

Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

Date: December 28, 2009

From: BIMLA G. RHINEHART
Executive Director

File: Book Item 2.2c (4)
Action

Ref: Final Environmental Impact Report for the Parsons Avenue Corridor Project (Resolution E-10-04)

ISSUE: Should the Commission, as a Responsible Agency, accept the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR), Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations for the Parsons Avenue Corridor Project (project) in Merced County and approve the project for future consideration of funding?

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Commission accept the FEIR, Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations and approve the project for future consideration of funding.

BACKGROUND: The City of Merced (City) is the CEQA lead agency for the project. On June 21, 1993 the City Council approved the project and adopted a mitigation monitoring and reporting program, facts and findings and a statement of overriding considerations. The FEIR was prepared to construct approximately 1.4 miles of new roadway designed to connect existing segments of Parsons Avenue so as to form one continuous 4-lane arterial street. The project will provide a new four-lane Parsons Avenue bridge across Bear Creek, with a bicycle-pedestrian pathway underpass on each side of the creek; a new roadway for Parsons Avenue between Stretch Road and Yosemite Park Way; a grade separation under or over Parsons Avenue at the Santa Fe Railroad tracks and Santa Fe Avenue north of Yosemite Parkway; the widening of Parsons Avenue where necessary to provide for a sufficient right-of-way for the entire length of the Parsons Avenue Corridor to accommodate four lanes of traffic and class II (on-street) bike lanes; and other roadway improvements.

Certain impacts considered unavoidable and not able to be feasibly mitigated to a less than significant level were identified. These impacts related to the acquisition and removal of approximately a dozen single family units; the elimination of on-street parking and approximately 100 driveways; pedestrian, bicycle and public transit access impacts; noise impacts on residential and other noise sensitive land uses adjacent to the roadway; and short term noise impacts during construction. The City found that specific environmental, economic, social and other benefits of the project override the negative impacts.

The City is constructing this project in segments. One segment of the larger project cleared by the certified FEIR is programmed in the Proposition 1B State and Local Partnership Program (SLPP). This project segment, the Parsons Avenue Widening, Highway 140 to Childs Avenue project, involves the completion of right of way acquisition and widening the planned arterial

road to its final lane configuration including curb, gutter, sidewalks and streetlights. This project segment will provide a four lane arterial through the southeast section of the community, relieving congestion on an important transportation corridor of the City. Given the length of time since the FEIR was certified, on August 3, 2009 the City revalidated the FEIR and certified that the FEIR remains valid and no new mitigation measures are required.

The project segment programmed in the SLPP is estimated to cost \$2,850,000 and is fully funded with Proposition 1B SLPP (\$1,000,000), and Local (\$1,850,000) funds. Construction is estimated to begin in FY 2009/10.

On December 18, 2009, the City provided confirmation that the preferred alternative set forth in the FEIR is consistent with the project scope of work programmed by the Commission.

Attachment

- Resolution E-10-04
- Findings and Overriding Considerations
- Project Location

CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Resolution for Consideration of Funding 10 - Merced Resolution E-10-04

- 1.1 **WHEREAS**, the City of Merced (City) has completed a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines for the following project:
 - Parsons Avenue Corridor Project
- 1.2 **WHEREAS**, the City has certified that the Final Environmental Impact Report has been completed pursuant to CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines for its implementation; and
- 1.3 **WHEREAS**, the project will construct approximately 1.4 miles of new roadway designed to connect existing segments of Parsons Avenue so as to form one continuous 4 lane arterial street and other roadway improvements; and
- 1.4 **WHEREAS**, the California Transportation Commission, as a Responsible Agency, has considered the information contained in the Final Environmental Impact Report; and
- 1.5 **WHEREAS**, written findings were made pursuant to CEQA guidelines to indicate that the project will result in significant and unavoidable impacts due to transportation and circulation, public service and facilities, and noise; and
- 1.6 **WHEREAS**, the City adopted a Mitigation Monitoring Program for the monitoring of the implementation of required mitigation measures for the project; and
- 1.7 **WHEREAS**, a Statement of Overriding Considerations was adopted by the City pursuant to CEQA guidelines that the benefits of the project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental impacts of the project; and
- 1.8 **WHEREAS**, the above significant effects are acceptable when balanced against the facts as set forth in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.
- 2.1 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the California Transportation Commission does hereby accept the Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations and approve the above referenced project to allow for future consideration of funding.

RESOLUTION NO. 93-73

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF
MERCED MAKING FINDINGS, ADOPTING A MITIGATION
MONITORING PROGRAM AND A STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING
CONSIDERATIONS, AND CERTIFYING THE FINAL
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE PARSONS AVENUE
CORRIDOR PROJECT

WHEREAS, the thoroughfare designated for the Parsons Avenue Corridor Project is located in the City of Merced, and is identified as an arterial street on City's General Plan Circulation Element; and

WHEREAS, the City Council wishes to retain Parsons Avenue as an arterial thoroughfare; and

WHEREAS, in furtherance of these objectives, the City of Merced hired a consultant, Duncan and Jones Urban and Environmental Planning Consultants, to assist it in preparing the Environmental Impact Report ("EIR"); and

WHEREAS, on February 25, 1993, the Draft EIR was presented to the public at an information public hearing regarding the Parsons Avenue Corridor Project EIR; and

WHEREAS, the Draft EIR was available for public review and comment beginning February 3, 1993 for the forty-five (45) day review period required by law; and

WHEREAS, the Final EIR, which responds to all comments received during the review period, including those received during the informational public hearing of February 25, 1993, was distributed to appropriate bodies for consideration on June 11, 1993; and

WHEREAS, Section 21082.1 of the Public Resources Code, known as the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"), and CEQA

Guideline 15090 requires the City Council to certify that the Final EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA, and that it has independently reviewed and considered the information contained in the Final EIR prior to making a decision on the project; and

WHEREAS, the City Council at a duly noticed public hearing held for the purpose of receiving comments on the Parsons Avenue Corridor Project Final EIR, did hear and consider all comments;

NOW, THEREFORE THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MERCED DOES HEREBY RESOLVE:

SECTION 1. The City Council has reviewed and independently analyzed the information contained in the Final EIR and hereby certifies that the Parsons Avenue Corridor Project Final EIR (the Draft EIR and Responses to Comments, which together comprise the Final EIR, on file in the City Clerk's Office) is complete and adequate and has been completed in compliance with CEQA.

SECTION 2. The City Council, in compliance with CEQA Guideline 15091, adopts the Statement of Facts and Findings set forth in the Statement of Facts and Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations, labeled Exhibit "A", attached hereto and incorporated herein by this reference.

SECTION 3. The City Council, in compliance with CEQA Guideline 15093, adopts the Statement of Overriding Considerations set forth in the Statement of Facts and Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations, labeled Exhibit "A", attached hereto and incorporated herein by this reference.

SECTION 4. The City Council, as required by Section 21081.6 of the Public Resources Code, adopts the Mitigation Monitoring Program for the monitoring of the implementation of the mitigation measures set forth in the Mitigation Monitoring Program, labeled Exhibit "B", attached hereto and incorporated herein by this reference.

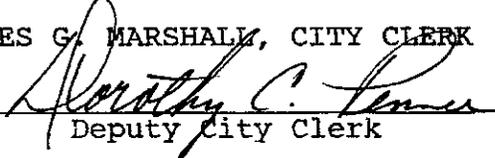
SECTION 5. The City Council hereby directs the City Manager, upon approval of the project, to file or cause to be filed with the Merced County Clerk a Notice of Determination in regard to the environmental impact of the project.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City Council of the City of Merced at a regular meeting held on the 21st day of June, 1993, by the following called vote:

AYES: Council Members: HASSETT, KNUDSEN, DIAS, BERNASCONI, LINDSEY
NOES: Council Members: NONE
ABSTAIN: Council Members: BERGMAN
ABSENT: Council Members: NONE (ONE VACANT)

ATTEST:

JAMES G. MARSHALL, CITY CLERK

BY: 
Deputy City Clerk

APPROVED:


Mayor

FRSCMPET

**STATEMENT OF FACTS AND FINDINGS
AND STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS**

PARSONS AVENUE CORRIDOR PROJECT

The City of Merced City Council, based on its independent judgment, finds and declares that the EIR has been completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines. The City Council finds and certifies that the EIR was presented to the City Council, and the City Council reviewed and considered the information contained in the EIR prior to acting on the project.

Based upon its review of the EIR, the City Council finds that the EIR is an adequate assessment of the potentially significant environmental impacts of the Parsons Avenue Corridor Project, and the application of its independent judgment and sets forth an adequate range of alternatives to this project. The Final EIR is composed of the following elements:

- a. Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Parsons Avenue Corridor Project (including all appendices), (December 1992).
- b. Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Parsons Avenue Corridor Project -- Transportation Technical Appendix (December 1992).
- c. Final Environmental Impact Report for the Parsons Avenue Corridor Project (June 1993).

I. POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

This section identifies the potentially significant impacts of the project, references the mitigation measure required of the project, and makes one of the three findings for each potentially significant impact. Section 15091 of the CEQA Guidelines requires that one or more of the following findings be made for each significant environmental effect:

- A. "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."
- B. "Changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency and not the agency making the finding. Such changes have been adopted by such other agency or can and should be adopted by such other agency."

- C. "Specific economic, social, or other considerations make infeasible the mitigation measures or project alternatives identified in the Final EIR."

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Parsons Avenue Corridor Project would require the completion of approximately 1.4 miles of new roadway designed to connect existing segments of Parsons Avenue so as to form on continuous 4-lane arterial street. The Project consists of the following construction projects to be undertaken by the City:

1. a new four-lane Parsons Avenue bridge across Bear Creek, with a bicycle-pedestrian pathway underpass on each side of the Creek;
2. a new roadway for Parsons Avenue between Stretch Road and Yosemite Park Way (State Route 140), in two approximately 650-foot sections divided by Santa Fe Avenue, on land presently occupied by about fifteen homes on Anderegg Avenue, Santa Fe Avenue, and Stretch Road, and which will require the relocation of the households;
3. a grade separation (either an under- or overpass of Parsons Avenue at the Santa Fe Railroad tracks and Santa Fe Avenue north of Yosemite Parkway (an underpass would require a temporary relocation of the Santa Fe Railroad track and temporary closure of Santa Fe Avenue); and
4. the widening of Parsons Avenue where necessary to provide for a sufficient right-of-way (generally 68 feet curb-to-curb) for the entire length of the Parsons Avenue Corridor to accommodate four lanes of traffic and Class II (on-street) bike lanes.

In addition to these projects, to be initiated and funded by the City, certain segments of the Parsons Avenue Corridor will be built with the financial participation of developers of specific sites adjacent to the Corridor, which include:

5. a new roadway (approximately one half mile in length) connecting the dead end of Parsons Avenue north of Olive Avenue to Yosemite Avenue; and
6. a new roadway connecting the two dead ends of Parsons Avenue south of Bear Creek and north of East 27th Street.

In summary, the major aspects of the Project require a bridge over Bear Creek, a railway/roadway grade separation,

three segments of new roadway, and widening of five segments. The proposed Project is expected to be completed in phases over an unspecified number of years as funding becomes available to finance the improvements identified above, and development of the related sites are approved and roadway fees are assessed.

III. PLANNING AND POLICY CONTEXT

Construction of the Project will require the acquisition and removal of approximately a dozen single family units in an area north of Yosemite Parkway. None of these units are of a unique nature that cannot be replaced with new development in the nearby vicinity. Their elimination would not be considered as a loss of affordable housing. Other homesite acquisitions would occur on an individual basis, and would not represent a significant loss of housing.

As stated in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), Impact 3.1, the Corridor project would have a substantial, unavoidable adverse effects on the residential neighborhoods abutting Parsons Avenue, which would not promote the policies of the General Plan pertaining to the protection of residential areas from the environmental effects of major thoroughfares. There are no mitigation measures which can be defined within the scope of this chapter for reducing the impact on the residential areas adjacent to the Parsons Avenue Corridor. The mitigation measures identified in the following chapters may substantially reduce many of the adverse effects, but some impacts are unavoidable and cannot be feasibly mitigated to a level that is less than significant. Specific environmental, economic, social and other benefits of the project override the negative impact as more fully stated in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

IV. TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

The DEIR studied traffic circulation at nineteen major circulation intersections to determine potential impacts of the project on levels of service. These intersections are listed on pages 47 through 50 for the DEIR.

In the year 2002:

It is projected that the impacts identified as 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 in the DEIR would be created as a result of anticipated growth and not as a result of the project. The implementation of the project and the recommended mitigation measures would have a beneficial effect on these impacts.

Impacts 4.1 through 4.7 resulting from, or partially from the project are potentially significant. These impacts can be mitigated to an acceptable level which would avoid

significant impact by the implementation of the measures identified on pages 87 and 88 of the DEIR. The mitigation measure numbered 4.4 requires adoption by the State Department of Transportation because it has jurisdiction over Yosemite Parkway which is part of State Highway 140.

In the year 2010:

It is projected that the impacts numbered 4.8, 4.9, 4.10 and 4.11 in the DEIR would be created as a result of anticipated growth and not as a result of the project. The implementation of the project and recommended mitigation measures would have a beneficial effect on these impacts.

Impacts 4.12 through 4.17 resulting from, or partially from the project are potentially significant. These impacts can be mitigated to an acceptable level which would avoid the significant impact by the implementation of the measures identified on pages 90 through 92 of the DEIR. The mitigation measure numbered 4.11 requires adoption by the State Department of Transportation because it has jurisdiction over Yosemite Parkway which is part of State Highway 140.

Impacts 4.18 and 4.19 result from the project and are considered to be unmitigable and unavoidable. Impact 4.20 can be mitigated but still remains at a significant level. Specific environmental, economic, and other benefits of the project override the negative impacts as more fully stated in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

V. PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Fire and Police Services

According to the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), implementation of the Parsons Avenue Corridor Project would result in the construction of bridge over Bear Creek, and an under-or overpass at the AT&SF railroad tracks. Such action will provide beneficial impacts on the ability of both the City Fire and Police Departments to respond to emergency calls. The grade separation at the railroad tracts would have the most important benefit for fire protection, because it would assure adequate response time for the area between the railroad tracks and Bear Creek. No mitigation measures are required since the adoption of the mitigation measures from Section IV (Transportation and Circulation) directly apply to emergency response services.

Access to Schools and Parks

The DEIR shows that two elementary schools (Chenoweth and Ada Givens) and a high school currently under construction are directly located on the Parsons Avenue

Corridor. The impact of the Corridor Project on access to the two elementary schools and the new high school would be significant as identified in Impact 5.1 of the DEIR. The pedestrian and bicycle safety mitigation measures listed and defined in Chapter IV (Transportation and Circulation), combined with strategically located signalized intersections including crosswalk-only signals and over- or under-crossings, would reduce the risk of accidents and decrease the perception of Parsons Avenue as a barrier between residential areas and the schools. However, the impact on access to schools by pedestrians and bicyclists, due to new safety hazards on Parsons Avenue will remain significant and unavoidable. Specific environmental, economic, social and other benefits of the project override the negative impact as more fully stated in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

The project would have the beneficial effect of providing substantially improved access between northern and southern Merced, and particularly for those buses transporting students to the new high school facility. The upgraded circulation system would constitute an improvement in the safety of student bus service, especially by providing an alternative to the Bradley Overpass which is a long, narrow traffic carrier that is especially dangerous during foggy or icy conditions.

The City's parks and recreational facilities along the Parsons Avenue Corridor include Rahilly Park, Ada Givens Park, and Joe Herb Park as well as the paved trail system and linear parks which parallel Bear Creek and Black Rascal Creek. The impact of the Corridor Project on access to the parks and recreational facilities would be significant as identified in Impact 5.1 of the DEIR. The pedestrian and bicycle safety mitigation measures listed and defined in Chapter IV (Transportation and Circulation), combined with strategically located signalized intersections including crosswalk-only signals and over- or under-crossings would reduce the risk of accidents and decrease the perception of Parsons Avenue as a barrier between residential areas and the schools. However, the impact on access to parks and recreation facilities by pedestrians and bicyclists, due to new safety hazards on Parsons Avenue will remain significant and unavoidable. Specific environmental, economic, social and other benefits of the project override the negative impact as more fully stated in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

VI. NOISE CONSIDERATIONS

The completion of Parsons Avenue Corridor Project would result in the significant noise impacts on all residential and other noise sensitive land uses adjacent to the roadway. Outdoor areas adjacent to Parsons Avenue would be exposed to

an average day/night level substantially above 60 dB. Noise levels in the front rooms of homes with a direct view of Parsons Avenue would be above the Ldn of 45 dB. Classrooms and church sanctuaries within 315 feet of the roadway and when facing the roadway may be exposed to interior noise levels above 45 dB. As identified in Impact 6.1 of the DEIR, the proposed project would have a significant adverse impacts on both indoor and outdoor noise levels in residential and other sensitive land uses adjacent to the roadway.

Mitigation measures to attenuate adverse noise conditions include the prohibition of truck traffic, acoustical treatment of impacted residences and other sensitive noise receptors, and the installation of noise barriers along the roadway right-of-way. The mitigation measures are fully detailed on pages 112 and 113 of the DEIR.

As a result of the project, some residences, schools and churches exposed to outdoor noise levels exceeding an Ldn of 60 dB may be exposed to interior noise levels exceeding an Ldn of 45 dB. Where feasible, the City should install sound barriers at locations identified during the final design of the Project. However, in areas deemed infeasible, mitigation measure 6.1B states that the City should prepare noise studies for those areas which are deemed infeasible for noise barrier installation. The noise study would survey the general acoustic characteristics of the structures in those areas and provide guidelines for suitable improvements. Following completion of the noise studies, the homeowners or other impacted persons could adopt the guidelines recommended in the noise studies.

Mitigation measure 6.1C, recommends that where a noise barrier is feasible, and truck traffic has been prohibited, an eight foot noise barrier installed on the roadway right-of-way would mitigate noise levels to below an Ldn of 60 dB. However, those homes directly accessing Parsons Avenue where a noise barrier could not be installed would have an unavoidable and adverse exterior noise impact. Specific environmental, economic, social and other benefits of the project override the negative impact as more fully stated in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Construction of the Parsons Avenue Corridor would result in significant short-term impacts resulting from the grading and paving of the new roadway sections and widening of the existing roadway sections. According to Impact 6.2, the construction phase of the proposed Project would have significant, short-term noise level impacts on land uses along Parsons Avenue. These impacts could be mitigated to an acceptable level which would avoid the significant impact by the implementation of the measures identified on page 113 of the DEIR.

VII. AIR QUALITY

Construction of the Project would result in the release of equipment exhaust emissions, organic gases, and construction dust during periods of active construction. The major construction air quality impacts would be due to dust generated by equipment and vehicles. Fugitive dust is emitted both during construction activity and as a result of wind erosion over exposed earth surfaces. Clearing and grading activities comprise the major source of construction dust emissions. As identified in Impact 7.1 of the DEIR, the effects of construction activities would be increased dustfall and locally elevated levels of PM-10 downwind of construction activity. Construction dust has the potential for creating a nuisance at existing properties adjacent to the Project. Construction dust is considered to represent a potentially significant impact. These impacts could be mitigated to an acceptable level which would avoid the significant impact by the implementation of the measures identified on page 125 of the DEIR.

VIII. VISUAL AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The construction of improvements to and extensions of Parsons Avenue, will have a noticeable visual effects on the Corridor area, some of which would be disruptive, while others would be beneficial. It will be necessary for a number of trees to be removed for widening or construction of the new roadway, which will have adverse visual impacts on at least a temporary basis. Replacement trees in a new parkway median would presumably compensate for the loss of these trees in a relatively short period of time, and the elimination of the overhead utility line (by placing them underground) would serve as a mitigating effect as well.

The construction of an over-pass across the AT&SF railroad tracks, if selected instead of an under-pass, would result in a major new visual element in the area between Yosemite Park Way and Stretch Road, and would probably be considered obtrusive by residents of the area. Impact 8.1 states that the potential construction of a grade separation in the form of an over-crossing of the AT&SF railroad tracks would have a significant adverse visual impact on several individual residents. The impact could be mitigated to an acceptable level which would avoid the significant impact by the implementation of the measures identified on page 129 of the DEIR.

Except for the potential railroad over-pass, none of the visual effects of the Corridor Project could be considered as resulting in the creation of an offensive view, but would

instead represent a trade-off of certain assets, and a change in the character of the Corridor area. The overall impact on the visual qualities of the Corridor area due to roadway widening and construction would not be significant.

Light and Glare

The construction of Parsons Avenue as an arterial roadway will require the addition of new overhead lighting for safety requirements, primarily in areas where new roadway will be added, by also along some existing segments of Parsons Avenue. The effect will be a reduction in night sky clarity, which may be noticeable immediately or gradually. The overall effect would not be significant due to its subjectivity, and the limited number of households affected. No mitigation measures are necessary.

The increase in traffic on Parsons would result in an increase in the extent to which residents whose homes face the roadway near intersections are disturbed by glare from headlights. The proportion of affected residents, however, would be small and the impact less than significant. No mitigation measures are necessary.

Cultural Resources

An archaeological and historical survey was previously conducted for the Corridor area, which revealed no indication of pre-historic inhabitation of the area. However, the extent of excavation which will be required for the Corridor Project, primarily for the Bear Creek bridge construction, and the potential railroad grade separation, requires some monitoring of initial excavation work by a qualified archaeologist. Any human remains determined to be of Native American origin will be reported to the Native American Heritage Commission.

Biotic Considerations

The construction of the bridge over Bear Creek will involve driving piling and supports into the creek bed, which could alter its natural flow. The construction activity may also result in water quality degradation. The City of Merced, prior to the preparation and approval of construction contracts, will be required to notify the Department of Fish and Game and possibly enter into a Streambed Alteration Agreement with the Department.

IX. ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires an EIR to include a description of a range of alternatives to

the project, which could feasibly serve the purposes of the project, and to provide a comparison of the merits and adverse effects of the alternatives. The consideration of a "no-project" alternative is also required in order to illustrate the desirable and undesirable effects of not approving the project as proposed. The EIR addressed two principal alternatives to the project. The first alternative was the required No Project Alternative. The second (principal) alternative analyzed was the mitigated no-project alternative (Improved G Street).

In addition, four secondary alternatives were reviewed to provide a comparison of environmental effects. These included: the Glen Avenue Alternative, the McKee Road Alternative, the Eastern Beltway Alternative, and the Modified Parsons Avenue Alternative.

A. NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE

The No Project Alternative assumes primarily existing circulation conditions for the Parsons Avenue Corridor and parallel roadways such as G Street, Glen Avenue, or McKee Road. Under this alternative future construction along Parsons would be limited to two segments -- 1) north of Rahilly Park to Yosemite Avenue, and 2) along the east edge of Ada Givens school and park.

This alternative would not prevent new and infill development from occurring within the Parsons Avenue Corridor, but could slow its pace. It is anticipated that growth conditions in the general area would include substantial residential development to the north and west of the Corridor area, as well as infill development to the east and south of the Corridor.

Under this alternative Parsons Avenue would not be a through street, would not have a bridge across Bear Creek, and would have no crossing of the Santa Fe railroad tracks south of Stretch Road. The adverse impacts predicted on most residents living along Parsons Avenue, such as traffic and related safety hazards, loss of on-street parking and unrestricted use of driveways, and noise, would not occur or would be greatly reduced.

However, the No Project Alternative would not reduce existing or projected congestion, but would simply force increasing traffic onto other roads through other neighborhoods. Impacts such as traffic-related safety hazards, driveway conflicts and increased noise would merely grow in other areas. Circulation would continue to be less flexible in east Merced, and time constraints would grow more quickly for residents traveling within, to, and from the area, especially during peak hour traffic.

Less efficient (more congested, stop and go) vehicle movements would mean greater overall vehicle emissions and energy consumption. Increased, time-consuming circulation difficulties could also contribute to reduced overall development potential for the area. This could force growth away from a more appropriate urban corridor to less appropriate areas outside the City.

A.1 FINDINGS

Based on the Final EIR and the entire record before the City Council, the City Council finds that the No Project Alternative is less desirable than the project and rejects the No Project Alternative for the following reasons:

1. Mitigation measures incorporated into the proposed project would reduce the project's environmental effects.
2. The No Project Alternative would not provide less environmental impact; it would provide significantly more impacts but would distribute these onto a number of other roadways and through other neighborhoods in North and Central Merced.
3. The No Project Alternative would mean that the project's objectives would not be achieved, including promotion of a more compact urban form (less urban sprawl), preservation of agricultural resources, and improvement of the City's overall circulation system.
4. The No Project Alternative would result in an impaired urban circulation system that lacks any effective north-south roadway east of G Street. As traffic pressures continue to mount on G Street, major impacts will also continue to increase, including significant congestion, auto emissions, and energy consumption.

B. MITIGATED NO PROJECT (IMPROVED G STREET) ALTERNATIVE

The Mitigated No Project Alternative would consist of widening and other improvements to G Street, including an under- or overpass at the Santa Fe railroad tracks (24th Street), and widening of the street cross-section to accommodate six lanes of traffic, a traffic median, and exclusive left- and right-turn lanes at major intersections. It is assumed that property acquisition for a widened G Street right-of-way, and tree, fence and building removal would be necessary.

The Mitigated No Project (Improved G Street) Alternative also assumes the same degree of limited improvements to

Parsons Avenue as outlined in the No Project Alternative (construction of Corridor segments between Rahilly Park/Yosemite Avenue and adjacent to Ada Givens). New residential and commercial growth is assumed to take place as with the Project. However, growth and infill development in the eastern and southeastern areas of the City would be slowed by the lack of an efficient circulation system in these areas.

An expanded G Street, coupled with an uncompleted Parsons Avenue, would conflict with the City's General Plan goal of a efficient, balanced circulation system. G Street traffic is projected to experience extreme delays during peak hours (and very likely at other times) without major reconstruction (to six through-lanes plus exclusive turn lanes) by 2010.

This Alternative would encourage traffic to seek alternate routes. Significant increases of traffic onto east-west arterials in eastern Merced could be expected. An Improved G Street would tend to force some traffic into neighborhoods along a wide variety of roads (including Glen and Santa Fe Avenue, both Bear Creek Drives, McKee Road, and 21st, 26th and 27th Streets). Many trips would also be accomplished on M and J Streets.

Impacts on driveways along other arterials would be significant, including G Street, McKee Road and Olive Avenue. While the G Street Improvement Alternative would probably be more beneficial for regional air quality than the No Project Alternative, unavoidable congestion and longer travel times would prevent it from having the same beneficial effect as the Parsons project.

B.1 FINDINGS

Based upon the Final EIR and the entire record before the City Council, the City Council finds that the Mitigated No Project (Improved G Street) Alternative is less desirable than the project and rejects the Mitigated No Project (Improved G Street) Alternative for the following reasons:

1. Mitigation measures incorporated into the proposed project would reduce the project's environmental effects.
2. The Mitigated No Project (Improved G Street) Alternative would result in major expansion of G Street in an effort to offset the lack of a Parsons Project. Impacts would increase accordingly on neighborhoods bordering the G Street Corridor, especially where roadways allowed overflow G Street traffic convenient escape routes during major congestion periods.
3. The Improved G Street Alternative would not be a

convenient route for many residents of east Merced, and as congestion (and impacts) continue to grow along the G Street Corridor it would become less and less convenient.

4. The Improved G Street Alternative would signify that the Project's objective of improvement of the City's overall circulation system was not being achieved.

C. ALTERNATIVE "C": GLEN AVENUE ALTERNATIVE

The Glen Avenue Alternative is one of four secondary alternatives. It would involve either Oleander Avenue or Parsons Avenue on the north side of Bear Creek, a bridge over Bear Creek at Glen Avenue, and Glen Avenue on the south to its existing connection at Yosemite Park Way.

Glen, Oleander, and Parsons would all remain two-lane collector-type streets, rather than upgrading to arterials, especially because of major constraints to widening through residential areas in the case of Oleander and Glen. The existing crossing of the Santa Fe railroad tracks would remain at grade.

The Glen Avenue Alternative assumes the same level of limited improvements along Parsons Avenue as described in the No Project Alternative (future improvements only from Rahilly Park to Yosemite Avenue and adjacent to Ada Givens School). Parsons Avenue north of Bear Creek would absorb a significant portion of the traffic using the Glen Avenue bridge, but would not be widened.

Glen Avenue would be unable to provide a fully functional arterial roadway in the eastern area of the City. Because this alternative would not provide continuous travel north of Olive Avenue, and would be discontinuous to the south, a substantial proportion of the traffic associated with projected growth in the general area would need to be accommodated on G Street and McKee Road, as well as Parsons Avenue south of Yosemite Park Way.

Most impacts would be avoided along Parsons Avenue south of Bear Creek to Stretch Road, but would become significant along the Glen Avenue Corridor. Access within the City among its important land uses would not be effectively promoted by the use of Glen Avenue. Poor circulation in east Merced would decelerate growth in that general area, including infill development along the Parsons Avenue Corridor.

C.1 FINDINGS

Based upon the Final EIR and the entire record before the City Council, the City Council finds that the Glen Avenue Alternative is less desirable than the project and rejects the Glen Avenue Alternative for the following reasons:

1. Mitigation measures incorporated into the proposed project would reduce the project's environmental effects.
2. The Glen Avenue Alternative would not provide less environmental impacts, but would merely distribute them more widely, to G Street and McKee Road as well as other roadways in North and Central Merced.
3. The Glen Avenue Alternative would result in the project's objectives not being achieved, particularly concerning improvement of the City's overall circulation system.
4. The proposed route(s) from East Olive Avenue to Yosemite Park Way would be an undersized, patchwork system that would simply not be able to handle anywhere near the amount of traffic projected for east Merced.

D. ALTERNATIVE "D": McKee ROAD ALTERNATIVE

The McKee Road alternative is one of four secondary alternatives reviewed in the EIR. It would require a new roadway connecting McKee at Stretch Road to Parsons north of its intersection with Yosemite Park Way. There would be a grade separated crossing of the Santa Fe railroad tracks in approximately the same location as for the Parsons Avenue Project.

The intent would be to upgrade McKee Road north of Stretch Road to a full four-lane arterial roadway, with a median and both left and right turn lanes at each major intersection. A substantial amount of property acquisition for sufficient right-of-way would be necessary to achieve this alignment.

This alternative would promote growth to the northeast of the City. It would avoid effects of the Project on the Parsons Avenue Corridor residential areas, but would essentially transfer them to the neighborhoods along McKee Road. From purely a traffic standpoint it would be the most functional of the alternatives, since it would create a north/south arterial in eastern Merced. However, its extra one-half mile distance from G Street would mean that many trips originating between G Street and Parsons, which would have been carried by the Parsons Project if built, would now go to G Street. This would require further mitigation of G including additional traffic lanes.

D.1 FINDINGS

Based on the Final EIR and the entire record before the City Council, the City Council finds that the McKee Road

Alternative is less desirable than the project and rejects the McKee Road Alternative for the following reasons:

1. Mitigation measures incorporated into the proposed project would reduce the project's environmental effects.
2. The McKee Road Alternative would require many vehicles using its route to travel significantly further than the Parsons Project route in order to gain the same destination.
3. The extra travel distance required of a significant number of vehicles utilizing a McKee Road Alternative would place significant pressures on the very limited number of east-west streets providing access in east Merced.
4. Two of the most sensitive local circumstances often cited by local residents in the Parsons Avenue Corridor area have been a) the number of residences on lots that front directly onto Parsons (thereby facing the most direct noise impacts and driveway conflicts); and b) the number of cul-de-sacs that access directly onto Parsons (thus creating unavoidable conflicts for traffic exiting these streets). In direct comparison between McKee Road and Parsons Avenue north of Bear Creek, however, McKee has significantly more lots that fall into these sensitive categories than Parsons Avenue. If the two corridors are compared for the entire distance between Stretch Road (south) and Yosemite Avenue (north), the number of sensitive lots are about the same for each corridor.

E. ALTERNATIVE "E": EASTERN BELTWAY ALTERNATIVE

The Eastern Beltway Alternative would consist of a new expressway along the existing alignment of Kibby Road two miles east of Parsons Avenue, between Childs and Yosemite Avenues. An existing bridge on Kibby Road over Bear Creek would be replaced or widened, and an overpass interchange would be constructed for the Beltway to cross over both Yosemite Park Way (Highway 140) and the Santa Fe railroad tracks. It would be assumed that such a beltway would ultimately extend both further north (to at least Bellevue Road) and south (to State Highway 99) but this would be unlikely for many years and were judged beyond the scope of the EIR.

The Beltway would primarily provide access around the existing urbanized area of Merced. It would serve to promote urban development in the area east of McKee Road, but would accommodate the circulation needs of eastern Merced between G Street and McKee Road only to a very limited extent. Instead, it could be expected to satisfy north/south cross-town

circulation needs of persons outside the Parsons Avenue Corridor area who were seeking a rapid travel route from southeastern Merced to areas north of Merced.

The Beltway Alternative would conflict with current General Plan policies to a greater extent than any other alternative, because of its potential growth-inducing effects on prime agricultural areas east of Merced. It would also contravene currently adopted City growth scenarios that maintain a reasonably compact north-south oriented urban form.

E.1 FINDINGS

Based on the Final EIR and the entire record before the City Council, the City Council finds that the Eastern Beltway Project Alternative is less desirable than the Project and rejects the Eastern Beltway Project Alternative for the following reasons:

1. Mitigation measures incorporated into the proposed project would reduce the project's environmental effects.
2. An Eastern Beltway could serve a useful purpose in the distant future, possibly in the later stages of the 40-year time frame of the Merced 2030 Growth Study. It could also become an important access to a future University of California campus in the vicinity of Lake Yosemite. However, it would not serve the near- and longer-term needs of east-central Merced for ease of movement between the City's major land uses and districts, and for commuting purposes.
3. It would not diffuse the traffic problems currently growing on G Street and McKee Road within the foreseeable future; it is potentially a mid- to long-term alternative for an existing, expanding near-term problem.
4. There appears to be almost no near-term feasibility of a beltway alternative. Even if the Beltway were built, however, projected impacts such as increasingly severe congestion would be virtually uninhibited on G Street and adjacent areas, and McKee Road neighborhoods would also experience virtually unaffected increases in traffic and related impacts, since most existing (and projected) traffic in the urban area would not find it convenient to use such a roadway placed so far from normal destinations/attractions.

F. ALTERNATIVE "F": MODIFIED PARSONS AVENUE ALTERNATIVE

Under the Modified Parsons Avenue Alternative, Parsons would be classified as a local collector-type street,

limiting traffic to one lane in each direction. This would require fewer improvements than those presently defined for the Parsons Project. A reduced-size bridge would be involved across Bear Creek, and an at-grade rail crossing would be used instead of a grade-separated crossing of the Santa Fe railroad tracks.

This alternative would provide for development of the Corridor Project's features in the most limited manner possible, limiting traffic to a minimum, and thus providing for only the most basic circulation needs of east Merced. A two-lane road would not be consistent with major roadway designation, and it would not satisfy the ultimate need for access from north to south in this area of Merced.

Such an option would offer only a limited improvement in the circulation system. It would still suffer from congestion as motorists pursued alternative routes to G Street and McKee Road. More vehicle trips on G Street than under the Parsons Avenue Project Alternative would result in the need for additional G Street through lanes as well as a number of other intersection improvements. The limited capacity of Parsons Avenue, combined with its important location and the areas that it would serve, would result in lower traffic volumes but congestion similar to or worse than the proposed Project, and similar impacts on the neighborhood in noise and safety hazards.

F.1 FINDINGS

Based on the Final EIR and the entire record before the City Council, the City Council finds that the Modified Parsons Avenue Alternative is less desirable than the project and rejects the Modified Parsons Avenue Alternative for the following reasons:

1. Mitigation measures incorporated into the proposed project would reduce the project's environmental effects.
2. The Modified Parsons Avenue Alternative would provide inadequate capacity for projected traffic needs in east Merced, which would simply force more traffic and thus more impacts onto other roadways such as G Street and McKee Road.
3. It would be extremely unlikely to be able to obtain approval for an at-grade crossing of the Santa Fe railroad, unless the City were to exchange (eliminate) a similar existing crossing somewhere else, an unlikely occurrence in the foreseeable future.

X. STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS

Having reviewed the EIR and the record before it regarding the Parsons Avenue Corridor Project, the City Council finds that, although significant negative environmental impacts remain even after adoption of feasible mitigation measures, the following overriding considerations allow approval of the Project despite these impacts.

The Parsons Avenue Corridor Project will achieve and facilitate many current and long term goals of the City. Merced has experienced population and development growth, and this growth is projected to continue, primarily in the north and south areas of the City. The Project will accommodate this growth by relieving north/south arterials. The enhanced access will promote infill projects thereby promoting the goal of compact growth.

The project will provide and improve public service access. The new Golden Valley High School being constructed will be provided with the needed expanded access. Access to parks and recreation facilities, such as Joe Herb Park will be enhanced. The police and fire response times on the east side will be enhanced. The police and fire response times on the east side will be improved. While a train is stopped on the Santa Fe tracks blocking Glen Avenue, Bradley Overcrossing is the only not at grade route for traversing the Santa Fe Railroad tracks in east Merced; the Project will provide a second alternative.

The Project promotes consistency and predictability of growth. The Project has been designated as an arterial on the General Plan since 1959. Portions of Parsons Avenue have already been constructed as an arterial. Persons have made housing and investment decisions based on the articulated Plan.

The Project will minimize the extent of neighborhood impacts. The location of the Project meets more of the goals than any other alternative with the least amount of neighborhood impact. If G Street were enlarged to 6 lanes and McKee made an arterial, there would be impacts on more residential areas than are involved with the completion of the Parsons Avenue widening. If Parsons and McKee were made into one-way streets, there would be restricted east/west access between the streets and more traffic on the residential streets located between them. Other streets including East Olive Avenue, R Street, G Street, and M Street have been successfully converted to arterials.

The Project will improve air quality. If McKee were substituted for Parsons more vehicles would continue to use G Street or would travel a greater distance to McKee and then to backtrack when crossing Bear Creek. In either case the

goal of the decreased vehicular travel would not be met; the Project would reduce the travel times on G Street by reducing congestion and would reduce the number of miles traveled to cross Bear Creek. The installation of sidewalk and Class II bicycle lanes would promote and facilitate the use of alternative transportation.

XI. MITIGATION MONITORING PROGRAM

Assembly Bill 3180 requires a public agency to adopt mitigation monitoring or reporting programs for all projects which an environmental impact report or "mitigated" negative declaration has been prepared. This law is intended to ensure the implementation of all mitigation measures adopted through the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process.

The following is the full text of the legislation:

Section 1. Section 21081.6 is added to the Public Resource Code, to read: 21081.6. When making findings required by subdivision (a) of Section 21081 or when adopting a negative declaration pursuant to paragraph (2) of subdivision (c) of Section 21081, the public agency shall adopt a reporting or monitoring program for the changes to the project which it has adopted or made a condition of project approval in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment. The reporting of monitoring program shall be designed to ensure compliance during project implementation. For those changes which have been required or incorporated into the project at the request of an agency having jurisdiction by law over natural resources affected by the project, that agency shall, if so requested by the lead or responsible agency, prepare and submit a proposed reporting or monitoring program.

Section 2. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because of the local agency or school district has the authority to levy service charges, fees, or assessments sufficient to pay for the program or level of service mandated by this act.

This legislation does not convey any new power to public agencies. The conditions and changes imposed on projects through CEQA have always been enforced through the previously existing police powers of the agency. This is the same with the implementation of AB 3180.

No regulations or guidelines concerning the implementation of AB 3180 have been issued by the State and numerous interpretations of its requirements are possible. The program defined in this document is intended to satisfy

the spirit of the law, and is based on significant research of ongoing monitoring programs throughout the State.

It is the intent of this program to use existing City review procedures and inspectors to the extent possible without adding significantly to the paperwork generated by City staff. The program is designed so that the designated Environmental Monitor and Technical Advisors complete the compliance reports and contact City inspectors and plan checkers as necessary.

**INTERIM
MITIGATION MONITORING PROGRAM
FOR THE
PARSONS AVENUE CORRIDOR PROJECT**

EXHIBIT B

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Impacts</u>	<u>Mitigation Measures</u>
Urban Development and Circulation Planning Impacts	<p>PLANNING AND POLICY CONTEXT (CHAPTER III)</p> <p>The proposed Project is consistent with the General Plan designation of Parsons Avenue as an arterial, and would fulfill an extensive range of General Plan policies, including the promotion of a compact urban form within the County Specific Urban Development Plan boundaries, in-fill development, preservation of agricultural/natural resources, improvement of the city's overall circulation system, expansion of the city's bike routes and pedestrian facilities, encouragement of expanded transit services, and visual improvement of the area through utility undergrounding.</p>	No mitigation measures are necessary.
2 Neighborhood Preservation Impacts	<p>3.1</p> <p>The Corridor Project would have substantial, unavoidable adverse effects (which are specified in subsequent chapters of the Draft EIR), on the residential neighborhoods directly abutting Parsons Avenue, which would not promote the policies of the General Plan intended to protect residential areas from the environmental effects of major thoroughfares.</p>	Mitigation measures are identified in subsequent chapters to address impacts of pedestrian safety, access to schools and parks, and noise due to traffic conditions on Parsons Avenue. These mitigations, overall, would not reduce the impact on neighborhoods to a less than significant level.
Year 2002 Impacts	<p>TRAFFIC AND CIRCULATION (CHAPTER IV)</p> <p>The Corridor Project is expected to be completed by the year 2002, by which time new development and related traffic in Merced would increase substantially over present conditions. The Corridor Project would serve the circulation needs of this additional growth, but if the Project were implemented strictly as proposed, and without improvements to intersections and roadways in nearby areas, the result would be unacceptable and significant peak hour congestion impacts at the following intersections:</p>	<p>For the year 2002, the following alterations of affected intersections would avoid the significant traffic impacts of the Project:</p> <p>4.1 G Street/Olive Avenue: Added left-turn lanes, for a total of two turn lanes each on the north- and west-bound approaches.</p> <p>4.2 G Street/North Bear Creek Drive: Added left-turn lanes on east- and west-bound approaches; and</p>

Topic	Impacts	Mitigation Measures
4.1	G Street/Olive Avenue	right-turn lane on east-bound approach.
4.2	G Street/North Bear Creek Drive	
4.3	Glen Avenue/Yosemite Park Way	4.3 Glen Avenue/Yosemite Park Way: Signalization would be required.
4.4	Parsons Avenue/Yosemite Park Way	4.4 Parsons Avenue/Yosemite Park Way: Dedicated left-turn lane on east-bound approach.
4.5	Parsons Avenue/Childs Avenue	4.5 Parsons Avenue/Childs Avenue: Added left- and right-turn lanes on east-bound approach; right-turn lane and bicycle lane curb on south-bound approach; and added left-turn lane on north-bound approach for a total of two turn lanes.
4.6	4.6 Childs Avenue/State Route 99 north bound/Motel Drive	4.6 Childs Avenue/State Route 99 north-bound/Motel Drive: Added left-turn lanes and new through-lanes on Childs in each direction (east- and west-bound approaches); and right-turn lane on west-bound approach (Childs Avenue).
4.7	4.7 Childs Avenue/State Route 99 south bound	4.7 Childs Avenue/State Route 99 south-bound: Added through-lanes on Childs in each direction.

3 Year 2010 Impacts

By the year 2010, growth in the city would further increase congestion on the circulation system, with significant adverse peak hour effects on the intersections listed below, assuming that none of the mitigations defined for year 2002 conditions were implemented.

The following changes to the affected intersections would avoid the significant effects of congestion resulting from projected traffic conditions for the year 2010:

4.8	G Street/Yosemite Avenue	4.8 G Street/Yosemite Avenue: Added left-turn lane on north-bound approach for a total of two.
4.9	4.9 G Street/Olive Avenue	4.9 G Street/Olive Avenue: Same mitigation as 4.1; and added left-turn lane on west-bound approach for a total of two.
4.10	4.10 G Street/North Bear Creek Drive	4.10 G Street/North Bear Creek Drive: Same mitigation as 4.2; and added left-turn lanes on south- and west-bound approaches for a total of two on each; and a new right-turn lane on west-bound approach.
4.11	4.11 Glen Avenue/Yosemite Park Way	4.11 Glen Avenue/Yosemite Park Way: Same mitigation as 4.3 (signalization).
4.12	4.12 Parsons Avenue/Yosemite Avenue	4.12 Parsons Avenue/Yosemite Avenue: Added east- and west-bound through-lanes.
4.13	4.13 Parsons Avenue/Olive Avenue	4.13 Parsons Avenue/Olive Avenue: Added right-turn lanes on north- and south-bound approaches.
4.14	4.14 Parsons Avenue/Yosemite Park Way	4.14 Parsons Avenue/Yosemite Park Way: Same mitigation as 4.4; added right-turn lanes on north-,
4.15	4.15 Parsons Avenue/Childs Avenue	
4.16	4.16 Childs Avenue/State Route 99 north-bound/Motel Drive	
4.17	4.17 Childs Avenue/State Route 99 south-bound	

Topic

Impacts

Mitigation Measures

- east- and south-bound approaches; added through-lanes on east- and west-bound approaches; and second left-turn lane on west-bound approach.
- 4.15 Parsons Avenue/Childs Avenue: Same mitigation as 4.5; added right-turn lane for a total of two on south-bound approach; joint through and right-turn lane on west-bound approach; and through-lane on east-bound approach.
- 4.16 Childs Avenue/State Route 99 north-bound/Motel Drive: Same mitigation as 4.6; and added left-turn lanes on north-, west- and south-bound approaches; joint through and left-turn lane on east-bound approach; and through lane on west-bound approach.
- 4.17 Childs Avenue/State Route 99 south-bound: Same mitigation as 4.7; additional through-lane on east-bound approach; and left-turn lane and second right-turn lane on south-bound approach.

4 Driveways and Parking Impacts

4.18,19
Parsons Avenue would require four traffic lanes and accommodate relatively high speeds, so it is necessary to eliminate on-street parking and to minimize direct driveway access due to the hazards and conflicts that use of driveways would create on Parsons Avenue. Several existing segments of Parsons Avenue presently have on-street parking, and an estimated 100 driveways are connected to Parsons Avenue. The continued use of driveways would have a significant impact on traffic flows and the accident rate, and the loss of parking would have a significant impact on residents adjacent to Parsons Avenue.

4.18,19
Elimination of driveways would avoid the impact on traffic flows and the likelihood of accidents. However, this mitigation is considered to be infeasible, and thus the significant impact is unavoidable. In limited areas loop drives may be possible, which would improve safety conditions and provide a partial substitute for on-street parking, but would not completely avoid the significant impacts. The loss of on-street parking is unavoidable and unmitigable.

Pedestrian, Bicycle and Public Transit Access Impacts

4.20
The Corridor Project would substantially expand the network of sidewalk and bicycle routes along Parsons Avenue, and would provide a valuable transit route. However, the traffic that would occur on Parsons Avenue after Project completion would result in increased rates of pedestrian and bicyclist accidents compared to existing conditions on Parsons Avenue, which would be a significant

4.20
Though the potential impact is unavoidable, certain safety measures can substantially reduce the potential for accidents. In addition to planned, signalized crosswalks, barriers at unsignalized intersections in parkway medians and in the roadway center would serve to direct pedestrians to the signalized intersections, or to potential and planned over- and under-crossings.

Topic	Impacts	Mitigation Measures
	<p>adverse impact. Although many measures would be employed to protect against accidents, the threshold of significance for hazards is very low and is an unavoidable impact. Although accident rates will increase city-wide as a function of the growth of the city, for vehicles as well as pedestrians and bicyclists, this impact results from the introduction of hazards into an area which presently is generally safe.</p>	
<p>Fire and Police Protection Impacts</p>	<p>PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES (CHAPTER V) The Project will have substantial, beneficial effects on the ability of the City Fire and Police Departments to respond to emergencies, particularly through the construction of a grade separation at the AT&SF rail line, and secondarily by relieving congestion elsewhere in the city. The traffic which is projected to utilize Parsons Avenue will result in increased accident rates, but will also alleviate such problems on G Street.</p>	<p>No mitigation measures are necessary.</p>
<p>Access to Schools and Parks Impacts</p>	<p>5.1 The Corridor Project would result in traffic conditions that would significantly reduce access to schools and parks due to safety hazards, though signalized crosswalks would be provided at related locations. Other safety precautions to ensure pedestrian and bicyclist safety would or could be provided, including potential over- or under-crossings, but the overall impact is considered to be unavoidable.</p>	<p>Mitigation measures to minimize pedestrian and bicyclist hazards are defined in Chapter IV, and no additional measures are available to reduce this impact to a less than significant level.</p>
<p>Infrastructure Impacts</p>	<p>The Corridor Project will enable the construction of new water, sewer and storm drainage conduits and related facilities, and improvement of existing systems.</p>	<p>No mitigation measures are necessary.</p>
<p>Operating Conditions Noise Impacts</p>	<p>NOISE CONSIDERATIONS (CHAPTER VI) 6.1 Average noise levels are projected to increase by between 6 and 21 decibels (dB) along the Corridor by the year 2010, to between 70 and 72 dB, causing significant impacts on residential and other sensitive land uses adjacent</p>	<p>6.1.A,B,C,D Mitigation measures to attenuate adverse noise conditions include the prohibition of truck traffic, the installation of noise barriers along the roadway right-of-way, and acoustical treatment of impacted residents and other</p>

Topic

Impacts

Mitigation Measures

to the future roadway alignment. The largest increases would occur where there is no existing roadway (south of Yosemite Avenue), with substantial increases (16 dB) also occurring on isolated segments of Parsons Avenue. During peak travel hours, exterior noise levels in excess of 60 dB, and interior noise levels over 45 dB, may be encountered up to 315 feet from the centerline of Parsons Avenue.

sensitive receptors. Noise barriers could reduce exterior noise impacts to a less than significant level. However, there are very few if any areas along the roadway with available right-of-way to accommodate a noise barrier, accompanied by a service road, which would also be necessary. Where the installation of noise barriers is infeasible, the exposure of outdoor use areas of some sensitive receptors to noise impacts will remain significant. When engineering design plans for the Corridor are prepared, and the location of any soundwalls are identified, detailed noise studies would be required to determine effective means of reducing interior noise levels to a level that is less than significant. Exterior noise impacts are considered to be unavoidable and unmitigable for the foreseeable future.

Construction-related Noise Impacts

6.2
Significant short-term noise impacts resulting from construction of the Parsons Avenue corridor are also expected.

6.2.A,B,C
Mitigation measures to partially mitigate noise impacts occurring during construction include limiting construction to daytime hours, noise attenuation and maintenance of construction equipment, and designation of a coordinator for mediating community complaints. These measures would enable the impact to be reduced to a less than significant level.

Construction-related Air Quality Impacts

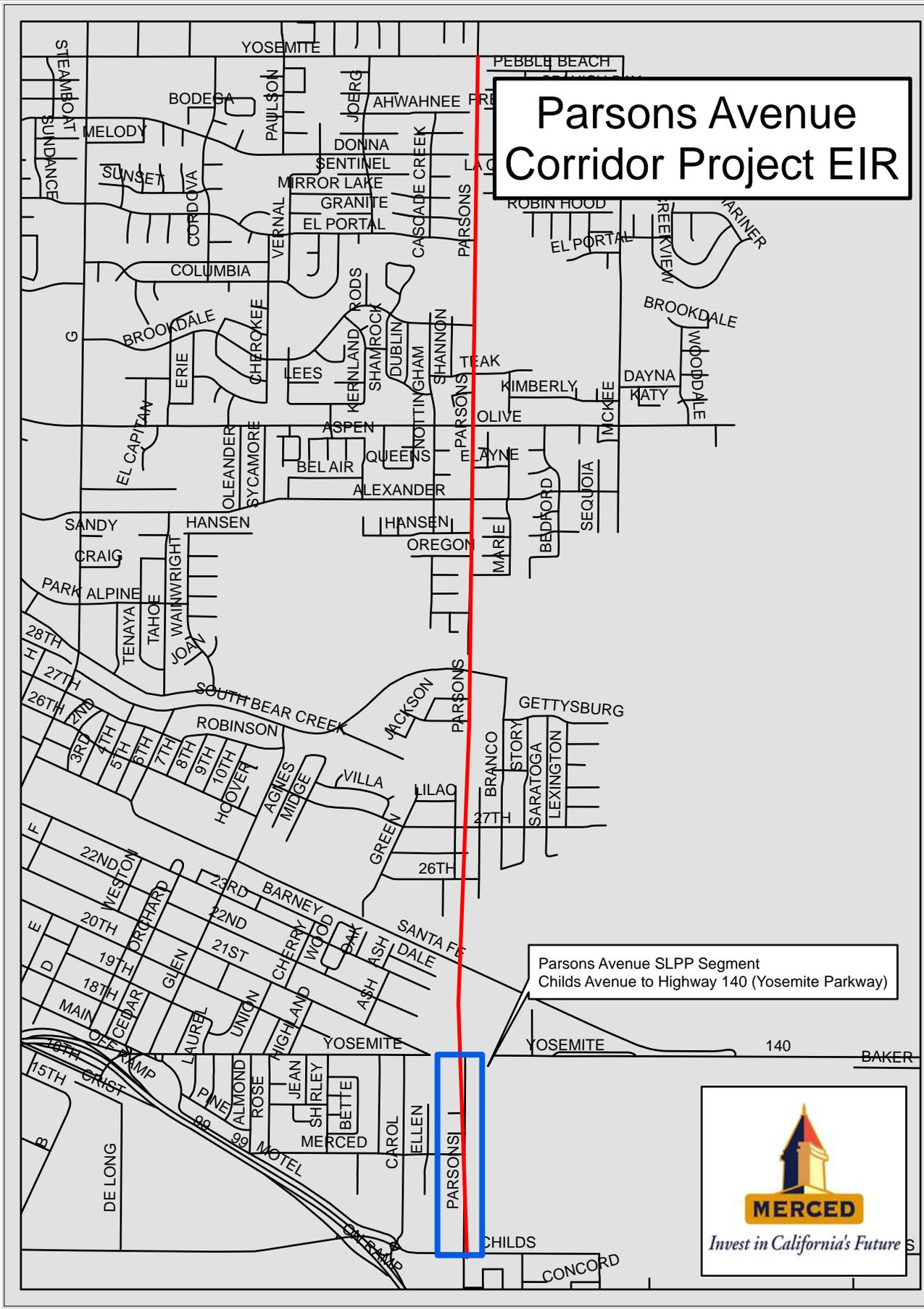
AIR QUALITY (CHAPTER VII)
7.1
Construction activity on the Corridor Project will temporarily generate locally elevated levels of suspended particulates, which could be a nuisance for properties adjacent to Parsons Avenue, and which are potentially significant without proper procedures.

7.1.A,B,C,D,E
In order to mitigate construction dust impacts, construction contracts should require the following measures: suspension of dust-producing activities during periods of high winds; suppression of exposed or disturbed soil surfaces with water or other appropriate dust palliatives; dust control measures for stockpiles of debris or other materials that could be blown by the wind; sweeping of construction areas and adjacent streets; and limiting the speeds of construction vehicles. These measures would enable the impact to be reduced to a less than significant level.

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Impacts</u>	<u>Mitigation Measures</u>
Local and Regional Air Quality Impacts	<p>Traffic increases on Parsons Avenue will not increase local carbon monoxide levels to significant concentrations, and would reduce such concentrations on other arterial roadways, particularly G Street. In addition, as an improvement in the city's circulation system which would reduce travel time and vehicle efficiency, the Corridor Project by itself would benefit regional air quality, although new growth of the city would cause air quality to deteriorate.</p>	No mitigation measures are necessary.
Visual Impacts	<p>VISUAL AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS (CHAPTER VIII)</p> <p>8.1 The Project will incorporate a grade separation of Parsons Avenue across the AT&SF railroad tracks, which may be configured either as an overpass or an underpass. If an overpass is selected as the design for the grade separation, it would have significant visual impacts on several homeowners in the area adjacent to the potential overpass.</p> <p>Construction of the Project in other areas of the Corridor would have variable visual effects on the adjoining area, both disruptive and beneficial. The removal of a large number of trees will have temporary adverse visual impacts, but many of these trees are relatively small, and are interspersed with overhead utility lines, the undergrounding of which will benefit the area's appearance. Replacement trees will partly compensate for this loss, assuming they meet appropriate standards for maturity. The natural beauty of Bear Creek would be temporarily affected by the construction of the Parsons Avenue bridge, and an existing rest area would be removed, and would require replacement on the trail, at an appropriate distance away from the bridge and the associated traffic noise. With the exception of the potential overpass, the visual effects of the Project would not create an offensive view, but represent a change in the character of the Corridor area. The overall impact on the visual qualities of the Corridor area due to roadway widening and construction would not be significant unless an overpass were constructed.</p>	<p>8.1 If an overpass is chosen in the design of the Project, special design considerations should be adopted, relating to the use of suitable materials, landscaping of embankments, ornamentation of the bridge, or other landscaping, as means of enhancing or shielding the view of the overpass from affected properties. This would enable the impact to be reduced to a less than significant level.</p> <p>New and replacement trees in the parkway median should meet City Parks and Recreation Department standards, and the relocation of the Bear Creek trail rest stop should be an integral part of the bridge construction design.</p>

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Impacts</u>	<u>Mitigation Measures</u>
Light and Glare Impacts	<p>The Corridor Project will require the addition of new overhead lighting, which will contribute to a reduction in regional night sky clarity, but no new high-intensity lighting would be needed. However, other urban development would occur simultaneously with the construction of the Corridor Project, and while the impact of the Project, and of each individual development would be individually limited, the collective effect would be significant. The impact of the Project by itself, however, would not be significant. Glare from headlights would not be significant.</p>	<p>No mitigation measures are necessary. However, to reduce unnecessary loss of night sky clarity, lighting requirements should be kept to the minimum necessary for the safety and efficiency of the roadway, and fixtures needed for the Project should be selected which limit the extent of upward diffusion of light, and excess spillage in horizontal directions.</p>
Cultural Resource Impacts	<p>Previous surveys of archaeological and historical resources have revealed no indications of pre-historic inhabitation of the area, though the extent of excavation which will be required for the Corridor Project, would call for some monitoring by a qualified archaeologist, and appropriate reporting procedures.</p>	<p>No mitigation measures are necessary. Any potentially Native American human remains are to be reported to the Native American Heritage Commission, with appropriate subsequent investigation of the site's surroundings.</p>
Biotic Impacts	<p>The Corridor area crosses Bear and Black Rascal Creeks, which provide valuable riparian habitats for birds, amphibians and other wildlife. Currently planned residential development unrelated to the Corridor Project will result in a disturbance of the natural qualities of Black Rascal Creek, displacing rural or semi-rural features with a more suburban character, while Bear Creek will be less affected by similar growth. The construction of the Parsons Avenue bridge over Bear Creek, however, will result in potential water quality degradation and habitat disturbance, requiring the City of Merced to coordinate with the state Department of Fish and Game, for preventive measures, such as a Streambed Alteration Agreement to specify measures to reduce any potential adverse effects on water quality or aquatic/riparian habitat.</p>	<p>No mitigation measures are necessary. Measures to protect water quality or aquatic/riparian habitat are to be defined at the final engineering design stage, and the state requirements are considered to provide sufficient protection to prevent significant biotic impacts.</p>

Parsons Avenue Corridor Project EIR



Parsons Avenue SLPP Segment
Childs Avenue to Highway 140 (Yosemite Parkway)

