

# Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS  
CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

CTC Meeting: August 6, 2013

Reference No.: 2.2c.(2)  
Action Item

From: STEVEN KECK  
Acting Chief Financial Officer

Prepared by: Katrina Pierce  
Division Chief  
Environmental Analysis

Subject: **APPROVAL OF PROJECT FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION OF FUNDING  
07-LA-5; PM R45.4/R59.0  
RESOLUTION E-13-64**

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

The California Department of Transportation (Department) recommends that the California Transportation Commission (Commission), as a responsible agency, approve the attached Resolutions E-13-64.

## **ISSUE:**

The attached resolution proposes to approve for future consideration of funding the following project for which a Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Report (SFEIR) has been completed:

- Interstate 5 (I-5) in Los Angeles County. Addition of a High Occupancy Toll Lane to a portion of I-5 in and near the city of Valencia.

This project in Los Angeles County will construct High Occupancy Toll lanes on Interstate 5 from State Route 14 to Parker Road. The project is fully funded with local funds. The total estimated cost is \$365,000,000 for capital and support. Construction is estimated to begin in Fiscal Year 2014-15.

A copy of the SFEIR has been provided to Commission staff. The decision to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Report was made due to changes to the original project that may have resulted in additional environmental impacts.

The analysis resulted in no additional impacts associated with the project changes. As a result, a SFEIR was prepared for the project.

Attachments

## **CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

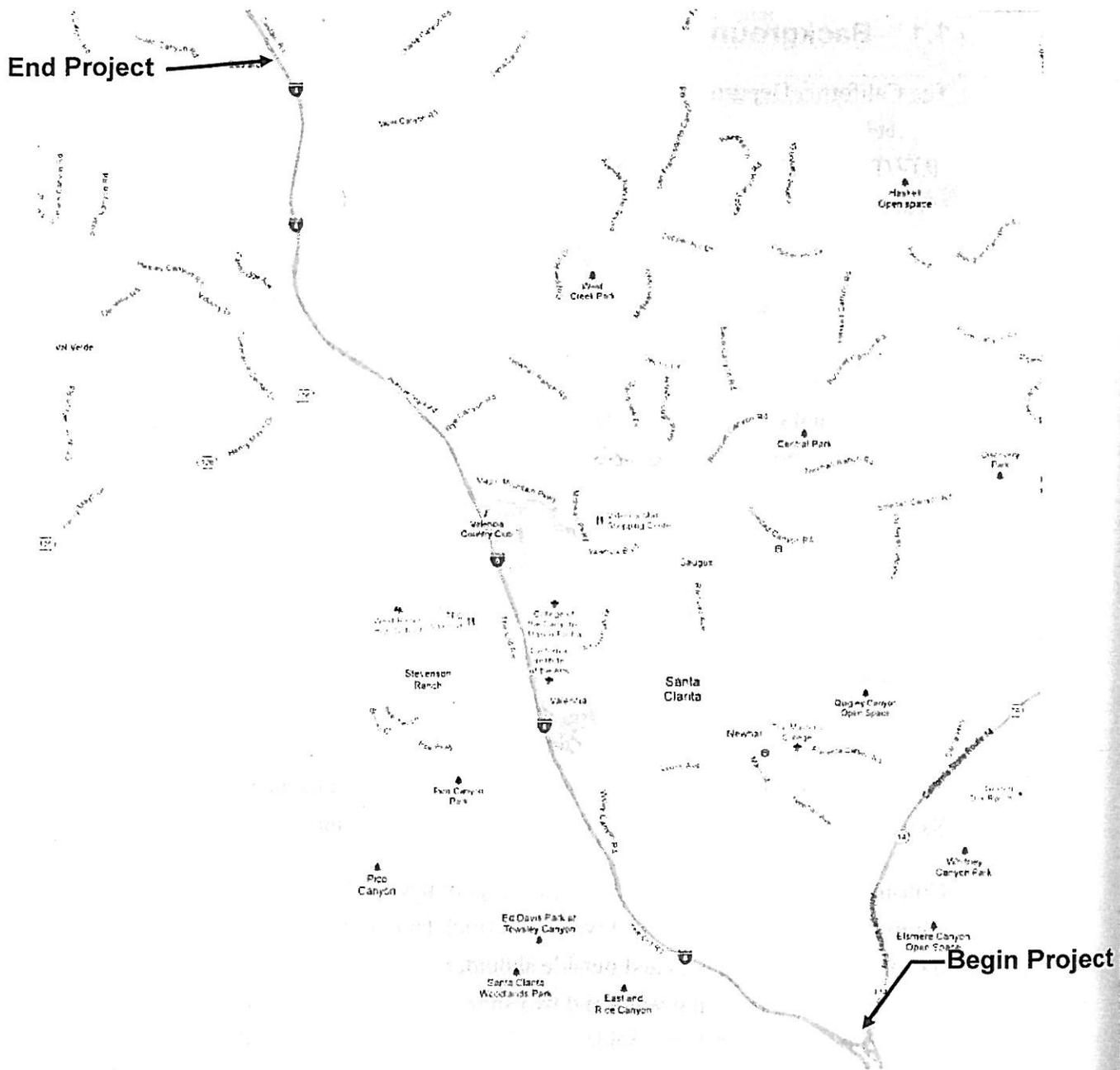
### **Resolution for Future Consideration of Funding**

**07-LA-5, PM R45.4/R59.0**

**Resolution E-13-64**

- 1.1** **WHEREAS**, the California Department of Transportation (Department) has completed an Environmental Impact Report pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines for the following project:
- Interstate 5 (I-5) in Los Angeles County. Addition of a High Occupancy Toll Lane to a portion of I-5 in and near the city of Valencia.
- 1.2** **WHEREAS**, the Department has certified that the Environmental Impact Report has been completed pursuant to CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines for its implementation; and
- 1.3** **WHEREAS**, the California Transportation Commission, as a responsible agency, has considered the information contained in the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Report.
- 1.4** **WHEREAS**, the project will have a significant effect on the environment.
- 1.5** **WHEREAS**, a Statement of Overriding Considerations was prepared; and
- 1.6** **WHEREAS**, Findings were made pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines; and
- 2.1** **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the California Transportation Commission does hereby support approval of the above referenced project to allow for consideration of funding.

Figure 1.1 Project Location



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**  
**CEQA FINDINGS**  
**FOR THE**  
**IINTERSTATES5 HOV/TRUCK LANES PROJECT**  
**STATE ROUTE 14 TO PARKER ROAD**

The following information is presented to comply with California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines (Title 14 California Code of Regulations, Chapter 3, Section 15091) and the Department of Transportation Environmental Regulations (Title 21, California Code of Regulations, Chapter 11, Section 1501). Reference is made to the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project, which is the basic source for the information.

The following adverse effects have been identified in the Final EIR as resulting from the project. Only effects found to be significant have been included.

**AESTHETICS**

**Adverse Environmental Effect:**

The project would result in the removal of trees and vegetation that constitute a scenic view and would require construction of retaining walls and noise barriers. The loss of these visual resources and/or construction of walls/barriers would adversely affect the visual character and quality at some locations in the project area. **Findings:**

Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project, which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the Final EIR.

**Statement of Facts:**

As mitigation, the Final EIR recommended avoidance of mature trees and/or replacement of mature trees at a 1:1 ratio, preparation of a landscape plan, application of wall treatments at Key View 4, and consideration of the use of transparent materials in noise barriers adjacent to residential uses with views of protected open space or of the adjacent Santa Monica or Santa Susan Mountains to reduce visual impacts (Section 3.2.2.1 of the Final EIR).

**AIR QUALITY**

**Adverse Environmental Effect:**

Short-term impacts to air quality are expected during construction due to types of work-performed, construction equipment, and motor vehicles used. The potential exists for air pollutant emissions to be generated in quantities that would exceed the current air quality standards.

**Findings:**

Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project, which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the Final EIR.

**Statement of Facts:**

Construction activities have the potential to produce combustion emissions from various sources such as site grading, utility engines, on-site heavy-duty construction vehicles, equipment hauling materials to and from the site, and motor vehicles transporting the construction crew. During construction, mitigation and control measures included in Appendix IV-A of the 2007 Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) will be implemented to reduce the impact of these emissions (Section 3.2.2.3 of the Final EIR).

**BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

**Significant Environmental Effect:**

The project would result in permanent impacts to 109 oak trees (20 heritage oaks and 89 other oak trees). Because the development of mature trees requires 60-80 years, temporal impacts (i.e., the time between planting and regrowth of trees to the size of existing trees) to the oak woodlands would result in unavoidable long term loss of habitat. This temporal and/or cumulative loss of oak woodlands would be considered significant.

**Findings:**

While measures have been incorporated to substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final EIR, these measures would not fully mitigate the long-term loss of habitat.

**Statement of Facts:**

As mitigation, the Final EIR recommended that any oak trees within Caltrans right-of-way (ROW) with a trunk sizes above 8 inches (in) diameter at breast height (dbh) will be replaced at a mitigation-to-impact ratio of 3:1, if possible. Heritage oaks (oaks with dbh greater than 36 in) will be replaced at a mitigation-to-impact ratio of 10:1, if possible. The Final EIR recommended that the County of Los Angeles Oak Tree Protection Ordinances and the City of Santa Clarita Municipal Code conditions be implemented to ensure that oak trees are protected outside of Caltrans ROW. These conditions may involve, but are not limited to, replacement of oak trees and an oak tree protection plan within the project area to protect

replacement oaks and those oak trees not impacted by the proposed project. Caltrans finds that these mitigation measures are feasible.

However, even with implementation of these conditions, the temporal loss of oak woodlands would not be fully mitigable. Thus, the removal of oak trees is still considered to be a significant and unavoidable impact. (Section 3.2.3 of the Final EIR)

### **MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

#### **Significant Environmental Effect:**

The project would have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment. The temporal loss of oak woodlands would be a long-term impact of the project based on the regrowth rate of these species.

#### **Findings:**

While measures have been incorporated to substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final EIR, because the development of mature large trees requires 60–80 years, the direct removal of this habitat type would result in unavoidable long-term temporal loss of habitat.

#### **Statement of Facts:**

As mitigation, the Final EIR recommended that any oak trees within Caltrans ROW with a trunk sizes above 8 in dbh will be replaced at a mitigation-to-impact ratio of 3:1, if possible. Heritage oaks (oaks with dbh greater than 36 in) will be replaced at a mitigation-to-impact ratio of 10:1, if possible. The Final EIR recommended that the County of Los Angeles Oak Tree Protection Ordinances and the City of Santa Clarita Municipal Code conditions be implemented to ensure that oak trees are protected outside of Caltrans ROW. These conditions may involve, but are not limited to, replacement of oak trees and an oak tree protection plan within the project area to protect replacement oaks and those oak trees not impacted by the proposed project.

Even with implementation of these conditions, the temporal loss of oak woodlands (i.e., the time between planting and regrowth of trees to the size of existing trees) is considered to be significant and unavoidable (Section 3.2.5.1 of the Final EIR).

#### **Significant Environmental Effect:**

The project would result cumulatively considerable long-term impacts related to oak woodlands.

#### **Findings:**

While measures have been incorporated to substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the Final EIR, because the development of mature large trees requires 60–80 years, the direct removal of this habitat type would result in unavoidable long-term loss of habitat. Coupled with the removal of oak woodlands in other parts of southern California, the project's contribution to the loss of oak woodlands (permanent or temporary) would be considered cumulatively considerable.

**Statement of Facts:**

As mitigation, the Final EIR recommended that any oak trees within Caltrans ROW with a trunk sizes above 8 in dbh will be replaced at a mitigation-to-impact ratio of 3:1, if possible. Heritage oaks (oaks with dbh greater than 36 in) will be replaced at a mitigation-to-impact ratio of 10:1, if possible. The Final EIR recommended that the County of Los Angeles Oak Tree Protection Ordinances and the City of Santa Clarita Municipal Code conditions be implemented to ensure that oak trees are protected outside of Caltrans ROW. These conditions may involve, but are not limited to, replacement of oak trees and an oak tree protection plan within the project area to protect replacement oaks and those oak trees not impacted by the proposed project.

Even with implementation of these conditions, the temporal loss of oak woodlands (i.e., the time between planting and regrowth of trees to the size of existing trees) is considered to be cumulatively considerable (Section 3.2.5.2 of the Final EIR).

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**  
**STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS**  
**FOR THE**  
**INTERSTATE 5 HOV/TRUCK LANES PROJECT**  
**STATE ROUTE 14 TO PARKER ROAD**

The following information is presented to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (Title 14 CCR Chapter 3, Section 15903) and the Department of Transportation and California Transportation Commission Environmental Regulations (Title 21 CCR Chapter 11, Section 1501). Reference is made to the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project, which is the basic source for the information.

The implementation of the Selected Alternative (Alternative 2 – Reduced Median) would result in the following impacts have been identified as significant and not fully mitigable:

- **Biological Resources:** Temporal and cumulative loss of oak woodlands (Final EIR Section 3.2.4)

Overriding considerations that support approval of this recommended project were identified in the Purpose and Need section of the Final EIR and are as follows:

**Insufficient Level of Service (LOS).** I-5 is experiencing greater automobile and truck congestion as a result of population growth in north Los Angeles County and goods movement into and out of the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. Freeway traffic volumes are expected to approximately double by 2030, which will continue to cause substantial delays (Final EIR, Chapter 1). Without the project, if capacity improvements are not made, traffic volumes in the project area are forecast to increase by 2030, resulting in a decrease in LOS. The proposed project would reduce existing and forecast traffic congestion on the project segment of I-5 to accommodate planned growth within the study area.

**Operational Deficiencies.** In the existing condition, due to the grades within the project area, slow-moving trucks and vehicles must share existing travel lanes with other vehicles and can obstruct the flow of traffic, thereby increasing congestion and reducing mobility. Given the high percentage of trucks and the conflict and inefficient operations as mentioned above, there is a need to separate trucks from passenger vehicles to improve congestion and delay associated with the interaction of these vehicle types. Without the project, the operational deficiencies would not be addressed. The project would reduce delays to vehicles caused by slower-moving trucks through the hilly southern portion of this segment of I-5. In addition, the

project would improve operational and safety design features to facilitate the movement of people, freight, and goods on the project segment.

Adoption of the Selected Alternative will: (1) reduce delays to vehicles caused by slower-moving trucks through the hilly southern portion of this segment of I-5; (2) improve operational and safety design features to facilitate the movement of people, freight, and goods on the project segment; and (3) reduce existing and forecast traffic congestion on the project segment of I-5 to accommodate planned growth within the study area.

Caltrans concludes, based upon the whole of the record, that the economic, social, and environmental benefits of improved mobility and reduced travel times of the selected alternative outweigh the unavoidable environmental impacts associated with its construction and operation and determines that said benefits override the significance of their associated adverse impacts.