

Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

CTC Meeting: June 10-11, 2009

Reference No.: 2.2c.(14)
Action Item

From: CINDY McKIM
Chief Financial Officer

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Subject: **APPROVAL OF PROJECT FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION OF FUNDING
11-SD-15, PM 15.7/16.1
RESOLUTION E-09-44**

RECOMMENDATION:

The California Department of Transportation (Department) recommends that the California Transportation Commission (Commission), as a responsible agency, approve the attached Resolution E-09-44.

ISSUE:

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

- Route 15 in San Diego County. Construct a direct access ramp and roadway improvements on Route 15 in Mira Mesa and Scripps Ranch communities. (PPNO 0672G)

This project in San Diego County would construct a direct access ramp on Route 15 from just south of Carroll Canyon Road Overcrossing to just north of Mira Mesa Boulevard Undercrossing. The project is programmed in the 2008 State Transportation Improvement Program and includes Congestion Mitigation Air Quality funds, as well as local transportation funds. The estimated cost of the project is \$75 million, capital and support. Construction is estimated to begin in Fiscal Year 2011-12.

A copy of the FEIR has been provided to Commission staff. Issues with traffic and visual resources impacting various roadway segments under both 2015 and 2020-year conditions and unmitigable changes to the visual composition resulted in an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) being completed for this project. As a result, a Statement of Overriding Considerations was adopted and Findings were made pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines.

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The Department has approved this project for construction. This approval and the filing of the Notice of Determination with the Office of Planning and Research will satisfy the environmental requirements for this stage of the project planning process.

Attachments

CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Resolution for Future Consideration of Funding

11-SD-15, PM 15.7/16.1

Resolution E-09-44

- 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:
- Route 15 in San Diego County. Construct a direct access ramp and roadway improvements on Route 15 in Mira Mesa and Scripps Ranch communities. (PPNO 0672G)
- 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 Environmental Impact Report; and
- 1.4** **WHEREAS**, the project will have a significant effect on the environment, and a Statement of Overriding Considerations was adopted, and Findings were made pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines.
- 2.1** **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the California Transportation Commission does hereby adopt the Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations and approve the above referenced project to allow for future consideration of funding.

FINDINGS

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FINDINGS FOR MIRA MESA/SCRIPPS RANCH DIRECT ACCESS RAMP PROJECT SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

The following information is presented to comply with State CEQA Guidelines (Title 14 California Code of Regulations, Chapter 3, Section 15901) and the Department of Transportation and California Transportation Commission Environmental Regulations (Title 21, California Code of Regulations, Chapter 11, Section 1501). Reference is made to the Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (FEIR/EA) for the Project, which is the basic source for the information.

The following effects have been identified in the EIR as resulting from the project. Effects found not to be significant have not been included.

Aesthetics/Visual Quality

Adverse Environmental Effects:

The Project will introduce dominant, contrasting elements that will cause major changes to the composition of the visual environment.

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 FEIR/EA.

Statement of Facts:

While these measures will help integrate the Project features with the surrounding area, they will not reduce the visible scale of them. Implementation of the following measures will reduce most of the Project visual impacts to below a level of significance:

- A comprehensive landscape concept plan shall be developed and implemented. This plan shall be consistent with the existing context and established I-15 corridor design themes and details, and will include the following landscape features:
 - Drought tolerant and sustainable plant palettes, and
 - Vine planting at retaining walls and noise attenuation walls to reduce the visual scale of the walls and to act as a graffiti deterrent.

- Architectural treatment – texture, pattern and color – consistent with corridor-wide design themes and the mitigation measures outlined below may also be used.
- Lighting and signage attachments shall occur at pilasters or be incorporated in other architectural features consistent with established corridor-wide design themes.
- The visual screening wall along the Hillery Drive overcrossing shall be 1.5-m (5-ft)-high on a 0.9-m (3-ft)-high concrete barrier. The wall shall be colored and textured. The exterior wall may have an element attached to the wall that would create a relief pattern and add shadows to reduce the monolithic quality of the wall. Enhanced materials, such as mosaic tiles, weathering steel accents and art designed by a local artist may also be considered in the design.
- MSE walls for the Hillery Drive overcrossing structure shall incorporate the following design features:
 - The face of the panels shall have a 100-mm (4-in) relief pattern, tan color and an exposed aggregate texture;
 - The panel relief design shall be at an appropriate scale for a neighborhood area; and
 - The MSE wall shall be designed to cast shadow patterns and add spatial articulation to relieve monolithic surfaces.
- Retaining walls of masonry block shall incorporate architectural treatments, including tan color, textured block, wall pilasters, and wall caps.
- Gentries, signage and other freeway appurtenances shall be designed to be consistent with the smaller scale of the local street.
- Street trees and landscaping shall be retained to the highest extent possible during construction of Project features at Hillery Drive.
- Replacement of street trees, shrubs and groundcover, and repair of existing irrigation systems shall be considered and implemented, if the property owner who currently maintains the landscaping in the City of San Diego R/W agrees to provide landscaping maintenance and water. Street trees, where replaced, shall be installed in accordance with City of San Diego guidelines.
- Architectural treatments in raised medians shall consist of enhanced paving or rock cobble mulch.

- Enhanced paving shall be used where the wide pedestrian walkway, extending from the Edwards Cinemas building to Miramar College, meets the sidewalk at Hillery Drive.
- Metal fencing and safety railing at local streets shall use masonry block pilasters, where appropriate, and have similar design and color as the existing fencing/ railing.
- Bicycle lanes and other urban amenities on the local street sections of structures shall be consistent with local Community Plan guidelines and the corridor-wide design themes.

Cultural Resources

Adverse Environmental Effects:

In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(f), the project has made provisions for historical or archaeological resources accidentally discovered during construction.

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 FEIR/EA.

Statement of Facts:

Implement of the following measures will avoid impacts to unknown buried cultural resources:

- If cultural materials are discovered during construction, all earth-moving activity within and around the immediate discovery area will be diverted until a qualified archaeologist can assess the nature and significance of the find.
- If human remains are discovered, State Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 states that further disturbances and activities shall cease in any area or nearby area suspected to overlie remains, and the County Coroner contact. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5097.98, if the remains are thought to be Native American, the Department will notify the Native American Heritage Commission, who will provide a Most Likely Descendant (MLD). The Department will contact the MLD. Department Professional Qualified Staff (PSQ) will work with the MLD on the respectful treatment and disposition of the remains. Further provisions of PRC 5097.98 will be followed, as applicable.

Geology and Soils

Adverse Environmental Effects:

The Project is located in a seismically active region of California. The potential for seismically-induced liquefaction and settlement is identified as low to moderate. Topsoils and geologic deposits identified at the Project site may also range from moderate to highly expansive.

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 FEIR/EA.

Statement of Facts:

The Project Geotechnical Report (*Geotechnical Reconnaissance Mira Mesa/Scripps Ranch Direct Access Ramp, Hillery Drive and Galvin Avenue Alternatives, 2007*) recommends that "...a comprehensive geotechnical evaluation, including subsurface exploration and laboratory testing, be conducted prior to design and construction." This evaluation, which is a standard Department requirement, will assess subsurface conditions in proposed development areas and provide related information/recommendations regarding engineering characteristics of associated earth materials. From these data, specific recommendations will be generated for applicable geotechnical issues to ensure conformance with associated regulatory and design requirements. The following types of standard design and construction measures may be considered in the noted geotechnical investigation.

- Potential liquefaction and seismically induced settlement effects (Hillery Drive Alternative only) will be addressed through efforts such as: (1) conformance with applicable seismic parameters from sources, including Department standards and the UBC/CBC; (2) removal and recompaction or replacement of materials susceptible to liquefaction or seismic settlement; (3) in-place soil and/or structural modifications, such as compaction grouting, soil mixing, dynamic compaction, or driving piles below liquefiable layers; and (4) use of subdrains in appropriate areas.
- Potential impacts related to landslide/slope stability hazards will be addressed through efforts such as: (1) removal of potentially unstable landslide deposits; (2) stabilization of applicable areas through buttressing or use of rock anchors; (3) placement of energy dissipators in appropriate areas; and (4) implementation of appropriate BMPs for erosion/sediment control.

- Expansive or compressive characteristics in surficial materials will be addressed through efforts such as: (1) removal and recompaction or replacement of unsuitable soils; (2) selective placement and/or capping of expansive soils; (3) use of subdrains and moisture conditioning in areas of expansive soils; (4) soil mixing and use of specially designed foundations or slabs in areas of expansive deposits; (5) use of in-place soil modifications in areas of compressible soils (as described above for liquefaction/seismic settlement); (6) surcharging of compressible materials left in place to accelerate consolidation rates; and (7) settlement monitoring in areas of compressible soils.

Hazardous Waste/Materials

Adverse Environmental Effects:

Lead-containing paints (LCPs) on surfaces such as roadway striping, metal guardrails and piping, as well as creosote treated wood within metal beam guardrail supports, may be present on the Project site. Asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) may also be present in piping materials.

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 FEIR/EA.

Statement of Facts:

The following measures will avoid impacts related to hazardous waste/materials:

- Wastes and potentially hazardous wastes on the Project site, including old tires, equipment, trash, and drums and containers shall be removed and disposed of in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements.
- Prior to disturbance of any painted surfaces, sampling shall be performed to assess the presence of lead. Suspect surfaces, including guardrails, piping and pavement striping shall be sampled and analyzed, and, if present, appropriate abatement actions shall be implemented in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements.
- Prior to renovation or demolition of bridge components, surveys shall be conducted of affected bridges to evaluate the presence, locations and quantities of ACMs. Suspect materials, including bridge joints and piping material shall be sampled and analyzed, and, if present, appropriate

abatement actions shall be implemented in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements.

- If creosote-treated wood is present on the Project site, it shall be characterized, managed and disposed of in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements.
- Prior to commencement of excavation activities, a Site and Community Health and Safety Plan shall be prepared to manage potential health and safety hazards to workers and the public.
- Prior to commencement of excavation activities, a Soil Management Plan shall be prepared to address the notification, monitoring, sampling, testing, handling, storage, and disposal of contaminated media or substances that may be encountered during construction activities.
- If groundwater is anticipated to be encountered during Project construction, a Groundwater Management Plan shall be prepared to address the notification, monitoring, sampling, testing, handling, storage, and disposal of potentially contaminated groundwater.
- Contract specifications shall include references to the potential to encounter contaminated soil, groundwater or other regulated wastes during Project construction.
- Further assessment shall be performed at the Project site if discolored soil suggestive of contamination or other potential environmental issues are encountered during Project construction.

Noise

Adverse Environmental Effects:

Construction activities will result in a short-term, temporary increase in the ambient noise level. Several sensitive receptors close to the Project may be exposed to noise levels as high as 90 dBA $L_{eq}(h)$.

Findings:

Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project, which avoid or substantially lessen the significant short-term construction noise effect as identified in the FEIR/EA.

Statement of Facts:

Short-term construction noise impacts will be avoided or minimized with implementation of the following noise control measures during Project construction:

- Compliance with the Department's Standard Specifications 7-1.011 (July 1999) Sound Control Requirements. "The contractor shall comply with all local sound control and noise level rules, regulations and ordinances which apply to any work performed pursuant to the contract. Each internal combustion engine, used for any purpose on the job or related to the job, shall be equipped with a muffler of a type recommended by the manufacturer. No internal combustion engine shall be operated on the project without said muffler."
- Idling equipment shall be turned off.
- A noise-control monitoring program shall be implemented.
- Noisier operations shall be performed during the times least sensitive to receptors.
- Temporary sound walls shall be constructed during construction, as appropriate.
- The community shall be informed of anticipated construction activities and schedules.

Paleontological Resources

Adverse Environmental Effects:

Grading and excavation activities associated with the Project may affect previously undisturbed portions of the high sensitivity Old Paralic Deposits and Stadium Conglomerate, as well as previously undisturbed and moderately sensitive volcanoclastic units of the Santiago Peak Volcanics.

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 FEIR/EA.

Statement of Facts:

Implementation of a Paleontological Monitoring Plan will avoid significant impacts to paleontological resources. The Paleontological Monitoring Plan will include

the following types of measures, with detailed requirements to be determined during plan preparation:

- A qualified principal paleontologist (M.S. or Ph.D. in paleontology or geology, and familiar with paleontological procedures and techniques) will be retained to be present at pre-grading meetings to consult with grading and excavation contractors.
- A paleontological monitor, under the direction of the qualified principal paleontologist, will be on-site to inspect cuts for fossils at all times during original grading involving sensitive geologic formations (i.e., previously undisturbed areas of the Old Paralic Deposits, Stadium Conglomerate and/or volcanoclastic members of the Santiago Peak Volcanics).
- When fossils are discovered, the paleontologist (or paleontological monitor) will recover them. Construction work in these areas will be halted or diverted to allow recovery of fossil remains in a timely manner.
- Fossil remains collected during the monitoring and salvage portion of the mitigation program will be cleaned, repaired, sorted, and cataloged.
- Prepared fossils, along with copies of all pertinent field notes, photos and maps, will be deposited in a scientific institution with paleontological collections.
- A final report will be completed that outlines the results of the Paleontological Monitoring Program.
- Where feasible, selected road cuts or large finished slopes in areas of critically interesting geology may be left exposed, so they can serve as important educational and scientific features.

Traffic and Transportation/Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Adverse Environmental Effects:

Traffic impacts to roadway segments and intersections under 2015 conditions will occur at:

- Hillery Drive, between Greenford Drive and Westview Parkway,
- Greenford Drive, between Mira Mesa Boulevard and Flanders Drive,
- Mira Mesa Boulevard/Black Mountain Road (PM peak hour),
- Hillery Drive/Greenford Drive (AM and PM peak hours),
- Hillery Drive/Marbury Avenue (AM and PM peak hours),
- Hillery Drive/Black Mountain Road (AM and PM peak hours), and
- Gold Coast Drive/Black Mountain Road (AM and PM peak hours).

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 FEIR/EA.

Statement of Facts:

Implementation of the following mitigation measures will reduce most of these traffic impacts to below a level of significance:

- Traffic calming shall be implemented along Hillery Drive, between Greenford Drive and Black Mountain Road. Specific types of traffic calming shall be determined in consultation with the Department and City of San Diego.

Traffic calming will reduce significant Project impacts to the segments of Hillery Drive, between Greenford Drive and Black Mountain Road, and Greenford Drive to below a level of significance. Traffic calming also will reduce significant Project impacts to Hillery Drive's intersections with Greenford Drive and Marbury Avenue.

The Department/SANDAG conducted a Series 11 model run for the Hillery Drive Alternative Build scenario with the implementation of traffic calming along Hillery Drive, west of Black Mountain Road. The model run concluded that, with the implementation of traffic calming on Hillery Drive, vehicular traffic trying to access the DAR will begin diverting off Mira Mesa Boulevard onto Hillery Drive at Black Mountain Road, rather than diverting at Greenford Drive. The implementation of traffic calming will discourage drivers from taking shortcuts through residential areas to access the DAR. Traffic calming methods that can be implemented to those streets where traffic is being diverted include, but are not limited to, narrow travel lanes, curb extensions (also called bulbouts), and all-way stop traffic control. Determination of the appropriate traffic calming methods will occur during design of the facility. Implementation of these measures will be subject to development of a cooperative agreement with the City of San Diego and public input on the proposal.

Traffic volumes on the segment of Hillery Drive, between Black Mountain Road and Westview Parkway, will not be reduced with the implementation of the identified mitigation measures. The only means to accommodate the increased traffic volumes would be to widen this segment of Hillery Drive, which is not feasible due to R/W constraints. Widening would require acquisition of additional R/W, including several mobile homes within a mobile home park on the north side of the roadway. Impacts to the segment of Hillery Drive, between

Black Mountain Road and Westview Parkway will, therefore, be significant and unmitigated.

Traffic calming will result in significant secondary impacts to the Mira Mesa Boulevard/Black Mountain Road intersection during the AM peak period. As discussed above, traffic calming will divert traffic trips along Hillery Drive, west of Black Mountain Road, back to Mira Mesa Boulevard. As a result, eastbound diverted trips will travel along Mira Mesa Boulevard and turn south at Black Mountain Road, to ultimately access the DAR on Hillery Drive. These diverted trips will cause the Mira Mesa Boulevard/Black Mountain Road intersection to degrade to LOS F and increase delays by approximately six seconds during the AM peak period. There is no feasible mitigation to effectively reduce delays at this intersection. This secondary impact to the Mira Mesa Boulevard/Black Mountain Road intersection, therefore, will be significant and unmitigated.

- A northbound right-turn lane shall be provided at the intersection of Mira Mesa Boulevard/Black Mountain Road. This improvement is proposed to be constructed as part of the proposed Casa Mira View project. If, however, it is not constructed in conjunction with the Casa Mira View project, then the Department will implement this improvement.

With this improvement, the delay at the intersection with the Project will be reduced below 2015 without Project volumes.

- A northbound, right-turn lane shall be provided at the intersection of Hillery Drive/Black Mountain Road. This improvement is proposed to be constructed as part of the proposed Casa Mira View project. If, however, it is not constructed in conjunction with the Casa Mira View project, then the Department will implement this improvement.
- The signal at the intersection of Hillery Drive/Black Mountain Road shall be modified to allow for northbound right-turn overlap.

With these improvements, delays at the intersection under 2015 conditions will be reduced by approximately 60 percent during the AM peak hour, and by approximately 70 percent during the PM peak hour; however, they will still substantially exceed two seconds. There is no feasible mitigation to effectively reduce delays at this intersection. Impacts to the Hillery Drive/Black Mountain Road intersection, therefore, will remain significant and unmitigated under 2015 conditions.

- The signal at the Gold Coast Drive/Black Mountain Road intersection shall be modified to allow for eastbound right-turn overlap.

With this improvement, significant Project impacts will be reduced to below a level of significance, as delays at this intersection with the Project will be reduced to below 2015 without Project volumes.

Cumulative Impacts

Adverse Environmental Effects:

Cumulative traffic impacts to the following roadway segments and intersections will occur under 2030 conditions:

- Hillery Drive, between Greenford Drive and Westview Parkway
- Greenford Drive, between Mira Mesa Boulevard and Flanders Drive
- Hillery Drive/Greenford Drive (AM and PM peak hours)
- Hillery Drive/Marbury Avenue (AM and PM peak hours)
- Hillery Drive/Black Mountain Road (PM peak hour)
- Gold Coast Drive/Black Mountain Road (AM and PM peak hours)

The Project will also contribute to cumulative visual effects.

Findings:

Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project, which avoid or substantially lessen the significant cumulative effects as identified in the FEIR/EA.

Statement of Facts:

Implementation of the mitigation measures identified above will reduce most of the 2030 traffic impacts to below a level of significance. Specifically, traffic calming will reduce Project impacts on Hillery Drive, between Greenford Drive and Black Mountain Road, and Greenford Drive to less than significant. Traffic calming also will reduce impacts to Hillery Drive's intersections with Greenford Drive and Marbury Avenue to less than significant.

As with the 2015 condition, traffic volumes on the segment of Hillery Drive, between Black Mountain Road and Westview Parkway, will not be reduced with the implementation of the identified mitigation measures. Impacts to this segment of Hillery Drive, therefore, will remain significant and unmitigated. Furthermore, the mitigation measures, namely traffic calming, will result in a significant secondary impact to the Mira Mesa Boulevard/Black Mountain Road intersection during the AM peak period (as discussed above). This secondary impact to the Mira Mesa Boulevard/Black Mountain Road intersection, therefore, will also be significant and unmitigated.

The identified improvements to the Hillery Drive/Black Mountain Road intersection will reduce impacts at this intersection during the PM peak period to below a level of significance.

The signal improvements at the Gold Coast Drive/Black Mountain Road intersection will reduce Project impacts to below a level of significance, because delays at this intersection will be reduced to below 2030 without Project volumes.

While the visual/aesthetics mitigation measures identified above will help integrate the Project features with the surrounding area, they will not reduce the visible scale of them. Therefore, the cumulative visual impact caused by Project features will remain unmitigated.

STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FINDINGS FOR THE I-15 MIRA MESA/SCRIPPS RANCH DIRECT ACCESS RAMP PROJECT IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

The following information is presented to comply with Section 15093 of the State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, and Section 1509.6 of the Department of Transportation and California Transportation Commission Environmental Regulations. Reference is made to the Final Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Assessment (EIR/EA) for the project, which is the basic source for the information.

The following impacts have been identified in the Final EIR/EA as potentially significant and not fully mitigable under CEQA.

Aesthetics/Visual Quality

In the EIR/EA Six key views were identified to illustrate typical views of the Hillery Drive Alternative site and surrounding area from locations accessible to the public. In addition to these six key views, two other locations were evaluated for Project visual effects, including Westview Parkway, south of Mira Mesa Boulevard, and the Legacy Apartment complex. Of the six key views and two additional locations presented in the EIR/EA, key views 1 through 4, and the legacy apartment complex result in significant impacts.

Key View 1 is located along the pedestrian walkway paralleling the private college driveway, near the Hillery Drive cul-de-sac, and looks northeast at the cul-de-sac, the entrance to the Legacy Apartments, and a building within the apartment complex (refer to Figure 2.6-3). The Hillery Drive Alternative would introduce dominant, contrasting elements that would cause major changes to the composition of visual elements in the area represented in Key View 1 (refer to Figure 2.6-11). This high level of change in the visual environment, combined with an anticipated high viewer response, would result in significant visual impacts.

Key View 2 is located at the sidewalk abutting the southern side of Hillery Drive, across from the southern terminus of Westview Parkway. It looks east along Hillery Drive at the sidewalk, roadway, parked cars, and buildings aligned along the road (refer to Figure 2.6-4). The newly introduced Hillery Drive Alternative elements would introduce dominant elements that would contrast with the existing visual environment and would cause a moderate degree of change to the composition of visual elements in the area represented in Key View 2, reducing the moderate visual character and quality to moderately low levels (refer to Figure 2.6-12). This level of change, combined with an anticipated moderately high viewer response, would result in significant visual impacts.

Key View 3 is located at the edge of a residential parking lot, from a walkway that provides entry to the Legacy Apartment complex and looks south toward Hillery Drive, the Distribution and Computing Center building within Miramar College, and Legacy Apartment buildings (refer to Figure 2.6-5). The Hillery Drive Alternative would introduce

large, geometric elements into the area that would visually encroach into the existing visual environment, reducing the amount of visible vegetation, and causing a substantial degree of change to the composition of visual elements in the area represented in Key View 3 (refer to Figure 2.6-13). This moderately high level of change in the visual environment, combined with an anticipated high viewer response, would result in significant visual impacts.

Key View 4 is located on the north side of Hillery Drive, at the pedestrian walkway that extends parallel to the east side of the private college driveway, through the Legacy Apartment complex, and terminates at the Edwards Cinemas within the Mira Mesa Market Center, north of the apartments. This view looks southeast at the Legacy Apartment complex and Hillery Drive cul-de-sac (refer to Figure 2.6-6). The Hillery Drive Alternative would introduce new large, geometric structures, columns and walls that would visually encroach into the visual environment represented by Key View 4, reducing the visual quality of the area and causing a major change to the visual character (refer to Figure 2.6-14). This moderately high level of change in the visual environment, combined with an anticipated high viewer response, would result in significant visual impacts.

Legacy Apartment Complex. The Project features of the Hillery Drive alternative would be seen by residents of the Legacy Apartments complex on the grounds in these areas, and by motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists on the nearby streets and walkways (as represented in Key Views 1 through 4, discussed above). From the access road, residents mainly would see the support columns and the shadows cast by the overhead structure and walls, similar to views represented in Key View 1. The overhead structure and resulting cast shadows would appear larger than in views of the structures from other areas. Additionally, less vegetation would be visible in the area, due to the removal of the existing trees and landscaped median. The Hillery Drive Alternative would cause a high level of change in the visual environment of this area. In combination with the anticipated moderately high to high viewer response, the Hillery Drive Alternative would result in significant unmitigable visual impacts.

Transportation/Traffic

With implementation of the traffic mitigation measures identified in the EIR/EA Section 3.3, cumulative traffic impacts would be reduced to below a level of significance, except for the segment of Hillery Drive, between Black Mountain Road and Westview Parkway. Traffic volumes on the segment of Hillery Drive, between Black Mountain Road and Westview Parkway, would not be reduced with implementation of the identified mitigation measures, resulting in a significant and unmitigated cumulative traffic impact. Additionally, the identified mitigation would result in a significant cumulative secondary traffic impact to the intersection of Mira Mesa Boulevard/Black Mountain Road during the AM peak hour. The proposed mitigation would divert traffic trips along Hillery Drive back to Mira Mesa Boulevard, which would cause the Mira Mesa Boulevard/Black Mountain Road intersection to degrade to LOS F, resulting in a significant and unmitigated traffic impact.

Overriding considerations that support approval of this recommended program are as follows:

Program Benefits

Capacity and Transportation Demand

A traffic report was prepared for the Project that analyzed traffic conditions on local roadways and intersections in the Project area under existing and future conditions. Select roadway segments along Mira Mesa Boulevard, Carroll Canyon Road and Greenford Drive currently operate at levels of service (LOS) E or F. Mira Mesa Boulevard currently operates at LOS E or F between the I-15 northbound ramps and Greenford Drive. Carroll Canyon Road operates at LOS E between the I-15 southbound ramps and I-15 northbound ramps. Greenford Drive operates at LOS F between Hillery Drive and Flanders Drive. In addition, the following intersections in the Project area operate at LOS E or F:

- Mira Mesa Boulevard/Black Mountain Road (LOS E during AM peak period and LOS F during PM peak period)
- Hillery Drive/Greenford Drive (LOS E during PM peak period)
- Hillery Drive/Marbury Avenue (LOS F during PM peak period)
- Gold Coast Drive/Black Mountain Road (LOS E during AM peak period and LOS F during PM peak period)
- Carroll Canyon Road/I-15 southbound ramps (LOS E during AM peak period)
- Black Mountain Road/Capricorn Way (LOS F during PM peak period)

As the Project area continues to develop with residential, commercial, and industrial/business park uses under existing land use plans, the Project area has experienced population growth and associated traffic that has increased demand and capacity on the surrounding roadway and freeway system. Between 2004 and 2030, the San Diego region's population is projected to increase by 32 percent, with an increase of approximately one million people. Within that same period, the population within the Mira Mesa community is projected to increase 23 percent.

Residential and employment densities in Mira Mesa also are expected to increase by 11 percent and eight percent, respectively. Population within the Scripps Miramar Ranch community is projected to increase by eight percent, with a 10-percent employment density increase. The residential density within Scripps Miramar Ranch is actually expected to decrease by two percent (SANDAG 2030 Cities/County Forecast). These population increases and resultant demand for additional housing, employment and public facilities will continue to encumber the existing transportation system. Additionally, the following roadway segments and intersections are projected to operate at an LOS E or F under 2030 conditions:

- Mira Mesa Blvd, between the I-15 northbound ramps and the I-15 southbound ramps (LOS F)
- Mira Mesa Blvd, between I-15 southbound ramps and Westview Parkway (LOS F)
- Mira Mesa Blvd, between Westview Parkway and Black Mountain Road (LOS F)
- Mira Mesa Blvd, between Black Mountain Road and Marbury Avenue (LOS F)
- Mira Mesa Blvd, between Marbury Avenue and Greenford Drive (LOS E)
- Hillery Dr, between Greenford Dr and Black Mountain Rd (LOS F)
- Greenford Dr, between Hillery Dr and Flanders Dr (LOS F)
- Mira Mesa Blvd/Black Mountain Rd (LOS F during AM and PM peak periods)
- Mira Mesa Blvd/Westview Pkwy (LOS F during AM and PM peak periods)
- Mira Mesa Blvd/I-15 southbound ramps (LOS E during AM peak period)
- Hillery Dr/Greenford Dr (LOS E during PM peak period)
- Hillery Dr/Marbury Ave (LOS F during PM peak period)

- Gold Coast Dr/Black Mountain Rd (LOS E during AM peak period and LOS F during PM peak period)
- Carroll Canyon Rd/I-15 southbound ramps (LOS F during AM peak period and LOS E during PM peak period)
- Carroll Canyon Rd/I-15 northbound ramps (LOS F during AM peak period)
- Black Mountain Rd/Capricorn Way (LOS F during PM peak period)

Land Use

The Project is proposed within a developed, urbanized area comprised of a variety of land uses, including industrial/business park, commercial retail, office, single- and multi-family residential, schools, and parks. Major activity centers, such as the Mira Mesa Market Center, Miramar College and existing and approved transit facilities, are located west of I-15. Local land use plans that govern the Project area call for a continuation of higher density development along this portion of the I-15 corridor, as well as maximization of transit opportunities to provide connections to the community's activity centers and to the rest of the region. This is also consistent with SANDAG's RCP. As such, there is a need to maximize integration of existing and planned land uses with transportation facilities.

Modal Interrelationships and System Linkages

Transit service and facilities are provided in the Mira Mesa community, including the Project area. Several local and express bus routes operate in the Project vicinity, primarily along Mira Mesa Boulevard, Black Mountain Road, and Carroll Canyon Road. Regional routes also are provided that utilize I-15. In addition, three park-and-ride facilities are located in the Project area, including one at the northwest corner of the I-15/Mira Mesa Boulevard interchange, one on the north side of Hillery Drive, adjacent to a multi-family residential development, and one at the southeast corner of the Hillery Drive/Black Mountain Road intersection, within Miramar College.

Approved transit/transportation facilities in the Project area include a transit center at Miramar College and the I-15 Managed Lanes facility. SANDAG will construct the Mira Mesa/Miramar College Transit Center immediately south of the intersection of Hillery Drive and Westview Parkway, in the northeastern portion of the Miramar College campus. This transit center will serve access and transfer needs for existing local and express bus routes and also will accommodate planned Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) services. The transit center will serve as the key access point to BRT services for the Mira Mesa and Scripps Miramar Ranch communities, as well as the regional transfer point between BRT services and local/express bus routes, connecting the I-15 corridor with Sorrento Mesa, University City, and the University of California, San Diego. Together with the I-15 Managed Lanes Facility, augmented transit service will be provided in the Project vicinity. The Project would provide a direct link to the approved I-15 Managed Lanes facility, including four managed lanes in the center median of I-15. These managed lanes will provide flexibility to alter lane configurations through movable barriers to improve corridor capacity for HOV, transit, and FasTrak users in the peak direction. The Managed Lanes facility also will feature intermediate access points along the general purpose lanes, as well as four approved DARs that connect to transit centers or the local street system. This Project proposes an additional DAR that would connect the local street system directly to the I-15 Managed Lanes facility.

The Project would also accommodate existing transit and planned BRT operations along the I-15 corridor. The BRT system is comprised of high frequency, all-day plus peak period commuter express services that would utilize transit centers along the I-15 and park-and-ride lots as the key access point to/from adjacent communities. The BRT system will be connected to the managed lanes via DARs, which allow BRT buses, HOVs, and FasTrak users to bypass existing congested freeway interchanges. Approved transit centers along I-15 include the Mira Mesa/Miramar College Transit Center, Sabre Springs/Peñasquitos Transit Center, Rancho Bernardo Transit Center, Del Lago Transit Center, and existing Escondido Transit Center. Four approved DARs will be constructed to provide connections (directly or via local streets) to the approved transit centers, with the exception of the Mira Mesa/Miramar Transit Center.

The Preferred Alternative

The following discussion explains the rationale for choosing the Preferred Alternative.

The Draft EIR/EA analyzed two action alternatives, the Hillery Drive Alternative and the Galvin Avenue Alternative, as well as the No Action Alternative. After full consideration of the comments received on the Draft EIR/EA and in coordination with federal and State regulatory agencies, the Hillery Drive Alternative was identified as the Preferred Alternative for the location of the Mira Mesa Direct Access Ramp in the Final EIR/EA.

For most environmental issues, the two action alternatives would have comparable environmental impacts. Either of the action alternatives would be expected to have similar potential impacts to growth, community impacts, utilities/emergency services, water quality and storm water runoff, geology/soils/Seismic/Topography, paleontology, Hazardous Waste, Air Quality, Energy, Natural Communities, Threatened and endangered species, and cumulative effects.

In terms of aesthetics, the Hillery Drive Alternative would introduce dominant, contrasting elements that would cause major changes to the composition of the visual environment while the Galvin Avenue Alternative would cause a moderate change to the visual environment.

In terms of noise, the Hillery Drive Alternative would result in 13 locations (representing 33 homes) would approach or exceed the noise abatement criteria (NAC). For the Galvin Avenue Alternative, six receptor location (representing 18 homes) would approach or exceed the NAC, and one location would increase by more than 12 decibels. Both alternatives would result in temporary construction impacts.

In terms of traffic the Hillery Drive Alternative results in impacts to seven roadway segments and/or intersections under 2015 conditions, and six roadway segments and/or intersections under 2030 conditions. The Galvin Avenue intersection results in impacts to three roadway segments and/or intersections under 2015 conditions, and no impacts under the 2030 conditions.

In terms of Land Use the Hillery Drive alternative would be consistent with local planning document while the Galvin Avenue Alternative is inconsistent with land use designations in the Mira Mesa Community Plan.

Implementation of the Galvin Avenue Alternative would require modification to I-15, including widening portions of the freeway, realignment of freeway ramps at Mira Mesa Boulevard, and widening of the Mira Mesa Boulevard undercrossing. These modifications would not be required for the Hillery Drive Alternative.

Project costs for right of way acquisition, construction, and support activities would differ between the two alternatives. Estimated Right of Way costs for the Hillery Drive Alternative are 9.7 million dollars, while costs for the Galvin Avenue Alternative are 17.6 million dollars. Construction costs for the Hillery Drive Alternative are 40.7 million dollars, while costs for the Galvin Avenue Alternative are 56.7 million dollars. Finally support costs for the Hillery Drive Alternative are 13.3 million dollars, while costs for the Galvin Avenue Alternative are 20.0 million dollars.

While few agencies commented on the Draft EIR/EA, there were many residents who did submit comment letters. In total, 318 comments were received of which the overwhelming majority expressed interest in the Hillery Drive Alternative or opposition to the Galvin Avenue Alternative.

After full consideration of the technical studies prepared, and based on public input, the Hillery Drive Alternative has been identified as the preferred alternative. Additional factors that influenced the decision included the fact that the Galvin Avenue alternative would require additional freeway widening to accommodate the DAR and would cost an additional 30.7 million dollars for design, right-of-way, and construction. At the public hearing and in comments received during the comment period, there was overwhelming public opposition to the Galvin Avenue Alternative. Of the comments received, the majority were related to concerns regarding traffic, safety, noise, and air quality impacts from the Galvin Avenue Alternative. There was a strong focus on impacts as they relate to Hage Elementary School and surrounding streets. It was a combination of all of these factors that lead to the selection of Hillery Drive Alternative as the preferred alternative. It should also be noted, some impacts might be avoided or minimized through design measures to be developed during final design of the preferred alternative; impacts would be mitigated in accordance with recommendations in the EIR/EA.

Caltrans' Project Development Team supports the identification of the Hillery Drive Alternative as the Preferred Alternative because it would fulfill the program's purpose and need, and would have less potential for significant future environmental impacts than other build alternatives.

The benefits provided by the Preferred Alternative, as discussed above, outweigh the potential unavoidable adverse environmental effects. Despite the identification of potentially significant environmental effects in the Final EIR/EA, the proposed Preferred Alternative (Hillery Drive Alternative) will be of great benefit locally.

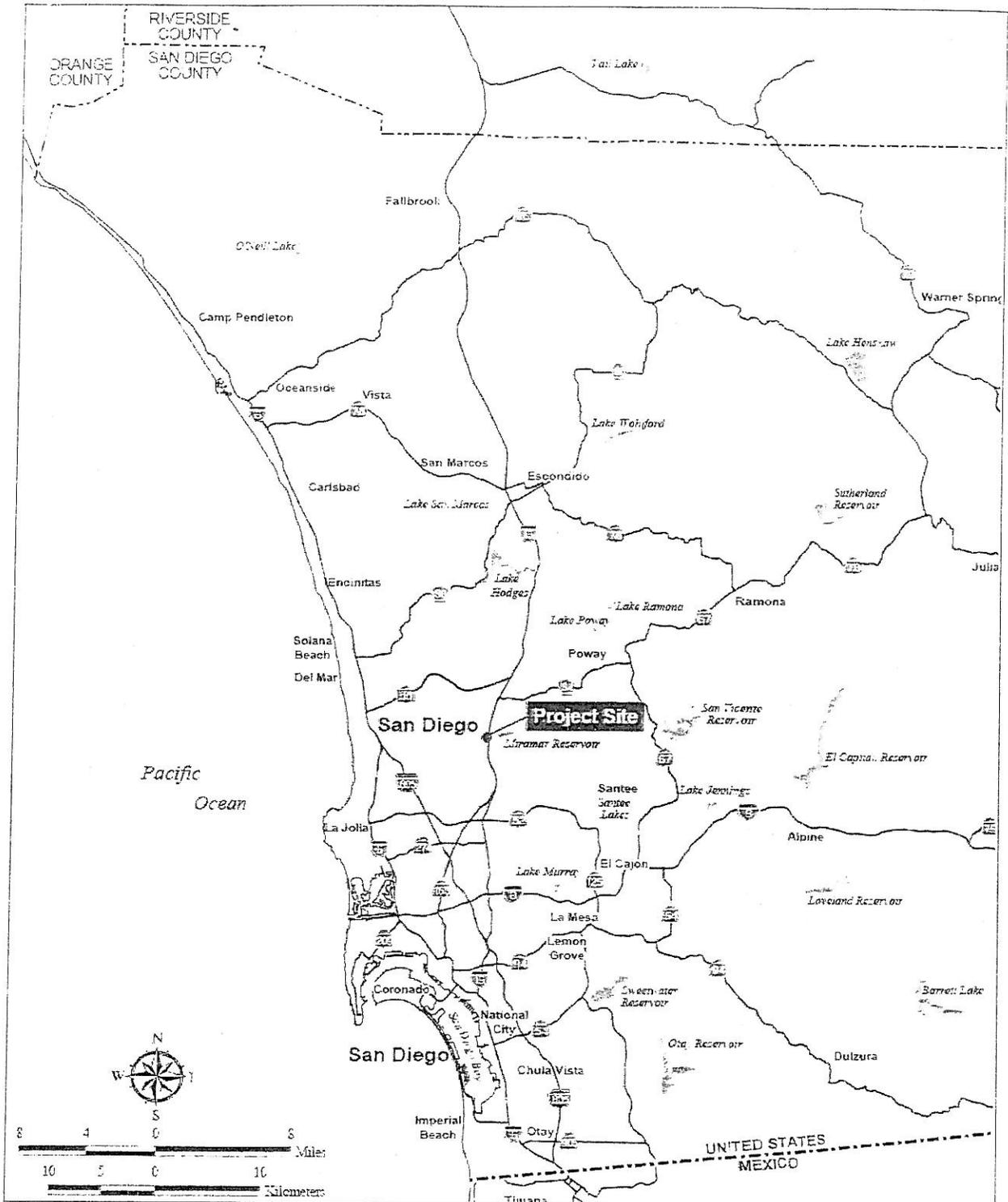


Figure 1
Mira Mesa DAR Project Vicinity Map