years project design experience. Contribution: Design Engineer.

Minerva Rodriguez, Transportation Engineer, P.E. B.S., Civil Engineering, California Polytechnic University, Pomona; 14 years transportation engineering experience. Contribution: Assistant Project Manager.

Victor Shaw, Project Manager. PE, PMP. B.S., Civil Engineering, California State University, Sacramento; 17 years engineering experience. Contribution: Technical Oversight.

Lea Spann, Associate Environmental Planner. B.A., Environmental Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara; 9 years hazardous waste/materials experience. Contribution: Initial Site Assessment.

Roger Valverde, Graphic Designer II. Certificate of Multimedia, Mount San Jacinto and California State University, Fresno; 23 years visual design and public participation experience. Contribution: Prepared graphics.

Fong Vue, Transportation Engineer. B.S., Civil Engineering, California State University, Fresno; 18 years experience in civil engineering and hydraulics. Contribution: Location Hydraulics Study.

Gordon Watkins, Associate Right-of-Way Agent. B.S., Real Estate and Urban Land Economics, California State University, Fresno. Public and county (10 years) experience in real estate and urban land economics; 8 years experience in Right-of-Way for Caltrans. Contribution: Draft Relocation Impact Report and Final Relocation Impact Report.

Appendix A California Environmental Quality Act Checklist

The following checklist identifies physical, biological, social, and economic factors that might be affected by the proposed project. The California Environmental Quality Act impact levels include “potentially significant impact,” “less than significant impact with mitigation,” “less than significant impact,” and “no impact.”

Supporting documentation of all California Environmental Quality Act checklist determinations is provided in Chapter 2 of this Initial Study/Environmental Assessment. Documentation of “No Impact” determinations is provided at the beginning of Chapter 2. Discussion of all impacts, avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures is under the appropriate topic headings in Chapter 2.



Potentially significant impact	Less than significant impact with mitigation	Less than significant impact	No impact
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AESTHETICS - Would the project:

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic building within a state scenic highway? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

AGRICULTURE RESOURCES - In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. Would the project:

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

AIR QUALITY - Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

Potentially significant impact	Less than significant impact with mitigation	Less than significant impact	No impact
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b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?

c) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions, which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?

d) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentration?

e) Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES – Would the project:

a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, and regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

Potentially significant impact	Less than significant impact with mitigation	Less than significant impact	No impact
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f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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CULTURAL RESOURCES - Would the project:

a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in §15064.5?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Archaeological resources are considered “historical resources” and are covered under (a).

c) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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d) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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GEOLOGY AND SOILS - Would the project:

a) Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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iv) Landslides?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in onsite or offsite landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Potentially significant impact	Less than significant impact with mitigation	Less than significant impact	No impact
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d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS -

Would the project:

a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous material, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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d) Be located on a site that is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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g) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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h) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Potentially significant impact	Less than significant impact with mitigation	Less than significant impact	No impact
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HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY - Would the project:

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level that would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner that would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or offsite? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner that would result in flooding on- or offsite? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Create or contribute runoff water that would exceed the capacity of existing or planned storm water drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| f) Otherwise substantially degrade water quality? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| h) Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures that would impede or redirect flood flows? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| j) Inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

LAND USE AND PLANNING - Would the project:

Potentially significant impact	Less than significant impact with mitigation	Less than significant impact	No impact
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a) Physically divide an established community?

b) Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?

c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?

MINERAL RESOURCES - Would the project:

a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?

b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?

NOISE - Would the project result in:

a) Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?

b) Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive ground borne vibration or ground borne noise levels?

c) A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?

d) A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?

e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

Potentially significant impact	Less than significant impact with mitigation	Less than significant impact	No impact
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f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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POPULATION AND HOUSING - Would the project:

a) Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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b) Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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c) Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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PUBLIC SERVICES -

a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the public services:

Fire protection?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Police protection?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Schools?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Parks?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------------------

Other public facilities?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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RECREATION -

a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Potentially significant impact	Less than significant impact with mitigation	Less than significant impact	No impact
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facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?

b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC - Would the project:

a) Cause an increase in traffic that is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections)?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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b) Exceed, either individually or cumulatively, a level of service standard established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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e) Result in inadequate emergency access?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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f) Result in inadequate parking capacity?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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g) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., bus turnouts, bicycle racks)?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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UTILITY AND SERVICE SYSTEMS - Would the project:

a) Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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b) Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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c) Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Potentially significant impact	Less than significant impact with mitigation	Less than significant impact	No impact
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d) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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e) Result in determination by the wastewater treatment provider that serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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f) Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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g) Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE -

a) Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, or cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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c) Does the project have environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Appendix B Title VI Policy Statement

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
1120 N STREET
P. O. BOX 942873
SACRAMENTO, CA 94273-0001
PHONE (916) 654-5266
FAX (916) 654-6608
TTY (916) 653-4086



*Flex your power!
Be energy efficient!*

January 14, 2005

TITLE VI POLICY STATEMENT

The California Department of Transportation under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes, ensures that no person in the State of California shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity it administers.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Will Kempton".

WILL KEMPTON
Director

"Caltrans improves mobility across California"



Appendix C Summary of Relocation Benefits

California Dept. of Transportation Relocation Assistance Program

Relocation Assistance Advisory Services

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) would provide relocation advisory assistance to any person, business, farm, or non-profit organization displaced as a result of Caltrans' acquisition of real property for public use. Caltrans would assist residential displacees in obtaining comparable decent, safe, and sanitary replacement housing by providing current and continuing information on sales prices and rental rates of available housing. Non-residential displacees would receive information on comparable properties for lease or purchase.

Residential replacement dwellings would be in equal or better neighborhoods, at prices within the financial means of the individuals and families displaced, and reasonably accessible to their places of employment. Before any displacement occurs, displacees would be offered comparable replacement dwellings that are open to all persons regardless of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, and are consistent with the requirements of Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968. This assistance would also include supplying information concerning federal- and state-assisted housing programs, and any other known services being offered by public and private agencies in the area.

Residential Relocation Payments Program

For more information or a brochure on the residential relocation program, please contact Richard Putler at richard_putler@dot.ca.gov, 559-243-8300, or:

California Department of Transportation
2015 E. Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726-5308

The brochure on the residential relocation program is also available in English at http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/row/pubs/residential_english.pdf and in Spanish at http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/row/pubs/residential_spanish.pdf.

If you own or rent a mobile home that may be moved or acquired by Caltrans, a relocation brochure is available in English at

http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/row/pubs/mobile_eng.pdf and in Spanish at http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/row/pubs/mobile_sp.pdf.

The Business and Farm Relocation Assistance Program

For more information or a brochure on the relocation of a business or farm, please contact Richard Putler at richard_putler@dot.ca.gov, 559-243-8300, or:

California Department of Transportation
2015 E. Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726-5308

The brochure on the business relocation program is also available in English at http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/row/pubs/business_farm.pdf and in Spanish at http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/row/pubs/business_sp.pdf.

Additional Information

No relocation payment received would be considered as income for the purpose of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 or for the purposes of determining eligibility or the extent of eligibility of any person for assistance under the Social Security Act or any other federal law (except for any federal law providing low-income housing assistance).

Persons who are eligible for relocation payments and who are legally occupying the property required for the project would not be asked to move without being given at least 90 days advance notice, in writing. Occupants of any type of dwelling eligible for relocation payments would not be required to move unless at least one comparable “decent, safe, and sanitary” replacement residence, open to all persons regardless of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, is available or has been made available to them by the state.

Any person, business, farm, or non-profit organization, which has been refused a relocation payment by Caltrans, or believes that the payments are inadequate, may appeal for a hearing before a hearing officer or the Caltrans’ Relocation Assistance Appeals Board. No legal assistance is required; however, the displacee may choose to obtain legal council at his/her expense. Information about the appeal procedure is available from Caltrans’ Relocation Advisors.

The information above is not intended to be a complete statement of all of Caltrans’ laws and regulations. At the time of the first written offer to purchase, owner-occupants are given a more detailed explanation of the state's relocation services.

Tenant occupants of properties to be acquired are contacted immediately after the first written offer to purchase, and also given a more detailed explanation of Caltrans' relocation programs.

Important Notice

To avoid loss of possible benefits, no individual, family, business, farm, or non-profit organization should commit to purchase or rent a replacement property without first contacting a Department of Transportation relocation advisor at (559) 445-6195 or by writing to:

State of California
Department of Transportation, District 6
Relocation Assistance Program
Tower Building, 855 "M" Street, 3rd Floor
Fresno, California 93721



Appendix D Minimization and/or Mitigation Summary

Parks and Recreation

The Visalia Unified School District would be compensated the fair market value for any land or improvements required for the proposed project.

During project design, Caltrans would coordinate construction activities with the Visalia Unified School District to minimize disruption of the district's activities and services. This would include scheduling construction in this portion of the project during school vacations to the degree that this is feasible. Otherwise, night construction may be necessary to lessen impacts on the school district.

The 16 trees along the south side of the school playground would be replaced at a 1:1 ratio.

Relocations

Funding would be available to relocate or re-establish any residents or businesses affected by the project. The Residential Relocation Assistance Program would help eligible residential occupants by providing advisory services, replacement housing payments and moving costs, down payment assistance and incidental costs to the purchase or rental of replacement housing.

The Non-Residential Relocation Assistance Program provides assistance to businesses, farms, and nonprofit organizations in locating suitable replacement property and reimbursement for certain costs involved in re-establishing a business. The Relocation Assistance Program would provide current lists of properties offered for sale or lease, suitable for a particular business' specific needs.

If farm and business displacements incur increased costs as a result of being relocated, they would be given the opportunity to file a claim for re-establishment, moving expenses and loss of goodwill. Any person (individual, family, corporation, partnership, or association) who qualifies and who moves from real property or moves personal property from real property as a result of the acquisition of the real property, or is required to relocate as a result of a written notice from the California Department of Transportation from the real property acquired for a transportation project is eligible for "Relocation Assistance."

All activities would be conducted in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended (see Appendices B and C). The Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act is a requirement of the project.

Parking

Alternative 1 would remove about 53 parking spaces at the Visalia Adult School. A field review of the project indicated that these stalls could be replaced onsite. Detailed design would be closely coordinated with the Visalia Unified School District during the next phase of the project.

Utilities/Emergency Services

Before construction, public utilities affected by the project would be relocated. During construction, one to two lanes of traffic would remain open. Emergency vehicles would be given priority.

Scheduling construction work that would require lane closures during non-peak hours would minimize traffic delay. Pre-construction meetings with emergency services agencies and the local school district would be conducted. Meetings would continue throughout construction of the project as needed.

A Transportation Management Plan would be required for the project before construction. Transportation Management Plans are prepared for projects on the state highway system to reduce traffic delays and congestion associated with construction activities. Emergency providers would be asked to participate in developing the plan, which would describe how emergency responders would handle detours or delays. Emergency vehicles would receive preference through the detour and lane closures.

Traffic and Transportation/Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

During construction, a traffic management plan would be implemented to help reduce traffic delays, congestion, and accidents. Standard Caltrans construction practices including providing information on roadway conditions, portable changeable message signs, lane and road closures, advance warning signs, alternate routes, reverse and alternate traffic control, and a traffic contingency plan for unforeseen circumstances and emergencies. The Caltrans Public Affairs Office would keep the local media informed of construction progress and information pertaining to delays, closures, and major changes in traffic patterns with information provided by the resident engineer.

Under the California Vehicle Code (Sec. 21200), bike riders have the same rights as operators of motor vehicles. They cannot be excluded from traveling on a roadway during construction unless motor vehicles are also prohibited from traveling those same roadways. “Share The Road” signs within the construction area alert motorists of the potential presence of bicyclists on the roadway.

A Construction Zone Enhanced Enforcement Program may be appropriate during portions of this project. The program involves the continuous presence of the California Highway Patrol in construction zones to serve as a reminder to motorists to slow down and use caution when traveling through work areas. The Caltrans Construction Division would be consulted to determine if the program is warranted for this project.

Improvements would be constructed in conformance with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Visual/Aesthetics

Existing vegetation would be preserved and protected to the maximum extent feasible in accordance with the Highway Design Manual. Appropriate replacement planting would be provided when native or specimen trees are removed or planting installed by others is damaged or removed by state highway construction activity.

Caltrans would replace planting installed by others in conformance with the Encroachment Permits Manual, Chapter 506.3, including irrigation modification and/or replacement.

If mitigation replacement planting is not installed with this project, it must be accomplished within two years of its completion. Funds would be set aside for the mitigation replacement planting. A plant establishment period would be provided and a cooperative/maintenance agreement would be required with the City of Visalia to ensure the survival of the newly planted landscaping.

The proposed landscape concept for this project consists of landscape and irrigation design as allowed by the Highway Design Manual. Trees and grass could be planted along the sidewalk planting strips on both sides of State Route 216.

In addition, Caltrans would also provide aesthetic treatment of the raised median, which could include tree planting and textured paving. Between Lovers Lane and McAuliff Road, the raised median could include stamped concrete paving and/or

landscaping. Caltrans would work with the City of Visalia and the Visalia Unified School District to develop an acceptable design for the improvements.

Tree Replacement

About 108 trees with a diameter at breast height ranging from 3 inches to 14 inches would be removed for the project. The Caltrans Landscape Architecture Branch would determine the need for replacement planting to mitigate for the removal of trees. Replacement planting should be done within the project limits or as close to the project site as possible.

Heritage Oak Replacement

Mitigation for the removal of the two heritage Valley oak trees would also be included in the project. Oak trees would be incorporated in the proposed landscape concept where possible.

Heritage oak trees would be replaced in accordance with the City of Visalia's Oak Tree Preservation Ordinance (Municipal Code 12.24). The ordinance applies to oak trees with a diameter at breast height of 2 inches or greater.

Section 12.24.120 of the Oak Tree Preservation Ordinance addresses the preservation and maintenance of existing oak trees through implementation of measures to ensure protection of the root zone. As a state agency, Caltrans is not subject to the city ordinance, but would make an effort to be consistent with it.

Water Quality and Storm Water Runoff

Management measures and best management practices would need to be addressed during the planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance stages.

A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan would be implemented during construction to help identify the sources of sediment and other pollutants that affect the quality of storm water discharges. The plan would also describe and ensure the implementation of best management practices to reduce or eliminate sediment and other pollutants in storm water as well as non-storm water discharges. A Storm Water Management Plan would be implemented after construction was completed (refer to Section 2.2.2).

Standard Specifications, Section 7-1.01G requires the construction contractor to implement pollution control practices related to construction projects via a Water Pollution Control Plan and Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan.

Presently, when a project is expected to disturb more than one acre of soil, the following is required:

1. A Notification of Construction is to be submitted to the appropriate Regional Water Quality Control Board at least 30 days prior to the start of construction. The Notice of Construction forms ask for tentative start date and duration, location, description of project, estimate of affected area, resident engineer with telephone number, etc.
2. A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan is to be prepared and implemented during construction to the satisfaction of the Resident Engineer.
3. A Notice of Construction Completion is to be submitted to the Regional Water Quality Control Board upon completion of the construction and stabilization of the site. A project will be considered complete when the criteria for final stabilization in the State General Construction Permit are met.

Hazardous Waste

Prior to any excavation or soil disturbance within project boundaries, a project-specific Lead Compliance Plan must be developed and implemented for earthwork as part of Caltrans non-standard special provisions.

Steps would be taken to reduce or eliminate any airborne dust. Water should be available at all times where work activities are being performed.

The contractor should use proper health and safety measures to minimize the exposure of workers to potential asbestos or lead-based paint from affected buildings and structures.

The demolition of water wells within the project limits must be in accordance with standards prepared by the Department of Water Resources (Bulletins 74-90) Title 23, California Code of Regulations and local regulatory standards.

Where yellow thermo plastic paint is to be removed, the contractor shall comply with standard special provision 15-300.

Noise

Construction noise emissions would be controlled by local noise ordinances and noise control measures that may include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Nighttime and weekend work is not anticipated.

2. Compliance with Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 7-01I “Sound Control Requirements” would be required. Section 7-01I refers to mandatory mufflers for all internal combustion engines operated with the project and mandatory compliance with local noise ordinances.

Invasive Species

The landscaping and erosion control included in the project would not use species listed as noxious weeds. In areas of particular sensitivity, extra precautions would be taken if invasive species were found in or adjacent to the construction areas. These include the inspections and cleaning of construction equipment and eradication strategies to be implemented should an invasion occur.

Special Provisions

In addition, the following special provisions would be implemented before and/or during construction of this project and are available for review at: California Department of Transportation, 1352 W. Olive Avenue, Fresno, CA:

- ***Cultural Resources***

Archaeology Special Provisions in regards to the discovery of artifacts and/or human remains during construction.

If cultural materials were discovered during construction, all earth-moving activity within and around the immediate discovery area would be diverted until a qualified archaeologist could assess the nature and significance of the find.

If human remains were discovered, State Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 states that further disturbances and activities would stop in any area or nearby area suspected to overlie remains, and the County Coroner would be contacted. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5097.98, if the remains were thought to be Native American, the coroner would notify the Native American Heritage Commission, who would then notify the Most Likely Descendent. At this time, the person who discovered the remains would contact Caltrans or the District 6 Native American Coordinator so that they may work with the Most Likely Descendent on the respectful treatment and disposition of the remains. Further provisions of Public Resources Code Section 5097.98 are to be followed as applicable.

- *Air Quality*

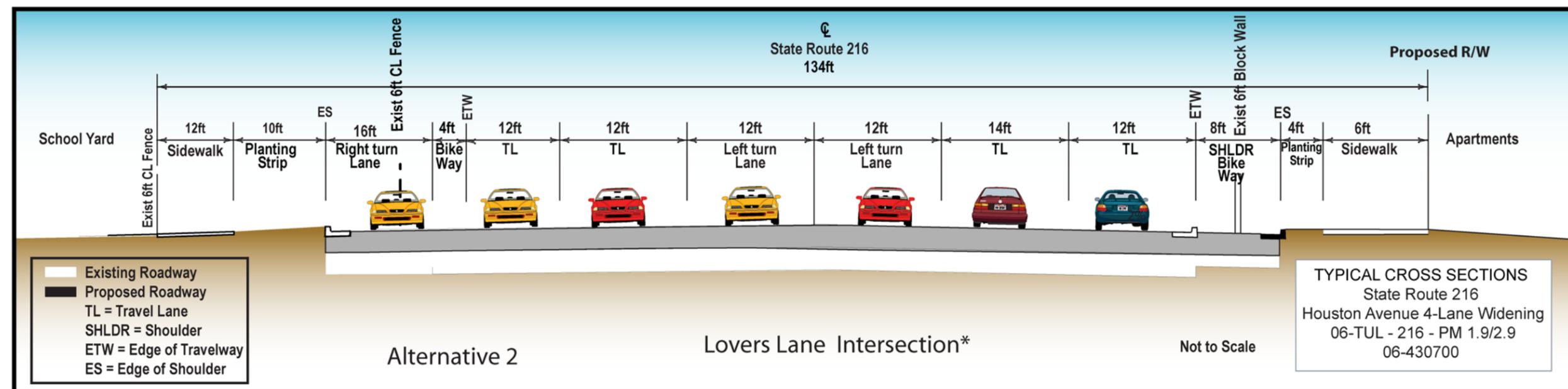
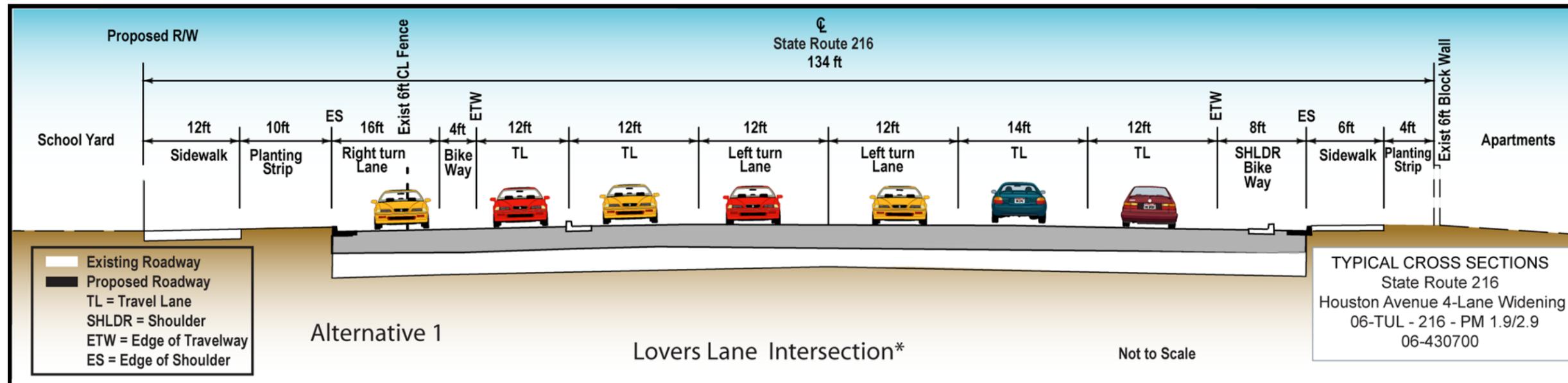
The provisions of Caltrans Standard Specifications, Section 7-1.01F “Air Pollution Control” and Section 10 “Dust Control” requires the contractor to comply with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District’s rules, ordinances, and regulations. With respect to diesel emissions during construction, Caltrans will take all minimization measures that are listed in Caltrans Standard Specifications to reduce particulate emissions. A dust control plan is required for this project and would be submitted to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District before construction begins. Typical dust and emission control methods include watering the construction site, cleaning paved streets, providing runoff and erosion control, using traps on diesel exhaust systems, and using emission control retrofits on older, higher polluting vehicles.

- *Animals*

General Migratory Bird Treaty Act Special Provisions to protect migratory birds, their occupied nests, and their eggs from disturbance or destruction would be included in the construction contract special provisions. Pre-construction surveys would be performed to confirm the findings of the Natural Environment Study.



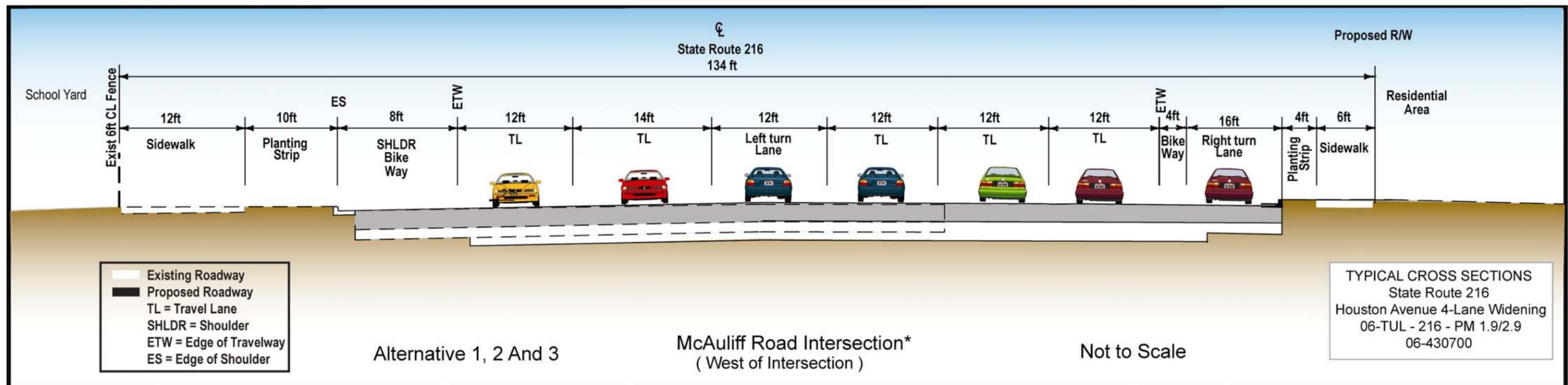
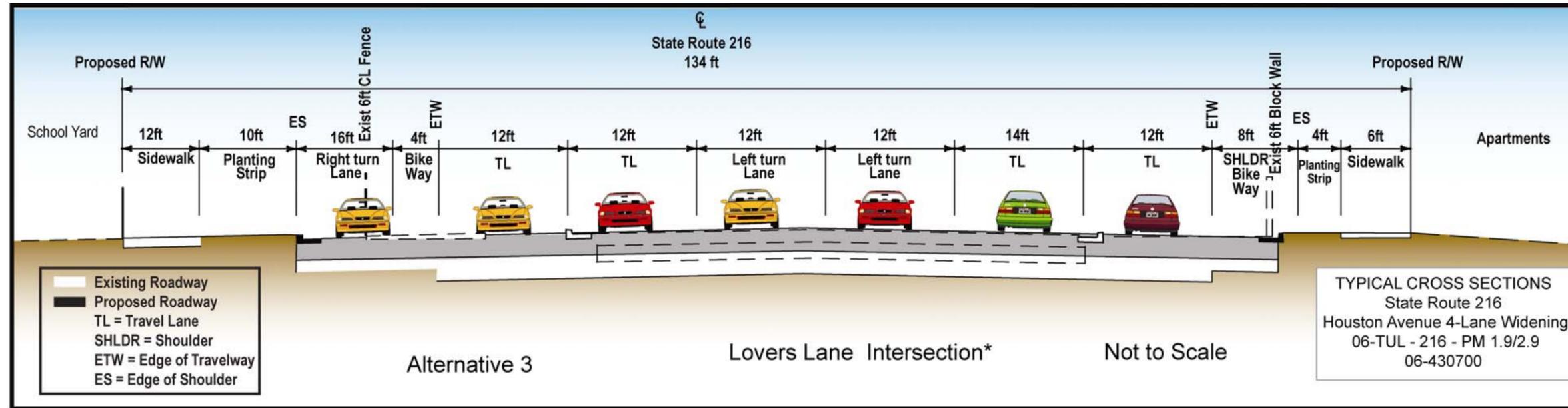
Appendix E Alternative Cross-Sections and Layouts



*The median width for each cross-section varies from 0 to 23 feet to accommodate dual left-turn lanes

Figure E-1 Typical Cross-Sections Lovers Lane Intersection Alternatives 1 and 2





*The median width for each cross-section varies from 0 to 23 feet to accommodate dual left-turn lanes.

Figure E-2 Typical Cross-Sections Lovers Lane Intersection Alternative 3 and McAuliff Road Alternatives 1–3



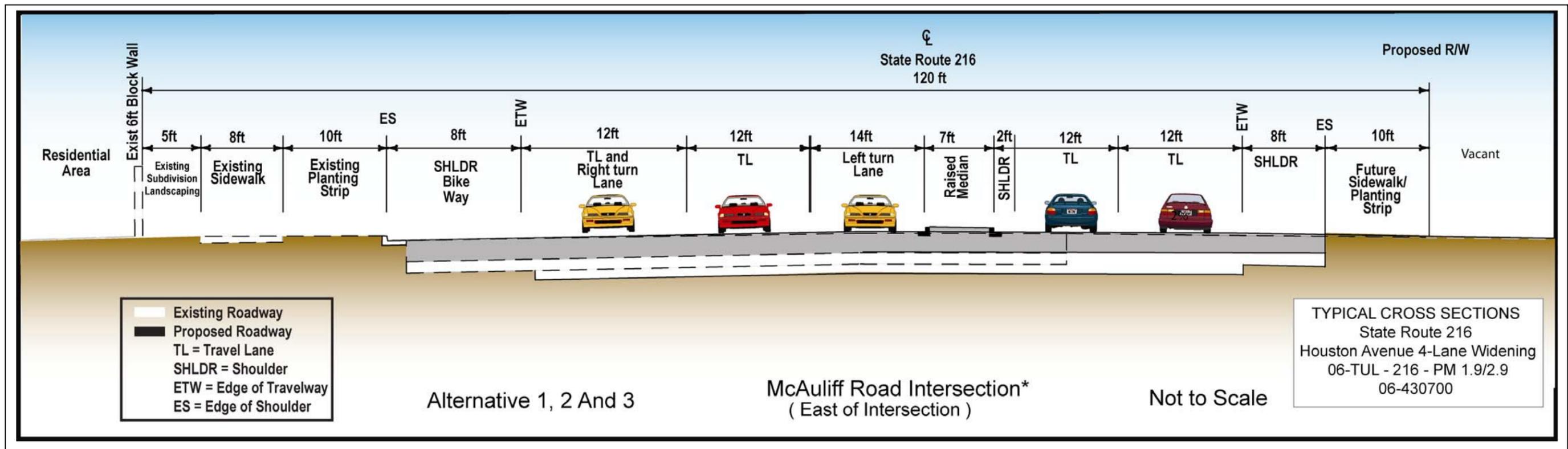
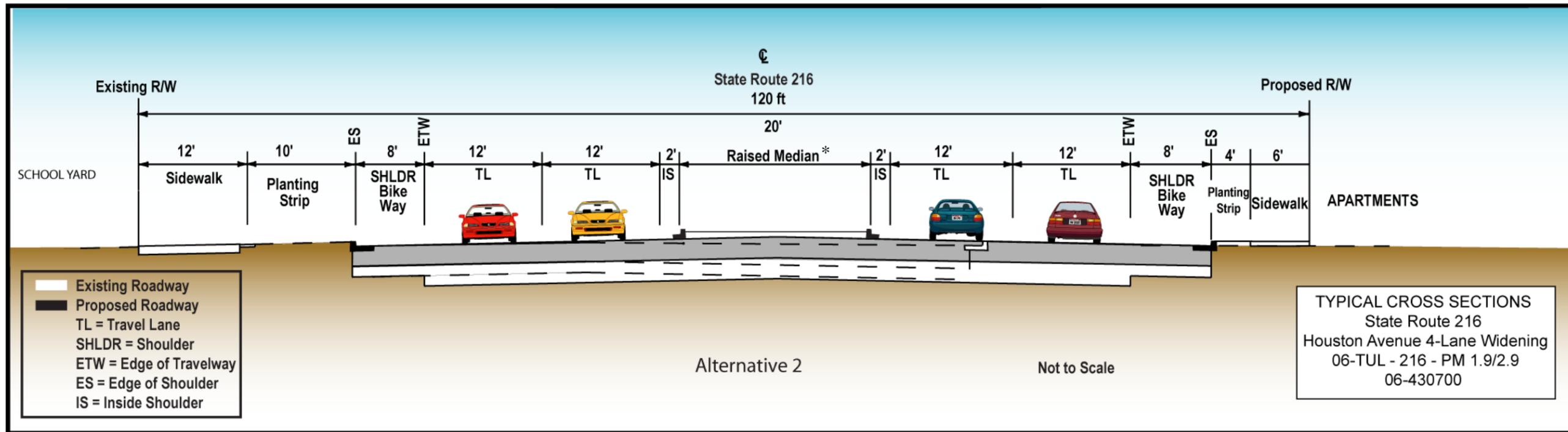
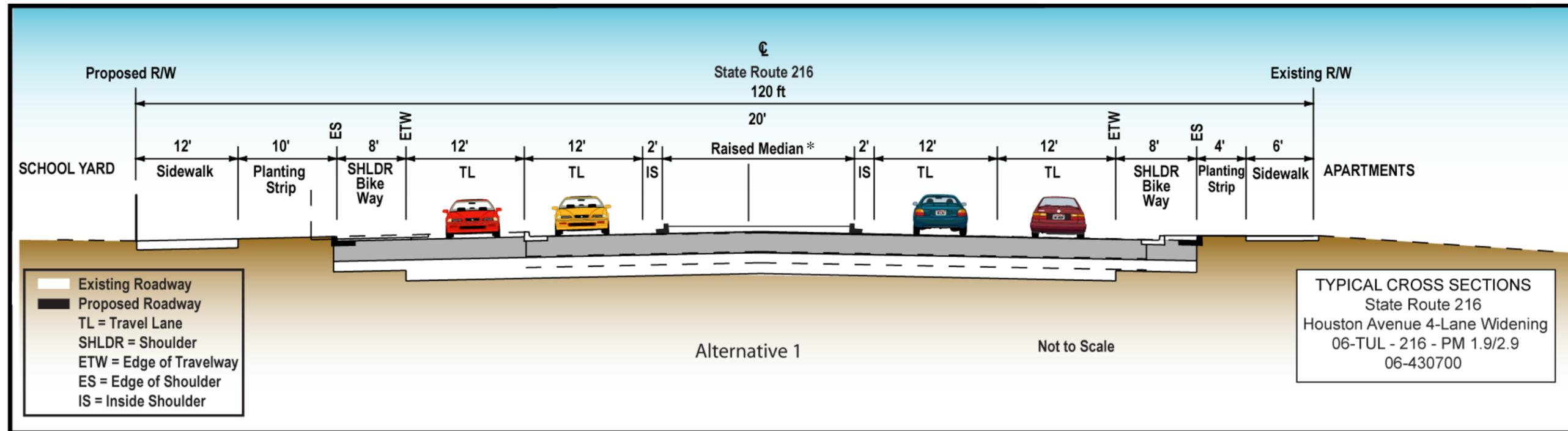


Figure E-3 Typical Cross-Sections for Alternatives 1, 2 and 3

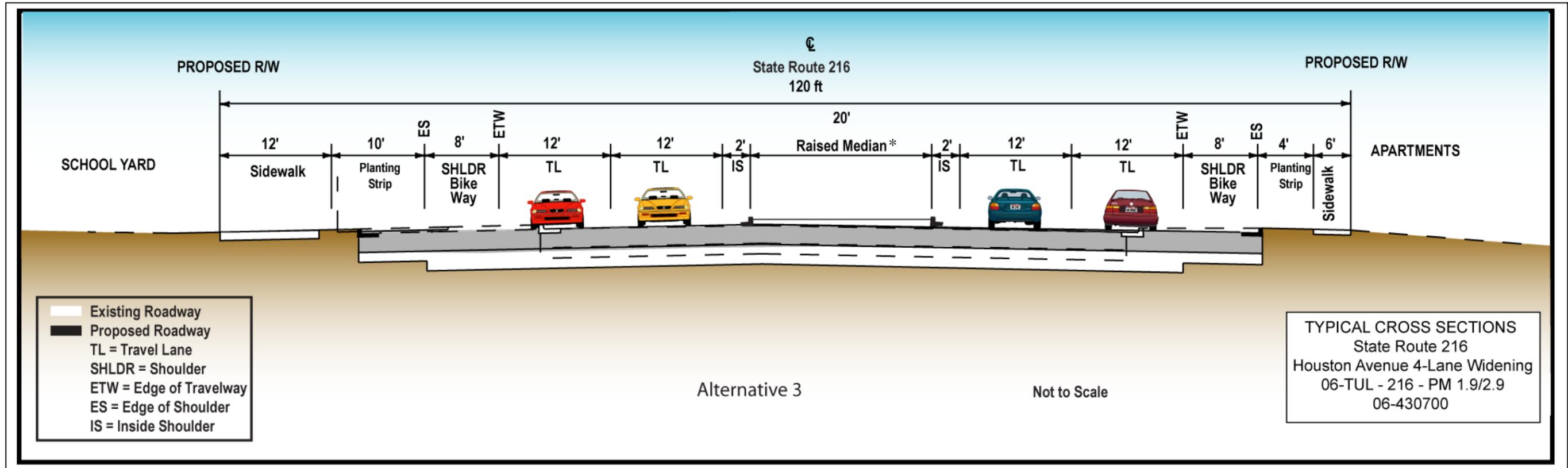




The median for each cross-section varies and may be as wide as 23 feet in some locations.

Figure E-4 Typical Cross-Sections for Alternatives 1 and 2





*The median varies and may be as wide as 23 feet in some locations.

Figure E-5 Typical Cross-Section for Alternative 3





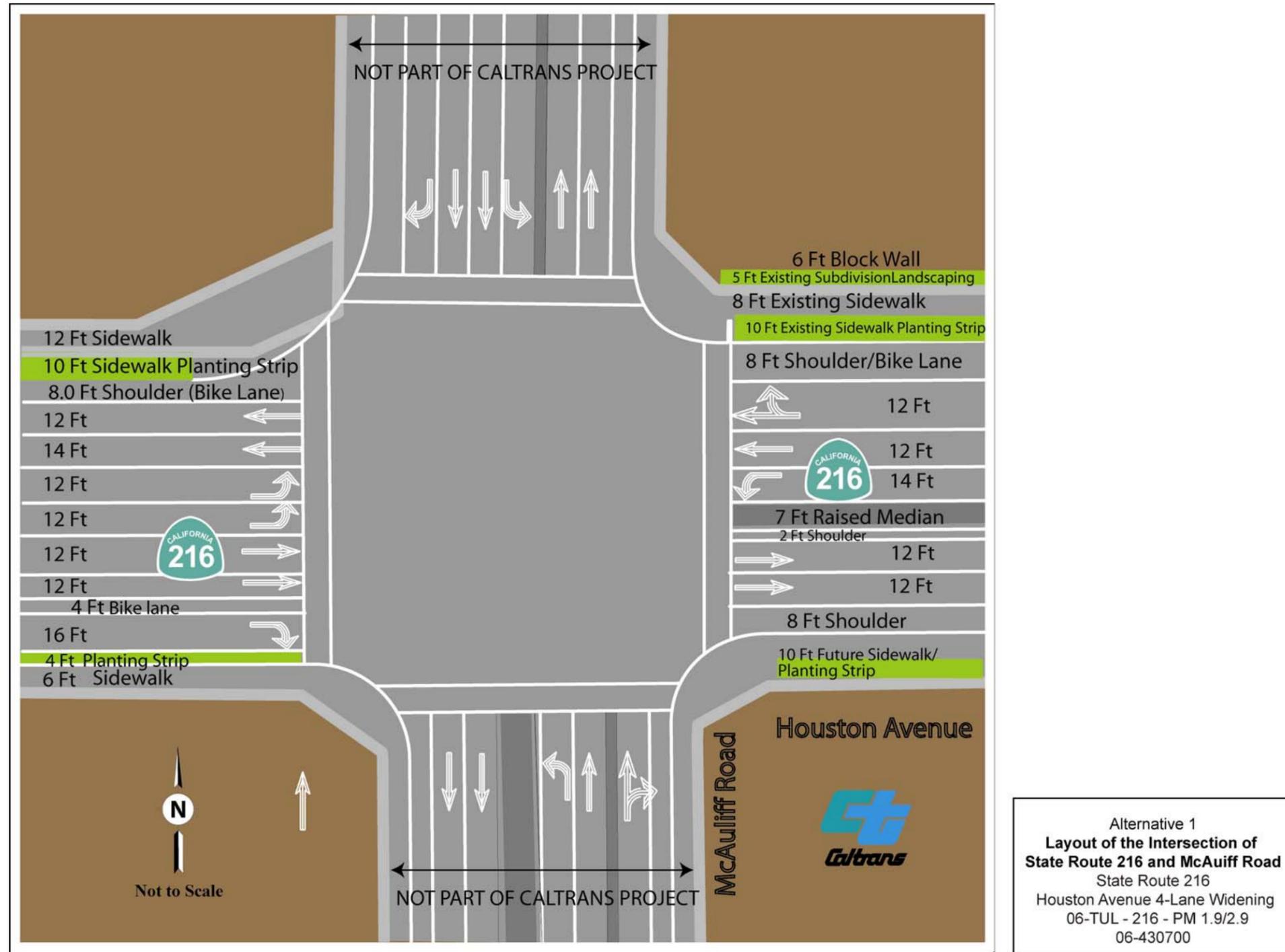


Figure E-7 Layout of the Intersection of State Route 216 and McAuliff Road



Appendix F Sensitive Plant and Animal Species

Common and Scientific Name	Status	General Habitat	Habitat Present / Absent	Rationale
AMPHIBIANS				
western spadefoot toad <i>Scaphiopus hammondi</i>	FSC CSC	Found in grassland, scrub, chaparral, and oak woodlands. Requires aquatic habitat for reproduction near upland habitats.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
California red-legged frog <i>Rana aurora draytonii</i>	FT CSC	Prefers permanent water source with extensive vegetation. Requires 11-20 weeks of permanent water for larval development.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
foothill yellow-legged frog <i>Rana boylei</i>	FSC CSC	Occurs in foothills surrounding the Central Valley in partly shaded shallow streams with cobble substrate.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
California tiger salamander <i>Ambystoma californiense</i>	FT CSC	Needs underground refuges, especially ground squirrel burrows and vernal pools or other seasonal water sources for breeding.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
BIRDS				
bald eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	FT (FPD) SE (FP)	Typically nests in large trees within short distance of rivers and lakes with abundant fish.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
Northern goshawk <i>Accipiter gentiles</i>	FSC CSC	Prefers mid to high elevation dense coniferous forest.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
mountain plover <i>Charadrius montanus</i>	FPT CSC	Associated with short grass and shrub steppe landscapes throughout its breeding and wintering range. Also inhabits heavily grazed sites, prairie dog colonies, and some cultivated fields. Winters in the Central Valley of California.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
tricolored blackbird <i>Agelaius tricolor</i>	FSC CSC	Breeds in freshwater marshes, croplands, and often in tules near or over water.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.

Common and Scientific Name	Status	General Habitat	Habitat Present / Absent	Rationale
western burrowing owl <i>Athene cunicularia hypugaea</i>	FSC CSC	Subterranean nester that is dependent upon burrowing mammals, most notably the California ground squirrel.	P	No effect. Suitable habitat exists within the project area, however, no owls or owl sign (i.e., guano, feathers, prey remains, etc.) were observed. There were several ground squirrel burrows seen in areas adjacent to the project area. There are no California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) occurrences within or adjacent to the Biological study area. Pre-construction surveys and migratory bird provisions would reduce potential impacts to this species.
Swainson's hawk <i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	ST	Requires large, open grasslands with abundant prey in association with suitable nest trees. Suitable foraging areas include native grasslands or lightly grazed pastures. Nesting habitat found in mature riparian forest, lone trees or groves of oaks, other trees in agricultural fields, and mature roadside trees.	A	No effect. Rarely sighted in Tulare County. No suitable habitat exists within the project impact area.
Aleutian Canada goose <i>Branta Canadensis leucopareia</i>	FD	Wintering habitat in California consists of pastures and grain fields in northern California and the Central Valley. Breeding habitat is on treeless islands in the Aleutian Chain.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
ferruginous hawk <i>Buteo regalis</i>	FSC CSC	Found in uncultivated pastures on the prairies and arid grasslands of western North America. Winter resident in California.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
Costa's hummingbird <i>Calypte costae</i>	FSC	Inhabits southern California, western Nevada, and Arizona. Breeding habitat consists of successional scrub.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
Lawrence's goldfinch <i>Carduelis lawrencei</i>	FSC	Breeds in a variety of habitats ranging from pinyon-juniper to arid oak woodlands with available water nearby.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
Vaux's swift <i>Chaetura vauxi</i>	FSC CSC	Species is fairly rare in the Sierra. Nests in natural tree cavities in coniferous and mixed oak-coniferous forests.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
white-tailed kite <i>Elanus leucurus</i>	FSC FP	Breeds in savannas, riparian woodlands, and grassy foothills.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
little willow flycatcher <i>Empidonax traillii brewsteri</i>	SE	Requires dense willow thickets for nesting/roosting. Low, exposed branches are used for singing posts/hunting perches.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
black swift <i>Cypseloides niger</i>	FSC CSC	Breeds in small colonies on cliffs behind or adjacent to waterfalls in deep canyons and sea-bluffs above surf.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
American peregrine falcon <i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i>	FD SE (FP)	Nests on high, isolated cliffs near water.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
loggerhead shrike <i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	FSC CSC	Inhabits areas of open country especially meadows, pastures, thickets, and hedges. Breeding habitat consists of open fields and woodlands with scattered trees.	P	No effect. Suitable habitat exists within the project area, however, none were observed during surveys and there are no CNDDDB occurrences within 10 miles of the project area. Pre-construction surveys and migratory bird provisions would reduce potential impacts to this species.
Lewis' woodpecker <i>Melanerpes lewis</i>	FSC	Breeding habitat can be found in a number of different types of habitats that have an open canopy, a brushy understory offering ground cover and abundant insects, dead or downed woody material, and available perches.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
Nuttall's woodpecker <i>Picoides nuttallii</i>	SLC	Inhabits oak woodlands, deciduous trees alongside streams in arid areas and in oak scrublands, and chaparral.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
greater sandhill crane <i>Grus canadensis tabida</i>	ST	Breeding habitat in wetlands and foraging habitat consists of meadows, irrigated pastures, grain fields, bogs, fens, marshes, and nearby fields. Winter resident in the Central Valley.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
long-billed curlew <i>Numenius americanus</i>	FSC CSC	Inhabits tidal flats and other coastal habitats and inland grassland and agricultural habitats including the Central Valley. Breeding habitat consists of short-grass communities, preferring native prairies and grazed mixed grass communities and scrub prairie. Winters in the Central Valley.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
white-faced ibis <i>Plegadis chihi</i>	FSC CSC	Found in freshwater marshes, rice fields, ponds, river, and swamps.	A	No effect. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
rufous hummingbird <i>Selasphorus rufus</i>	FSC	Inhabits mountain meadows and forest edges. When migrating or wintering, frequents gardens with hummingbird feeding stations.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.

Common and Scientific Name	Status	General Habitat	Habitat Present / Absent	Rationale
California spotted owl <i>Strix occidentalis occidentalis</i>	FSC CSC	Found in coniferous forests in the Sierra Nevada and along the Coast Range. Prefers mature forests with a canopy closure of 40 percent or greater.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
FISH				
Delta smelt <i>Hypomesus transpacificus</i>	FT ST	Found in the lower reaches of the Sacramento River below Isleton, the San Joaquin River below Mossdale, through the Delta and into Suisun Bay; occur in open surface waters and shoal areas; ideal spawning areas are those with moderate to fast flows (including tidal action) and thriving aquatic vegetation.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
Sacramento splittail <i>Pogonichthys macrolepidotus</i>	FSC CSC	Mostly confined to the Delta, Suisun Bay, Suisun Marsh, and Napa Marsh and are rarely found more than 5 to 10 miles above the upstream boundaries of the Delta; adults deposit adhesive eggs over flooded stream banks of aquatic vegetation.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
longfin smelt <i>Spirinchus thaleichthys</i>	FSC CSC	Generally found in Suisun Bay, Montezuma Slough, lower reaches of Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers, and the Delta.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
Kern brook lamprey <i>Lampetra hubbsi</i>	FSC CSC	Restricted to the San Joaquin River Basin. Inhabits the Friant-Kern Canal, lower Merced, Kaweah, Kings, and San Joaquin rivers.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
INVERTEBRATES				
vernal pool fairy shrimp <i>Branchinecta lynchi</i>	FT	Inhabits a variety of different vernal pool habitats from small, clear, sandstone rock pools to large, turbid, alkaline, grassland valley floor pools. Most commonly found in grass or mud bottomed swales, or basalt flow depression pools in unplowed grasslands.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
vernal pool tadpole shrimp <i>Lepidurus packardii</i>	FE	Inhabit vernal pools and swales in the Central Valley.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
California linderiella fairy shrimp <i>Linderiella occidentalis</i>	FSC	Found in large, fairly clear vernal pools and lakes. They can survive in clear to turbid water with a pH of 6.1 to 8.5.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
valley elderberry longhorn beetle <i>Desmocerus californicus dimorphus</i>	FT	Obligate species found with elderberry shrubs.	A	No effect. No elderberry shrubs were observed within the project area.
San Joaquin tiger beetle <i>Cicindela tranquebarica</i> ssp.	FSC	Inhabits clay or sandy soils and include sand dunes, prairies, alkali flats, gravel pits, eroded slopes, beaches, and roads.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
Molestan blister beetle <i>Lytta molesta</i>	FSC	All collected specimens found in vernal pool vegetation. Little is known about this species.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
Hopping's blister beetle <i>Lytta hoppingi</i>	FSC	Commonly occurs on the flowers and foliage of various plants in foothills at the southern end of the Central Valley.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
MAMMALS				
Tipton kangaroo rat <i>Dipodomys nitratooides nitratooides</i>	FE SE	A subspecies of the San Joaquin kangaroo rat, it is restricted to arid land communities occupying the valley floor of the Tulare Basin.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
San Joaquin kit fox <i>Vulpes macrotis mutica</i>	FE ST	Found in grassland and scrubland communities in the San Joaquin Valley. Denning habitat consists of burrows constructed in flat ground in areas of low to moderate relief.	P	No effect. Habitat is present within the biological study area. However, surveys resulted in no detection within the Biological study area and there are no CNDDDB occurrences within or adjacent to the Biological study area.
San Joaquin antelope squirrel <i>Ammospermophilus nelsoni</i>	ST	Permanent resident of the western San Joaquin Valley from 200 to 1,200 feet elevation on dry sparsely vegetated, loamy soils.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
Pacific western big-eared bat <i>Corynorhinus townsendii townsendii</i>	FSC CSC	Found primarily in rural areas in a variety of habitats, including oak woodlands in California's inner Coast Range and Sierra Nevada foothills. Associated with caves and abandoned mines.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
spotted bat <i>Euderma maculatum</i>	FSC CSC	Closely associated with rocky cliffs in a variety of habitats.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
greater western mastiff bat <i>Eumops perotis californicus</i>	FSC CSC	Found in a variety of habitats up to 8,000 feet elevation; distribution linked to presence of significant rock features for roosting.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.

Common and Scientific Name	Status	General Habitat	Habitat Present / Absent	Rationale
small-footed myotis <i>Myotis ciliolabrum</i>	FSC	Roosts in mines and trees in a variety of habitats greater than 6,000 feet elevation.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
fringed myotis bat <i>Myotis thysanodes</i>	FSC	Found from coast range to at least 6,400 feet elevation in the Sierras. Year-round resident. Roost sites include mines, caves, old buildings, and trees. Widely distributed, but rare.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
long-legged myotis <i>Myotis volans</i>	FSC	Inhabits pinyon-juniper, Joshua tree woodland, and montane coniferous forests. Day roosts in hollow trees, also uses rock crevasses, mines, and buildings.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
Yuma myotis <i>Myotis yumanensis</i>	FSC CSC	Found throughout California at lower to mid-elevations in a variety of habitats.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
southern grasshopper mouse <i>Onychomys torridus ramona</i>	FSC CSC	Found in arid desert habitats of the Mojave Desert and southern Central Valley of California.	A	No effect. The project occurs outside of the current known range for this species.
Tulare grasshopper mouse <i>Onychomys torridus tularensis</i>	FSC CSC	Inhabits arid grassland and shrub land associations, including blue oak woodlands, upper Sonoran subshrub-scrub community, alkali sink, and mesquite associations on the valley floor, and grassland associations on the sloping margins of the San Joaquin Valley and Carrizo Plain region.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
San Joaquin pocket mouse <i>Perognathus inornatus inornatus</i>	FSC CSC	Inhabits dry, open grasslands or scrub areas on fine textured soils between 1,100 and 2,000 feet in the Central and Salinas valleys. Found in open, sandy areas with grasses and forbs.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
American badger <i>Taxidea taxus</i>	CSC	Inhabit arid communities consisting of shrub and forest habitat with friable soils. They prey on burrowing rodents and dig their own burrows.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
PLANTS				
Earlimart orache <i>Atriplex erecticaulis</i>	FSC CNPS 1B	Found in valley and foothill alkali grasslands.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
brittlescale <i>Atriplex depressa</i>	FSC CNPS 1B	Found in alkaline or clay soils less than 650 feet elevation in the San Joaquin Valley and southern Sacramento Valley.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
lesser saltscale <i>Atriplex minuscula</i>	FSC CNPS 1B	Found in sandy, alkaline soils less than 650 feet elevation in the southern San Joaquin Valley.	A	No effect. The project occurs outside the known range of this plant and none were observed during surveys.
subtle orache <i>Atriplex subtilis</i>	SLC CNPS 1B	Found in valley and foothill grasslands 130-320 feet elevation.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
Hoover's spurge <i>Chamaesyce hooveri</i>	FT CNPS 1B	Found in vernal pools, and valley and foothill grasslands.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
spiny-sepaled button-celery <i>Eryngium spinosepalum</i>	FSC CNPS 1B	Found in vernal pools, and valley and foothill grasslands.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
San Joaquin adobe sunburst <i>Pseudobahia peirsonii</i>	FT SE CNPS 1B	Found in heavy adobe clay soils in grasslands dominated by non-native annual plants, wild oats, charlock, soft chess, red brome, and redstem filaree.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
San Joaquin Valley orcutt grass <i>Orcuttia inaequalis</i>	FT SE CNPS 1B	Species endemic to vernal pools in the San Joaquin Valley.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
REPTILES				
blunt-nosed leopard lizard <i>Gambelia sila</i>	FE SE (FP)	Found only in the San Joaquin Valley in open, sparsely vegetated areas of low relief on the valley floor and the surrounding foothills. They also use alkali playa and valley saltbush scrub. They require small rodent burrows for shelter.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
giant garter snake <i>Thamnophis gigas</i>	FT ST	Inhabits agricultural wetlands and other waterways such as irrigation and drainage canals, sloughs, ponds, small lakes, low gradient streams, and adjacent uplands in the Central Valley. They also inhabit rice fields. They use small mammal burrows and other soil crevices throughout their winter dormancy period.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
northwestern pond turtle <i>Clemmys marmorata marmorata</i>	FSC CSC	Inhabits ponds, marshes, rivers, and streams with rocky or muddy bottoms with cattails, water lilies, watercress, and other aquatic vegetation.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.

Common and Scientific Name	Status	General Habitat	Habitat Present / Absent	Rationale
southwestern pond turtle <i>Clemmys marmorata pallida</i>	FSC CSC	Inhabits ponds, marshes, rivers, and streams with rocky or muddy bottoms with cattails, water lilies, watercress, and other aquatic vegetation.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
California horned lizard <i>Phrynosoma coronatum frontale</i>	FSC CSC	Inhabits sandy washes, floodplains, and wind-blown deposits. Forages on ants in open areas between shrubs.	A	No effect. Suitable habitat does not exist within the project area.
NATURAL COMMUNITIES OF CONCERN				
Great Valley Valley Oak Riparian Forest		Consists of broad-leaved deciduous trees dominated by valley oaks.	P	No effect. This community type is present within the biological study area, however, it occurs outside of the construction footprint, and therefore, will not be affected as a result of the proposed project.
Valley Sacaton Grassland	--	Consists of bunch grasses dominated by (<i>Sporobolus airoides</i>).	P	No effect. This community type is present within the biological study area, however, it occurs outside of the construction footprint, and therefore, will not be affected as a result of the proposed project.

FE = Federal Endangered
 FT = Federal Threatened
 FSC = Federal Species of Concern
 FD = Federal Delisted
 FPD = Federal Proposed for Delisting

SE = State Endangered
 ST = State Threatened
 CSC = State Species of Concern
 FP = Fully Protected
 SLC = Species of Local Concern

CNPS 1B = Plants considered to be rare and endangered in California and elsewhere
 CNPS 4 = Watch List
 CNDDDB = California Natural Diversity Database



Appendix G State Historic Preservation Officer Concurrence Letter

**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

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April 27, 2006

Reply To: FHWA060407A

Kelly Hobbs, Acting Chief
Central California Cultural Resources Branch
Department of Transportation
2015 E Shields Ave, Suite A-100
Fresno, CA 93726-5428

Re: Determination of Eligibility for the Proposed Houston Avenue Widening Project on State Route 216, Tulare County, CA

Dear Mr. Hobbs:

Thank you for consulting with me about the subject undertaking in accordance with the *Programmatic Agreement Among the Federal Highway Administration, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the California State Historic Preservation Officer, and the California Department of Transportation Regarding Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as it Pertains to the Administration of the Federal-Aid Highway Program in California (PA)*.

The California Department of Transportation is requesting my concurrence, pursuant to Stipulation VIII.C.5 of the PA, that the following properties are not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places:

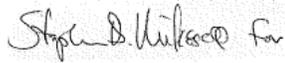
- 3143 E Houston Avenue, Visalia, CA
- 3203 E Houston Avenue, Visalia, CA
- 3227 E Houston Avenue, Visalia, CA
- 3223 E Houston Avenue, Visalia, CA
- 3307 E Houston Avenue, Visalia, CA
- 3321 E Houston Avenue, Visalia, CA
- 3349 E Houston Avenue, Visalia, CA
- 3347 E Houston Avenue, Visalia, CA
- 3631 E Houston Avenue, Visalia, CA
- 3933 E Houston Avenue, Visalia, CA
- 3944 E Houston Avenue, Visalia, CA
- 14657 Ivanhoe Drive, Visalia, CA
- 14871 Ivanhoe Drive, Visalia, CA
- 14892 Ivanhoe Drive, Visalia, CA
- 14962 Ivanhoe Drive, Visalia, CA
- 15026 Ivanhoe Drive, Visalia, CA
- 15059 Ivanhoe Drive, Visalia, CA
- 30312 Road 152, Visalia, CA

Mr. Hobbs
April 27, 2006
Page 2

Based on my review of the submitted documentation, I concur.

Thank you for considering historic properties during project planning. If you have any questions, please contact Natalie Lindquist of my staff at (916) 654-0631 or e-mail at nlind@ohp.parks.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA
State Historic Preservation Officer

Appendix H Inter-Agency Consultation with the San Joaquin Valley Modeling Coordinating Committee

State of California
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Business, Transportation and Housing Agency

Memorandum

*Flex your power!
Be energy efficient!*

To: Inter-agency Consultation Partners

Date: January 24, 2007
EA: 06-430700
Tul-216-1.9/3.7

From: AGNES JENKINS, Chief
Central Region
Environmental Engineering Branch

Subject: Consultation on PM10 and PM2.5 Hot-spot Conformity Assessment for the SR
216 Houston Avenue 4-Lane Widen and Realignment (CTIP'S ID#1150000077
)

The Department of Transportation is providing the following PM10 and PM 2.5 Hot-spot Conformity Assessment of the widening and realignment of Houston Ave (SR 216) for Interagency Consultation. The project is currently undergoing review by Caltrans for NEPA as a Finding of No Significant Impact, and CEQA, as a Negative Declaration. Clearance of this assessment is required prior to the NEPA and CEQA documents being finalized. It is requested that the Interagency Consultation Partners concur that the project is not "Projects of Air Quality Concern" (POAQC). Interagency comments on the assessment are due by February 7, 2007; an interagency conference call will be held upon request.

Project Description:

The project proposes to widen State Route 216 from Lovers Lane in the City of Visalia to east of Road 152 in Tulare County, California (PM 1.9/3.7). State Route 216 would be widened from 2 to 4 lanes with a highway median and street parking within the Visalia city limits. At the city limit, the 4-lane arterial would transition into two-lane conventional highway with 8-foot shoulders to Road 152. Intersections would be upgraded and the Road 152 intersection realigned. Additional right-of-way would be required. Three alternatives are under consideration for this project; three build alternatives and one no-build alternative. The project will improve the Level of Service and reduce overall idling time at intersections. The reduction in idling time would reduce emissions of particulate matter, thus providing an overall air quality benefit.

The project will be completed in spring 2011. The design concept and scope of this project is consistent with the federally approved 2007 FTIP, 2004 RTP, and associated conformity determination.

PM 2.5 Hot-spot Conformity Assessment:

The project is in the San Joaquin Valley PM-10 and PM2.5 nonattainment area. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Transportation Conformity Guidance, PM10 and PM2.5 hot-spot analysis is required for Projects of Air Quality Concern (POAQC) in non-attainment areas (40 CFR 93.123 (b) (1)). Projects that are exempt or not POAQC do not require hot-spot analysis.

"Caltrans improves mobility across California"

The Project does not meet the criteria of an exempt project under 40 CFR 93.126. However, the Department of Transportation has determined that the project does not meet criteria for (POAQC) as defined in the final rule by 40 CFR 93.123(b)(1). According to the Environmental Protection Agency Transportation Conformity Guidance (final rule), March 10, 2006, the following are the projects of Air quality concern:

- New or expanded highway projects with greater than 125,000 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) and 8% or more of such AADT is diesel truck traffic;
- New or expanded highway projects that affect a transportation facility at a Level of Service D, E, or F, or will become a Level of Service D, E, or F;
- New or expanded highway projects that will significantly increase the amount of diesel truck traffic.

PM 10 and PM 2.5 Hot-spot Conformity Assessment:

According to the Caltrans data, annual average daily traffic projections for the project are :

YEAR	AADT	Truck %
2011 (construction year)	29,000	4
2021	34,000	4
2030	40,000	4

This project will not exceed the AADT threshold through 2031 (the final year of the current Regional Transportation Plan).

The average Level of Service (LOS) for the Project is "C" and building this project will bring the average level of service to B. By 2031, the LOS will return to "C", but would be "F" with no-build scenario.

The Department of Transportation has completed this PM10 and PM 2.5 assessment and has determined that this project is not a "Project of Air Quality Concern"; therefore, no further analysis is required.

Public Involvement Process:

As part of the NEPA/CEQA review process, this project will be submitted for public review on approximately March, 2007 and a public hearing will be held on approximately April 5, 2007, specifying that this is a supplement to the NEPA/CEQA documents.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact Agnes Jenkins, Senior Transportation Engineer at (559) 243-8234 or by email at Agnes_Jenkins@dot.ca.gov or Abdul N. Chafi, Transportation Engineer, at (559) 243-8225 or by email at achafi@dot.ca.gov.

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Subject: Re: IAC for STATE ROUTE 216/HOUSTON AVENUE WIDENING AND REALIGNMENT (CTIP 's ID 1150000077).

EPA concurs that the SR 216 / Houston Avenue widening project is not a project of air quality concern, therefore does not need a qualitative hotspot analysis.

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Subject: IAC for STATE ROUTE 216/HOUSTON AVENUE WIDENING AND REALIGNMENT (CTIP 's ID 11500000077).

Caltrans is providing the following PM 2.5 and PM 10 Hot-Spot Conformity Assessment for the proposed project for the widening of SR 216 / Houston Avenue widening from 2 to 4 lanes in Visalia, Tulare County. This project needs concurrence for inclusion in the environmental document.

It is requested that the Interagency Consultation Partners concur that the project is not a "Project of Air Quality Concern" (POAQC). Interagency comments on the assessment are due by 5:00 pm on February 7, 2007. An interagency conference call will be held upon request.

(See attached file: PM 2.5 EA 06 430700.doc)

Agnes Jenkins
Central Region Environmental Engineering
(559) 243-8234
(559) 246-6871 (Cellular)
(See attached file: PM 2.5 EA 06 430700.doc)



PM 2.5 EA 06 430700.doc



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01/26/2007 09:29 AM

To: "Agnes Jenkins" <sagnes_jenkins@dot.ca.gov>, "Cari Anderson" <cari@caconsulting.org>
cc: "Andy Chesley" <achesley@sjcog.org>, "Alex Smith" <Alex.smith@fta.dot.gov>, "Annette Clark" <annette_clark@dot.ca.gov>, "Bruce Abanathie" <Babanathie@stancog.org>, "Les Beshears" <beshears@fresnocog.org>, "Barbara Goodwin" <bgoodwin@fresnocog.org>, "Cathy Gomes" <cathy_gomes@dot.ca.gov>, "Christina Lehn" <CLehn@co.kings.ca.us>, "Dana Cowell" <Cowell@sjcog.org>, "Daniel Garcia" <dan.garcia@valleyair.org>, "Derek Winning" <derek@maderactc.org>, "Dennis Mills" <DMills@co.tulare.ca.us>, "Don Hunsaker" <Donald.Hunsaker@valleyair.org>, "Doug Thompson" <dthomps@arb.ca.gov>, "Dennis Wade" <dwade@arb.ca.gov>, "Eddie Wendt" <Ewendt@co.tulare.ca.us>, "Elizabeth Wright" <EWright@co.tulare.ca.us>, "George Finney" <gfinney@co.tulare.ca.us>, "Doug Ito" <ito@sjcog.org>, "Jason Paukovits" <jasonp@fresnocog.org>, "Jesse B Brown" <jesse@mcag.cog.ca.us>, "Jeff Lindberg" <jlindber@arb.ca.gov>, "John Nguyen" <jnguyen@arb.ca.gov>, "John Gedney" <john_gedney@dot.ca.gov>, "Joseph Stramaglia" <jstramaglia@kerncog.org>, "Jody Swanson" <Jswanson@sjcog.org>, "Juven Alvarez" <juven.alvarez@dot.ca.gov>, "Kristine Cai" <kcai@fresnocog.org>, "Kim Kloeb" <kkloeb@sjcog.org>, "Lark Downs" <LarkDowns@StanCOG.org>, "Lauren Dawson" <lauren.dawson@valleyair.org>, "Doris Lo" <Lo.Doris@epamail.epa.gov>, "Mark Hays" <MAHays@co.tulare.ca.us>, "Matt Fell" <matt@mcag.cog.ca.us>, "Marilyn J. Beardslee" <mbeardslee@kerncog.org>, "Mike Bitner" <mbitner@fresnocog.org>, "Mike Brady" <Mike_Brady@dot.ca.gov>, "Karina O'Connor" <OConnor.Karina@epamail.epa.gov>, "Patricia Taylor" <patricia@maderactc.org>, "Penny Gray" <penny.gray@dot.ca.gov>, "Rachel Falsetti" <Rachel.falsetti@dot.ca.gov>, "Rob Ball" <rball@kerncog.org>, "Renee DeVere" <rdevere@fresnocog.org>, "Ronald E Brummett" <robrumm@zeus.kern.org>, "Raquel Pacheco" <rpacheco@kerncog.org>, "Carson, Scott" <Scott.Carson@fhwa.dot.gov>, "Sam Kaur" <skaur@stancog.org>, "Luxenberg, Steve" <Steve.Luxenberg@fhwa.dot.gov>, "Steve Curti" <steve_curti@dot.ca.gov>, <Taylor@sjcog.org>, "Ted Matley" <Ted.Matley@fta.dot.gov>, "Terri Lewis" <terri@mcag.cog.ca.us>, "Terri King" <tking@co.kings.ca.us>, "Tom Jordan" <tom.jordan@valleyair.org>, "Ted Smalley" <tsmalley@co.tulare.ca.us>, "Tom Webster" <twebster@co.kings.ca.us>, "Vince Angelino" <Vangelino@stancog.org>, "Vince Harris" <VHarris@StanCOG.org>, "Vincent Liu" <vliu@kerncog.org>
Subject: RE: IAC for STATE ROUTE 216-HOUSTON AVENUE WIDENING AND REALIGNMENT (CTIP 's ID 1150000077).

Agnes,

FHWA concurs that the SR 216/Houston Ave. project is not a project of air quality concern.

Thanks!

-----Original Message-----

From: Agnes Jenkins [mailto:agnes_jenkins@dot.ca.gov]

Sent: Wednesday, January 24, 2007 1:18 PM

To: Cari Anderson

Cc: 'Andy Chesley'; 'Alex Smith'; 'Annette Clark'; 'Bruce Abanathie'; 'Les Beshears'; 'Barbara Goodwin'; 'Cathy Gomes'; 'Christina Lehn'; 'Dana Cowell'; Daniel Garcia; 'Derek Winning'; 'Dennis Mills'; 'Don Hunsaker'; Doug Thompson; 'Dennis Wade'; 'Eddie Wendt'; Elizabeth Wright; 'George Finney'; 'Doug Ito'; 'Jason Paukovits'; 'Jesse B Brown'; 'Jeff Lindberg'; John Nguyen; 'John Gedney'; 'Joseph Stramaglia'; 'Jody Swanson'; 'Juven Alvarez'; 'Kristine Cai'; 'Kim Kloeb'; 'Lark Downs'; 'Lauren Dawson'; 'Doris Lo'; 'Mark Hays'; 'Matt Fell'; 'Marilyn J. Beardslee'; 'Mike Bitner'; 'Mike Brady'; 'Karina O'Connor'; Patricia Taylor; 'Penny Gray'; 'Rachel Falsetti'; 'Rob Ball'; 'Renee DeVere'; O'Loughlin, Robert; 'Ronald E Brummett'; 'Raquel Pacheco'; Carson, Scott; 'Sam Kaur'; Luxenberg, Steve; 'Steve Curti'; Taylor@sjcog.org; 'Ted Matley'; 'Terri Lewis'; Terri King; 'Tom Jordan'; 'Ted Smalley'; 'Tom Webster'; 'Vince Angelino'; 'Vince Harris'; 'Vincent Liu'
Subject: IAC for STATE ROUTE 216/HOUSTON AVENUE WIDENING AND REALIGNMENT (CTIP 's ID 11500000077).

Caltrans is providing the following PM 2.5 and PM 10 Hot-Spot Conformity Assessment for the proposed project for the widening of SR 216 / Houston Avenue widening from 2 to 4 lanes in Visalia, Tulare County. This project needs concurrence for inclusion in the environmental document.

It is requested that the Interagency Consultation Partners concur that the project is not a "Project of Air Quality Concern" (POAQC). Interagency comments on the assessment are due by 5:00 pm on February 7, 2007. An interagency conference call will be held upon request.

(See attached file: PM 2.5 EA 06 430700.doc)

Agnes Jenkins
Central Region Environmental Engineering
(559) 243-8234
(559) 246-6871 (Cellular)



Appendix I Comments and Responses

This appendix contains the comments received during the public circulation and comment period from September 4, 2007 to October 4, 2007. A Caltrans response follows each comment presented.

Comment from the State Clearinghouse and Planning Unit

 ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER GOVERNOR	STATE OF CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF PLANNING AND RESEARCH STATE CLEARINGHOUSE AND PLANNING UNIT	 CYNTHIA BRYANT DIRECTOR
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October 4, 2007

Sarah Gassner
California Department of Transportation, District 6
2015 E. Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726-5428

Subject: State Route 216/Houston Avenue 4-Lane Widening
SCH#: 2007091006

Dear Sarah Gassner:

The State Clearinghouse submitted the above named Mitigated Negative Declaration to selected state agencies for review. On the enclosed Document Details Report please note that the Clearinghouse has listed the state agencies that reviewed your document. The review period closed on October 3, 2007, and the comments from the responding agency (ies) is (are) enclosed. If this comment package is not in order, please notify the State Clearinghouse immediately. Please refer to the project's ten-digit State Clearinghouse number in future correspondence so that we may respond promptly.

Please note that Section 21104(c) of the California Public Resources Code states that:

"A responsible or other public agency shall only make substantive comments regarding those activities involved in a project which are within an area of expertise of the agency or which are required to be carried out or approved by the agency. Those comments shall be supported by specific documentation."

These comments are forwarded for use in preparing your final environmental document. Should you need more information or clarification of the enclosed comments, we recommend that you contact the commenting agency directly.

This letter acknowledges that you have complied with the State Clearinghouse review requirements for draft environmental documents, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act. Please contact the State Clearinghouse at (916) 445-0613 if you have any questions regarding the environmental review process.

Sincerely,



Terry Roberts
Director, State Clearinghouse

Enclosures
cc: Resources Agency

1400 10th Street P.O. Box 3044 Sacramento, California 95812-3044
(916) 445-0613 FAX (916) 323-3018 www.opr.ca.gov

Response to Comment from the State Clearinghouse and Planning Unit

The State Clearinghouse letter acknowledges that Caltrans has complied with review requirements for draft environmental documents, per the California Environmental Quality Act.

Comment from the Native American Heritage Commission

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor

NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE COMMISSION

915 CAPITOL MALL, ROOM 364
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
(916) 653-6251
Fax (916) 657-5390
Web Site www.nahc.ca.gov
e-mail: ds_nahc@pacbell.net



September 10, 2007

Ms. Sarah Gassner, Acting Branch Chief
California Department of Transportation
Southern Sierra Environmental Analysis Branch
2015 E. Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726-5308

Re: SCH#2007091006: CEQA Notice of Completion, Mitigated Negative Declaration: State Route 216/Houston Avenue 4-Lane Widening Project, California Department of Transportation 06-TUL-216-PM 1.9/3.7: 06-430700: Tulare County, California

Dear Ms. Gassner:

The Native American Heritage Commission is the state's Trustee Agency for Native American Cultural Resources. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that any project that causes a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource, that includes archaeological resources, is a 'significant effect' requiring the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) per CEQA guidelines § 15064.5(b)(c). In order to comply with this provision, the lead agency is required to assess whether the project will have an adverse impact on these resources within the 'area of potential effect (APE)', and if so, to mitigate that effect. To adequately assess the project-related impacts on historical resources, the Commission recommends the following action:

- √ Contact the appropriate California Historic Resources Information Center (CHRIS). Contact information for the Information Center nearest you is available from the State Office of Historic Preservation (916/653-7278)/ <http://www.ohp.parks.ca.gov/1068/files/IC%20Roster.pdf>. The record search will determine:
 - If a part or the entire APE has been previously surveyed for cultural resources.
 - If any known cultural resources have already been recorded in or adjacent to the APE.
 - If the probability is low, moderate, or high that cultural resources are located in the APE.
 - If a survey is required to determine whether previously unrecorded cultural resources are present.
- √ If an archaeological inventory survey is required, the final stage is the preparation of a professional report detailing the findings and recommendations of the records search and field survey.
 - The final report containing site forms, site significance, and mitigation measures should be submitted immediately to the planning department. All information regarding site locations, Native American human remains, and associated funerary objects should be in a separate confidential addendum, and not be made available for public disclosure.
 - The final written report should be submitted within 3 months after work has been completed to the appropriate regional archaeological Information Center.
- √ Contact the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) for:
 - A Sacred Lands File (SLF) search of the project area and information on tribal contacts in the project vicinity that may have additional cultural resource information. Please provide this office with the following citation format to assist with the Sacred Lands File search request: USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle citation with name, township, range and section:
 - The NAHC advises the use of Native American Monitors to ensure proper identification and care given cultural resources that may be discovered. The NAHC recommends that contact be made with Native American Contacts on the attached list to get their input on potential project impact (APE). In some cases, the existence of a Native American cultural resources may be known only to a local tribe(s).
- √ Lack of surface evidence of archeological resources does not preclude their subsurface existence.
 - Lead agencies should include in their mitigation plan provisions for the identification and evaluation of accidentally discovered archeological resources, per California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) §15064.5 (f). In areas of identified archaeological sensitivity, a certified archaeologist and a culturally affiliated Native American, with knowledge in cultural resources, should monitor all ground-disturbing activities.
 - Lead agencies should include in their mitigation plan provisions for the disposition of recovered artifacts, in consultation with culturally affiliated Native Americans.
- √ Lead agencies should include provisions for discovery of Native American human remains or unmarked cemeteries in their mitigation plans.
 - CEQA Guidelines, Section 15064.5(d) requires the lead agency to work with the Native Americans identified by this Commission if the initial Study identifies the presence or likely presence of Native American human

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remains within the APE. CEQA Guidelines provide for agreements with Native American, identified by the NAHC, to assure the appropriate and dignified treatment of Native American human remains and any associated grave liens.

√ Health and Safety Code §7050.5, Public Resources Code §5097.98 and Sec. §15064.5 (d) of the CEQA Guidelines mandate procedures to be followed in the event of an accidental discovery of any human remains in a location other than a dedicated cemetery.

√ Lead agencies should consider avoidance, as defined in § 15370 of the CEQA Guidelines, when significant cultural resources are discovered during the course of project planning.

Please feel free to contact me at (916) 653-6251 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Dave Singleton
Program Analyst

Attachment: List of Native American Contacts

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Native American Contacts
Tulare County
September 10, 2007

Santa Rosa Rancheria
Clarence Atwell, Chairperson
P.O. Box 8
Lemoore , CA 93245
(559) 924-1278
(559) 924-3583 Fax

Tache
Tachi
Yokut

Tule River Indian Tribe
Neil Peyron, Chairperson
P.O. Box 589
Porterville , CA 93258
chairman@tulerivertribe.nsn.
(559) 781-4271
(559) 781-4610 FAX

Yokuts

Wukchumni Tribe
Susan Weese, C/o Lalo Franco
2504 West Beech Street.
Visalia , CA 93277
(559) 925-2831 - Lalo Franco

Wukchumni

Kenneth Woodrow
1179 Rock Haven Ct.
Salinas , CA 93906
831-443-9702

Foothill Yokuts
Mono

Response to Comments from the Native American Heritage Commission

Thank you for your comments on the project.

Response to comment #1: Chapter 2 and Appendix A of this environmental document demonstrate Caltrans' compliance with California Environmental Quality Act guidelines regarding identification of historical resources. All efforts met and/or exceeded California Environmental Quality Act guidelines, as they also comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the *Programmatic Agreement among the Federal Highway Administration, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the California State Historic Preservation Officer, and the California*

Department of Transportation Regarding Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as it Pertains to the Administration of the Federal-Aid Highway Program in California, and the National Environmental Policy Act. Caltrans determined that no historic properties or historical resources were present within the project Area of Potential Effects. Caltrans submitted these findings within the April 2006 Historic Property Survey Report Houston Avenue 4-Lane Widening to the State Historic Preservation Officer. The letter of concurrence from the State Historic Preservation Officer on the said document, dated April 27, 2006, is shown in Appendix G of this environmental document.

Response to comment #2: A records search was performed at the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center of the California Historical Resources Information System in March 2001.

Response to comment #3: An archaeological survey was performed in March and April 2001 and documented in an April 2006 Archaeological Survey Report.

Response to comment #4: The Native American Heritage Commission was contacted on February 15, 2001 to search its Sacred Lands File and to obtain a Native American Contacts list. The Native American Heritage Commission responded on March 2, 2001. Letters were sent to all names on the 2001 Native American Contacts list on September 23, 2002. Caltrans received no responses.

Response to comment #5: Caltrans agrees that the lack of surface evidence of archaeological resources does not always preclude their subsurface existence. The project is located in the San Joaquin Valley within the historic floodplain of the Kaweah River, a landform that has the potential to contain buried archaeological deposits. The vertical Area of Potential Effects for this project is 10 feet or less. The project is located in an urban setting; historic and modern road construction, utility placement, residential landscaping and agricultural activities have extensively affected the original ground. Extensive surface and canal side-wall survey and ethnographic and historic research does not support the probability of buried archaeological deposits. Therefore, the likelihood of encountering buried archaeological deposits during construction is low.

It is standard Caltrans practice that language regarding encountering archaeological resources during construction be included within the standard Special Provisions section of the construction contract. The project area is not considered archaeologically sensitive.

Response to comment #6: It is standard Caltrans practice that language regarding encountering human remains during construction be included within the standard Special Provisions section of the construction contract. The likelihood of encountering human remains or unmarked cemeteries during construction is extremely low.

Response to comment #7: Caltrans does comply with the California Health and Safety Code.

Response to comment #8: Because the cultural resources inventories performed for this project resulted in negative findings, avoidance measures are not necessary.

Comment from the Department of Water Resources

STATE OF CALIFORNIA -- THE RESOURCES AGENCY

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

1416 NINTH STREET, P.O. BOX 942836
SACRAMENTO, CA 942360001
(916) 653-5791



September 19, 2007

Sara Gardner
California Department of Transportation
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, California 93726

State Route 216/Houston Avenue 4-Lane Widening
State Clearinghouse (SCH) Number: 2007091006

The project corresponding to the subject SCH identification number has come to our attention. The limited project description suggests your project may be an encroachment on the State Adopted Plan of Flood Control. You may refer to the California Code of Regulations, Title 23 and Designated Floodway maps at <http://recbd.ca.gov/>. Please be advised that your county office also has copies of the Board's designated floodways for your review. If indeed your project encroaches on an adopted flood control plan, you will need to obtain an encroachment permit from the Reclamation Board prior to initiating any activities. The attached Fact Sheet explains the permitting process. Please note that the permitting process may take as much as 45 to 60 days to process. Also note that a condition of the permit requires the securing all of the appropriate additional permits before initiating work. This information is provided so that you may plan accordingly.

If after careful evaluation, it is your assessment that your project is not within the authority of the Reclamation Board, you may disregard this notice. For further information, please contact me at (916) 574-1249.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Huitt".

Christopher Huitt
Staff Environmental Scientist
Floodway Protection Section

Enclosure

cc: Governor's Office of Planning and Research
State Clearinghouse
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121
Sacramento, CA 95814

Encroachment Permits Fact Sheet

Basis for Authority

State law (Water Code Sections 8534, 8608, 8609, and 8710 – 8723) tasks the Reclamation Board with enforcing appropriate standards for the construction, maintenance, and protection of adopted flood control plans. Regulations implementing these directives are found in California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 23, Division 1.

Area of Reclamation Board Jurisdiction

The adopted plan of flood control under the jurisdiction and authority of the Reclamation Board includes the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers and their tributaries and distributaries and the designated floodways.

Streams regulated by the Reclamation Board can be found in Title 23 Section 112. Information on designated floodways can be found on the Reclamation Board's website at http://recbd.ca.gov/designated_floodway/ and CCR Title 23 Sections 101 - 107.

Regulatory Process

The Reclamation Board ensures the integrity of the flood control system through a permit process (Water Code Section 8710). A permit must be obtained prior to initiating any activity, including excavation and construction, removal or planting of landscaping within floodways, levees, and 10 feet landward of the landside levee toes. Additionally, activities located outside of the adopted plan of flood control but which may foreseeably interfere with the functioning or operation of the plan of flood control is also subject to a permit of the Reclamation Board.

Details regarding the permitting process and the regulations can be found on the Reclamation Board's website at <http://recbd.ca.gov/> under "Frequently Asked Questions" and "Regulations," respectively. The application form and the accompanying environmental questionnaire can be found on the Reclamation Board's website at <http://recbd.ca.gov/forms.cfm>.

Application Review Process

Applications when deemed complete will undergo technical and environmental review by Reclamation Board and/or Department of Water Resources staff.

Technical Review

A technical review is conducted of the application to ensure consistency with the regulatory standards designed to ensure the function and structural integrity of the adopted plan of flood control for the protection of public welfare and safety. Standards and permitted uses of designated floodways are found in CCR Title 23 Sections 107 and Article 8 (Sections 111 to 137). The permit contains 12 standard conditions and additional special conditions may be placed on the permit as the situation warrants. Special conditions, for example, may include mitigation for the hydraulic impacts of the project by reducing or eliminating the additional flood risk to third parties that may be caused by the project.

Additional information may be requested in support of the technical review of

your application pursuant to CCR Title 23 Section 8(b)(4). This information may include but not limited to geotechnical exploration, soil testing, hydraulic or sediment transport studies, and other analyses may be required at any time prior to a determination on the application.

Environmental Review

A determination on an encroachment application is a discretionary action by the Reclamation Board and its staff and subject to the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code 21000 et seq.). Additional environmental considerations are placed on the issuance of the encroachment permit by Water Code Section 8608 and the corresponding implementing regulations (California Code of Regulations – CCR Title 23 Sections 10 and 16).

In most cases, the Reclamation Board will be assuming the role of a "responsible agency" within the meaning of CEQA. In these situations, the application must include a certified CEQA document by the "lead agency" [CCR Title 23 Section 8(b)(2)]. We emphasize that such a document must include within its project description and environmental assessment of the activities for which are being considered under the permit.

Encroachment applications will also undergo a review by an interagency Environmental Review Committee (ERC) pursuant to CCR Title 23 Section 10. Review of your application will be facilitated by providing as much additional environmental information as pertinent and available to the applicant at the time of submission of the encroachment application.

These additional documentations may include the following documentation:

- California Department of Fish and Game Streambed Alteration Notification (<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/1600/>),
- Clean Water Act Section 404 applications, and Rivers and Harbors Section 10 application (US Army Corp of Engineers),
- Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification, and
- corresponding determinations by the respective regulatory agencies to the aforementioned applications, including Biological Opinions, if available at the time of submission of your application.

The submission of this information, if pertinent to your application, will expedite review and prevent overlapping requirements. This information should be made available as a supplement to your application as it becomes available. Transmittal information should reference the application number provided by the Reclamation Board.

In some limited situations, such as for minor projects, there may be no other agency with approval authority over the project, other than the encroachment permit by Reclamation Board. In these limited instances, the Reclamation Board

may choose to serve as the "lead agency" within the meaning of CEQA and in most cases the projects are of such a nature that a categorical or statutory exemption will apply. The Reclamation Board cannot invest staff resources to prepare complex environmental documentation.

Additional information may be requested in support of the environmental review of your application pursuant to CCR Title 23 Section 8(b)(4). This information may include biological surveys or other environmental surveys and may be required at anytime prior to a determination on the application.

Response to Comment from the Department of Water Resources

Thank you for your comments on the project. A Caltrans hydraulics engineer reviewed the Flood Insurance Rate Maps that cover the project area to determine if any of the floodplain designations have changed since the Location Hydraulic Study was originally written and signed by Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration. Caltrans determined that no changes have occurred to the floodplain designations in the project area since the original Location Hydraulic Study was prepared. The project does not encroach on the State Adopted Plan of Flood Control.

Comment from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District



November 5, 2007

Sarah Gassner
State of California Dept of Transportation
2015 East Shileds Ave, Suite A-100
Fresno, CA 93726-5428

Project: Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration:
State Route 216/Houston Avenue 4-Land Widening

Subject: CEQA comments regarding the widening of State Route 216 from Lovers Lane
to Road 152, Visalia, CA

District Reference No: 200701302

Dear Ms. Gassner:

The San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District (District) has reviewed the project referenced above and offers the following comments:

On October 30, 2006 the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) found the District to be in attainment of the National Ambient Air Quality Standard for PM10. However, the official re-designation of the District's classification from "Serious Non-Attainment" to "Attainment" can only occur after additional administrative steps are taken.

Findings of Significance

This project would contribute to the overall decline in air quality due to construction activities in preparation of the site, and ongoing traffic and other operational emissions. Based on the information provided, the District expects that the project would not exceed the District's Thresholds of Significance for ozone precursors of 10 tons per year of reactive organic gases (ROG) and oxides of nitrogen (NOx). A concerted effort should be made to reduce project-related emissions as outlined below:

This project may be subject to District Rule 9510, Indirect Source Review.

Seyed Sadredin
Executive Director/Air Pollution Control Officer

Northern Region
4800 Enterprise Way
Modesto, CA 95356 8718
Tel: (209) 557-6400 FAX: (209) 557-6475

Central Region (Main Office)
1990 E. Gettysburg Avenue
Fresno, CA 93726-0244
Tel: (559) 230-6000 FAX: (559) 230-6061
www.valleyair.org

Southern Region
2700 M Street, Suite 275
Bakersfield, CA 93301-2373
Tel: (661) 326-6900 FAX: (661) 326-6905

Printed on recycled paper. ♻️

Applicable District Rules

Based on the information provided, the proposed project will be subject to the District rules identified below. These rules have been adopted by the District to reduce emissions throughout the San Joaquin Valley, and are required. This project may be subject to additional District Rules not enumerated below. To identify additional rules or regulations that apply to this project, or for further information, the applicant is strongly encouraged to contact the District's Small Business Assistance Office at (559) 230-5888. Current District rules can be found at www.valleyair.org/rules/1ruleslist.htm.

2

Regulation VIII (Fugitive PM10 Prohibitions) Rules 8011-8081 are designed to reduce PM10 emissions (predominantly dust/dirt) generated by human activity, including construction and demolition activities, road construction, bulk materials storage, paved and unpaved roads, carryout and track out, landfill operations, etc. The District's compliance assistance bulletin for construction sites can be found at www.valleyair.org/busind/comply/PM10/Req VIII CAB.pdf.

3

Rule 4002 (National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants) In the event that any portion of an existing building will be renovated, partially demolished or removed, the project will be subject to District Rule 4002. Prior to any demolition activity, an asbestos survey of existing structures on the project site may be required to identify the presence of any asbestos containing building material (ACBM). In accordance with CAL-OSHA requirements, a certified asbestos contractor must remove any identified ACBM having the potential for disturbance. If you have any questions concerning asbestos related requirements, please contact the District's Compliance Division at (559) 230-6000 or contact CAL-OSHA at (559) 454-1295. The District's Asbestos Requirements Bulletin can be found online at <http://valleyair.org/busind/comply/asbestosbultn.htm>.

4

Rule 4102 (Nuisance) This rule applies to any source operation that emits or may emit air contaminants or other materials. In the event that the project or construction of the project creates a public nuisance, it could be in violation and be subject to District enforcement action.

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Rule 4641 (Cutback, Slow Cure, and Emulsified Asphalt, Paving and Maintenance Operations) If asphalt paving will be used, then paving operations of this project will be subject to Rule 4641. This rule applies to the manufacture and use of cutback asphalt, slow cure asphalt and emulsified asphalt for paving and maintenance operations.

6

Rule 9510 (Indirect Source Review) This rule was adopted to reduce the impacts of growth in emissions from all new development in the San Joaquin Valley. Rule 9510 requires applicants subject to the rule to provide information that enables the District to quantify construction, area and operational PM10 and NOx emissions, and potentially mitigate a portion of those emissions. Rule 9510 requires construction exhaust emissions to be reduced by 20 percent for NOx and 45 percent for PM10 and operational emissions to be reduced by 33.3% for NOx and 50% for PM10 when compared to the

Ms. Gassner
IS/proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration

Page 3 of 3

statewide fleet average. An application must be filed with the District no later than concurrent with application with a local agency for the final discretionary approval. For more information and instruction, please contact the District's ISR staff by phone at (559) 230-6000 or by email at ISR@valleyair.org.

District staff is available to meet with you and/or the applicant to further discuss the regulatory requirements that are associated with this project. If you have any questions or require further information, please call Georgia Stewart at (559) 230-5937 and provide the reference number at the top of this letter.

Sincerely,

David Warner
Director of Permit Services

for 
Arnaud Marjollet
Permit Services Manager

DW: gs

Response to Comments from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

Thank you for your comments on the project.

Response to comment #1: During construction, the proposed project would generate air pollutants from construction equipment exhaust and dust.

The provisions of Caltrans Standard Specifications, Section 7-1.01F "Air Pollution Control" and Section 10 "Dust Control" requires the contractor to comply with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's rules, ordinances, and regulations. With respect to diesel emissions during construction, Caltrans will take all minimization measures that are listed in Caltrans Standard Specifications to reduce particulate emissions. A dust control plan is required for this project and would be

submitted to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District before construction begins.

Caltrans prepared a PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} Hot Spot Conformity Assessment for the Tulare 216/Houston Avenue 4-Lane Widening project for consultation with the San Joaquin Valley Modeling Coordinating Committee. On January 26, 2007, the committee concurred with Caltrans' finding that future new or worsened PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ violations of any standards are not anticipated in the project area.

The proposed project is expected to be in compliance with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District standards for PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀. The project would provide for better traffic circulation and would reduce idling time throughout the project limits.

The proposed project is considered to be a project with no meaningful mobile source air toxic impacts because it does not significantly increase vehicle miles traveled. The proposed project widens a small segment of State Route 216, which will relieve traffic congestion and improve traffic flow, thereby reducing emissions of volatile organic carbon-based mobile source air toxics.

Response to comment #2: Caltrans Standard Specifications pertaining to dust control and dust palliative requirements are required for all construction contracts and should effectively reduce and control emission impacts during construction. The provisions of Caltrans Standard Specifications, Section 7-1.01F, Air Pollution Control and Section 10, Dust Control, require the contractor to comply with the rules, ordinances and regulations of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. A Dust Control Plan is required for this project and must be submitted prior to construction. Caltrans would comply with the control measures listed in the dust control plan and all applicable laws and regulations at the time the project is constructed.

Response to comment #3: If Caltrans must remove or demolish any buildings for the project, a survey would be conducted to determine the presence of any building materials that contain asbestos. Caltrans would comply with California Occupational Health and Safety Administration (also known as Cal-OSHA) requirements and use the services of a certified asbestos contractor for the removal of any asbestos-containing building materials that have the potential for disturbance. Caltrans would comply with all applicable laws and regulations at the time the project is constructed.

Response to comment #4: Caltrans would comply with all applicable laws and regulations related to nuisance at the time the project is constructed.

Response to comment #5: Caltrans would determine during final design whether it would use cutback or slow-cure asphalt for the project. Caltrans would use emulsified asphalt for the tack coat that is necessary to bind the layers of pavement together. Caltrans would comply with all applicable laws and regulations at the time the project is constructed.

Response to comment #6: Caltrans recognizes the importance of the regulatory function provided by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and complies with the substantive requirements of the various rules implemented by the District. Caltrans has been advised by legal counsel that it is exempt from paying application fees associated with local regulations such as Rule 9510, based on California Government Code Section 6103. Caltrans would otherwise comply with applicable requirements of Rule 9510, including filing of the required application, preparation and submittal of required analysis, and payment of emission reduction fee if indicated by the analysis.

Comment from Fred Weber



Comment Card
State Route 216/Houston Avenue 4 - Lane Widening

Public Hearing

Wednesday, September 19, 2007

NAME: FRED WEBER

ADDRESS: 1020 W. MINERAL KING CITY: VISALIA ZIP: 93291

REPRESENTING: Doug Gray

Do you wish to be added to the project mailing list? YES NO

Mail to: Caltrans, District 6
Department of Transportation
Attention: Sarah Gassner
Senior Environmental Planner
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726-5428
or e-mail: sarah_gassner@dot.ca.gov

I would like the following comments filed in the record (please print):

Please respond by October 4, 2007



Response to Comment from Fred Weber

Fred Weber's name has been added to the project mailing list as requested.

Comment from Randy and Alice Cassella

Comment Card

State Route 216/Houston Avenue 4 - Lane Widening



Public Hearing

Wednesday, September 19, 2007

NAME: Randy & Alice Cassella

ADDRESS: 1210 S. Nirmarpp CITY: Visalia ZIP: 93292

REPRESENTING: 3143 E. Houston (Trust of John & Anna Cassella)

Do you wish to be added to the project mailing list? YES NO
home phone 732-4022

Mail to: Caltrans, District 6
Department of Transportation
Attention: Sarah Gassner
Senior Environmental Planner
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726-5428
or e-mail: sarah.gassner@dot.ca.gov

I would like the following comments filed in the record (please print):

1 we want to fence the north side of our
property and will want to know which
alternative is selected so we place the
fence in a location that it won't have
to be moved.

2 We prefer that you choose Alternative I.

Please respond by October 4, 2007



Response to Comments from Randy and Alice Cassella

Thank you for your comments on the project.

Response to comment #1: As requested, Caltrans contacted Mr. Cassella on October 19, 2007 by telephone and informed him that Alternative 1 was selected as the preferred alternative. Mr. Cassella was also informed that Caltrans would be required to move a property owner's fence, at Caltrans' expense, if it were located in the project right-of-way.

Response to comment #2: Following the public comment period, Alternative 1, widening to the north, was selected as the preferred alternative for the project.

Comment from Randy Groom



Public Hearing

Wednesday, September 19, 2007

NAME: RANDY GROOM
ADDRESS: 5000 W CYPRESS AVE CITY: VISALIA ZIP: 93277
REPRESENTING: VISALIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Do you wish to be added to the project mailing list? YES NO

Mail to: Caltrans, District 6
Department of Transportation
Attention: Sarah Gassner
Senior Environmental Planner
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726-5428
or e mail: sarah_gassner@dot.ca.gov

I would like the following comments filed in the record (please print):

THE VISALIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT IS CONCERNED WITH ANY ALTERNATIVE THAT WOULD RESULT IN A LOSS OF PROPERTY TO ANY OF OUR FACILITIES. OF MOST PRESSING CONCERN WOULD BE LOSS OF PROPERTY AT THE VISALIA ADULT SCHOOL OR GOLDEN WEST HIGH SCHOOL. WE WOULD EXPECT TO PLAY A KEY ROLE IN THE DISCUSSION OF MITIGATION MEASURES AFFECTING OUR PROPERTIES. AT LEAST ONE OF THE STAFFED ALTERNATIVES WOULD RESULT IN A SUBSTANTIAL DISPLACEMENT OF AUTOMOBILE PARKING AT THE ADULT SCHOOL. ADDITIONAL ON-STREET PARKING WOULD ALSO BE COMPROMISED AND LOST. ADDITIONAL CONCERNS RELATE TO POTENTIAL LOSS OF PLAYFIELD SPACE AT THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF HOUSTON/MCDONALD AND THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF HOUSTON/LEWIS LANE.

Please respond by October 4, 2007



Response to Comment from Randy Groom

Thank you for your comments on the project.

The Visalia Unified School District sent a letter to Caltrans, dated November 28, 2006, supporting Alternative 1 as the preferred alternative for the project. Alternative 1 would construct project improvements to the north of the existing highway, requiring the use of about a 1.02-acre strip of land from the 154-acre Golden West Educational Complex.

Potential impacts to the Golden West Educational Complex resulting from selection of Alternative 1 as the preferred alternative for the project include removing existing sidewalks, trees, 0.77 acre of play fields, parking spaces at the Visalia Adult School, on-street parking and a bicycle path.

The District's letter requested that Caltrans replace the existing planting strip, 10-foot sidewalk and parking at the adult school. Caltrans has included each of these items as a part of the avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures for the project. Please see the sections for parks and recreation (2.1.1.3), parking (2.1.3.4), pedestrian and bicycle circulation (2.1.5), and visual/aesthetics (2.1.6).

Caltrans would work closely with local agencies, including the Visalia Unified School District, City of Visalia and Tulare County, to make sure that the design of the project meets their needs as well as the needs of the community.

Comment from VandenBerghe Properties, Incorporated

Burgundy House Apartments, a California Limited Partnership
VandenBerghe Properties, Inc., General Partner
525 Sycamore Valley Road West
Danville, California 94526-3900
(925) 837-3456 (925) 552-1490 Facsimile

October 2, 2007

Via Fax: (559) 243-8215
Via Email: sarah_gassner@dot.ca.gov
Via U.S. Mail

Caltrans, District 6
Department of Transportation
Attention: Sarah Gassner, Senior Environmental Planner
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726-5428

Re: State Route 216/Houston Avenue 4-Lane Widening Project

Burgundy House Apartments, a California Limited Partnership
2901 E. Stewart Drive, Visalia, California 93292

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are the General Partner of Burgundy House Apartments, a California Limited Partnership, which owns and operates the Burgundy House Apartment complex located at the Southeast corner of Houston Avenue and Lovers Lane in Visalia, California, consisting of 133 multifamily residential rental units situated on approximately 8.43 acres. We are writing to express our concerns over the planned 4-lane widening project for State Route 216 (Houston Avenue), which was the subject of a public hearing held on Wednesday, September 19, 2007, at Golden Oak Elementary School. The school is directly across Houston Avenue from our apartment project.

We sent representatives to the public hearing who examined the plans for the three (3) alternatives for increasing the Houston Avenue right-of-way. The three plans clearly showed the impact on existing buildings and related improvements. Our representatives also discussed the relative costs of each alternative with Caltrans employees who were present at the hearing.

Two of the three alternatives would have a materially adverse impact on our apartment project, inasmuch as they involve alterations to the southern boundary of Houston Avenue and the northern boundary of our property. Under the two south-boundary

Department of Transportation
October 2, 2007
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scenarios, the State of California would have to take portions of our property by eminent domain in order to widen the street and install curb, parkway, and sidewalk. Such a taking would disrupt the operations of our apartments, would most likely involve reconstructing some of the utilities that service our project from Houston Avenue, and would negatively impact our residents' quality of life. The alternative that envisions taking all of the increased right-of-way to the South clearly would involve demolition of several of the apartment buildings on our project, the relocation of tenants, and substantial reconstruction costs. To the extent that either of the south boundary plans implicates reconstruction, alteration or removal of structures on our property, the rental income from the apartments will be diminished, thereby increasing the economic damages sustained by our owners.

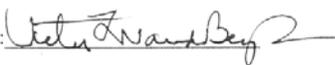
The alternative that envisions taking the entire increased right-of-way from the owners along the northern boundary of the existing road right-of-way is the most cost-effective for the State and the least disruptive for our project and for all the other residents inhabiting properties to our East along the south boundary of the right-of-way. The reconstruction costs, relocation costs, economic damages, and the human toll of the north boundary alternative are far less than either of the southern boundary plans for us and for all of our neighbors.

In sum, as an owner and the manager of the Burgundy House Apartments, we support the north boundary alternative. Our reasons are summarized as follows: First, the costs to the State of pursuing the two alternatives that involve condemnation of Burgundy House property would be substantially more than the north boundary alternative, because the costs to the State for removing the buildings and improvements on our site, the costs of repairing and restoring the remainder of the project, the costs of relocating any displaced residents, and the damages resulting to the owners due to lost rental income over the life of the project will greatly exceed the costs of taking property across the street from the school district and restoring the remainder of the school yard, boundary fence and sidewalk. Second, the impact on those residents of our apartment project who would be adversely affected by a taking should be factored into the decision, since they are moderate income people who have a very nice place to live at present. Those residents who will have to be relocated to other housing may not be able to find shelter in the Visalia market that is comparable to the Burgundy House.

For all of the foregoing reasons, we request that the Department of Transportation widen State Route 216/Houston Avenue by taking all necessary private property for that purpose north of the existing road right-of-way.

Respectfully Submitted,

VandenBerghe Properties, Inc., General Partner

By: 

Response to Comment from VandenBerghe Properties, Incorporated

Thank you for your participation in the public hearing process. Your comment has been considered in the evaluation of project alternatives. Alternative 1, widening to the north, was selected as the preferred alternative for the project.

**Comments Made to the Court Reporter at the Public Hearing on
September 19, 2007**

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CALTRANS }
PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING }
STATE ROUTE 216/HOUSTON }
AVENUE 4 - LANE WIDENING }
}

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Visalia, California September 19, 2007

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REPORTER'S TRANSCRIPT OF OPEN FORUM

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Reported By:
Lynne A. Mello, CSR, RPR
License No. 13003

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BE IT REMEMBERED, that pursuant to Notice of
this proceeding, and on Wednesday, the 19th day of
September, 2007, commencing at the hour of 4:54
p.m. thereof, in the cafeteria of Golden Oak
Elementary, 1700 North Lovers Lane, Visalia,
California, before me, LYNNE A. MELLO, a Certified
Shorthand Reporter in and for the State of
California, the following proceedings were held.

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Page 2

1 SARAH GASSNER: This public hearing for
2 the Houston four-lane project is officially open.
3 It's 4:54.

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4
5 Vern Borges: My big questions are the
6 literature says no housing will be affected. The
7 maps show at least 10 to 12 houses will be affected
8 in either of the three different alternatives they
9 have. They tell me that 1 is the most likely to go
10 with, and it shows going through houses. If that's
11 the case where the lines are going, why didn't they
12 draw it right?

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13
14 Hugh McDonald, Attorney: I represent the
15 owners of the Burgundy House Apartments on the SE
16 corner intersection.

17 I want to urge the State to opt for
18 Alternative 1, which takes the right of way north.
19 For my client, any other alternative would entail
20 taking a large percentage of their rental units, up
21 to 15 percent on one of the alternatives. And the
22 cost to repair the residuals after the taking is
23 going to be prohibitive for the State and extremely
24 disruptive for my client.

25 Furthermore, if rental units are taken,

1 we're going to have a damage claim for the life of
2 the property based on the loss of the rental income
3 for the units taken, which will be substantial.

4 And finally, any taking of units or
5 interference with how the property is currently
6 configured is going to severely disrupt the
7 lifestyle of the tenants and have an adverse impact
8 on the entire community. There's a lot of
9 affordable units there. People have a hard enough
10 time finding a decent place to live.

11 So for all those reasons, I'm encouraging
12 the State to opt for Alternative 1.

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14 SARAH GASSNER: This public hearing is
15 now closed at 7:35.

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17 (Whereupon, the proceeding concluded at
18 approximately 7:35 p.m.)

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1 State of California,

2 County of Fresno.

3 I, LYNNE A. MELLO, License No. 13003, a
4 Certified Shorthand Reporter of the State of
5 California, do hereby certify:

6

7 That the said proceeding was taken before me
8 as a Certified Shorthand Reporter at the said time
9 and place and was taken down in shorthand writing
10 by me;

11 That the said proceeding was thereafter, under
12 my direction, transcribed with the use of
13 computer-assisted transcription, and that the
14 foregoing transcript constitutes a full, true, and
15 correct report of the proceedings which then and
16 there took place;

17 That I am a disinterested person to the said
18 action.

19 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed
20 my hand this 28th day of September, 2007.

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22

Lynne A. Mello, CSR, RPR

23

License No. 13003

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Page 5

Response to Comments Told to the Court Reporter at the Public Hearing on September 19, 2007

Thank you for all of the comments on the project.

Response to comment #1 (Mr. Borges): The Summary of Major Potential Impacts from Alternatives (see pages x and xi of this environmental document) was on display at the public hearing on September 19, 2007. The summary shows that each of the proposed alternatives, except the No-Build Alternative, would cause impacts to properties adjoining State Route 216, including the acquisition of homes and businesses. Caltrans has selected Alternative 1 as the preferred alternative for the project. Alternative 1 could displace four single-family homes.

Caltrans engineers were available at the public hearing to answer questions about the aerial mapping that was on display or about properties that might be acquired for the project.

Response to comment #2 (Mr. McDonald): Thank you for your participation in the public hearing process. Your comment has been considered in the evaluation of project alternatives. Alternative 1, widening to the north, was selected as the preferred alternative for the project.

List of Technical Studies that are Bound Separately

Air Quality Studies

- Air Quality Analysis
- Consultation on PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} Hot Spot Conformity Assessment for the State Route 216/Houston Avenue 4-Lane Widening and Realignment (CTIPS ID# 11500000077)

Hazardous Waste Reports

- Aerially Deposited Lead Investigation Report
- Initial Site Investigation

Historic Property Survey Report

- Archaeological Survey Report
- Historic Resource Evaluation Report

Initial Paleontology Study

Location Hydraulic Study

Natural Environment Study

Noise Study Report

Draft Relocation Impact Report

Final Relocation Impact Report

Traffic Study

- Operational Analysis
- Transportation Management Plan and Lane Closure Recommendations

Visual Assessment/Scenic Resource Evaluation

Water Quality Report