State of California
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

California State Transportation Agency

Memorandum

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To: DEPUTY DISTRICT DIRECTORS
FOR ENVIRONMENTAL

Date: June 30, 2015

Sen:

From: KATRINA C. PIERCE
Chief
Division of Environmental Analysis

Subject: **POLICIES AND PROTOCOLS RELATED TO NOISE STUDIES**

The Division of Environmental Analysis in recent months received a few inquiries regarding the practice and process for the development and re-evaluation of noise studies. This memo has been prepared to clarify the federal policies for noise analysis and to provide clarification to the districts to ensure consistency in district practices related to noise studies for federal or federal-aid highway projects. It is important to note that this memo only reiterates current direction and policies; there has been no change to the existing federal code or Caltrans policies.

Title 23, Part 772 of the Code of Federal Regulations (23CFR772), "Procedures for Abatement of Highway Traffic Noise and Construction Noise," outlines procedures for noise studies that are required for approval of federal or federal-aid highway projects. Transportation projects that (1) are funded with federal-aid highway funds or (2) require federal approval regardless of funding sources are required to analyze noise impacts as outlined by federal regulations in 23CFR772.

The "Traffic Analysis Protocol" dated May 2011, translates requirements related to 23CFR772 into a statewide policy. The internet link to the 2011 Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol (Noise Protocol) is located at http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/env/noise/. In addition to the 2011 Noise Protocol, Caltrans has made available the Technical Noise Supplement (TeNS) 2013 to assist noise analysts with the technical aspects of noise impact analysis. The internet location for TeNS is at http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/env/noise/. Furthermore, Chapter 12 of the Standard Environmental Reference (SER) provides overview of Caltrans noise policies as they relate to transportation project planning and delivery and is located at http://www.dot.ca.gov/ser/vol1/sec3/physical/ch12noise/chap12noise.htm

The 2011 Protocol is a revision of and supersedes the previous 2006 Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol. The following are a few main differences between the 2006 and 2011 Protocols:

- Due to changes in 23CFR772, the 2011 Protocol no longer supports the unusual and extraordinary criteria as a special consideration for noise abatement when reasonableness and feasibility requirements are not met at severely impacted receptors.

- The methodology for calculation of the reasonable allowance per benefitted receptor was simplified between the 2006 and 2011 Protocols and was set at $55,000 for year 2012. The cost allowance for noise abatement is periodically adjusted based on the

Construction Price Index (CPI) and is currently $71,000. Information on the new cost allowance is located at the intranet site http://env.onramp.dot.ca.gov/noise-and-vibration.

- The 2011 Protocol established a Noise Reduction Design Goal as a factor in determining reasonableness. The goal requires that an abatement must be predicted to provide at least 7 dB of noise reduction at one or more of the benefitted receptors for it to be considered reasonable.

Projects that do not have a completed noise study signed and approved by July 13, 2011 are required to comply with the 2011 Traffic Analysis Protocol. If a noise study was completed under the 2006 Protocol and had to be re-evaluated due to design changes after the effective date of the 2011 Protocol, noise abatement commitments found to be both reasonable and feasible under the old policy cannot be dismissed solely based on the updated policy criteria. This interpretation of the current policy is the result of collaboration between FHWA and Caltrans and will be reflected in the next update of the Noise Protocol.

If you have any questions regarding this memorandum, please contact Shaila Chowdhury, Chief, Hazardous Waste, Air, Noise and Paleontology Office at (916) 653 1303 or Bruce Rymer, Senior Transportation Engineer at (916) 653 6073.

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