

Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

CTC Meeting: December 10-11, 2008

Reference No.: 2.2c.(4) - **REVISED**
Action Item

From: CINDY McKIM
Chief Financial Officer

Prepared by: Jay Norvell
Division Chief
Environmental
Analysis

Subject: **APPROVAL OF PROJECT FOR FUNDING**
04-SON-101, PM 21.7/29.3
RESOLUTION E-08-24

RECOMMENDATION:

The Department of Transportation (Department) recommends that the California Transportation Commission (Commission), as a responsible agency, approve the attached Resolution E-08-24.

ISSUE:

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

- Route 101 in Sonoma County – Widen Route 101 from four to six lanes between Steele Lane Interchange to Windsor River Road Interchange in the unincorporated community of Windsor near Santa Rosa.

This project in Sonoma County would widen the existing four-lane route to six lanes between the Steele Lane interchange and the Windsor River Road interchange in the unincorporated community of Windsor. The project is fully funded in the 2008 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The project is programmed with Corridor Mobility Improvement Account, local, and federal funds. The cost of the project is \$120,260,000. The scope, as described for the preferred alternative, is consistent with the project scope set forth in the approved project baseline agreement.

A copy of the FEIR has been provided to Commission staff. Construction of the project impacts aquatic habitat of steelhead, coho, and chinook salmon, which are federally-listed species; and western pond turtle, northwestern pond turtle, northern red-legged frog, and foothill yellow-legged frog, which are state species of concern. Additionally loss of mature vegetation and redwood trees, permanent impacts to waters of the U.S., and the public controversy regarding the project resulted in an environmental impact report being completed for this project. Due to mitigation such as revegetation, tree replacement, aesthetic design treatments, riparian and aquatic habitat restoration, and relocation of identified turtle and frog

species encountered during surveys, impacts were determined to be less than significant.

Pursuant to CEQA 15091 Findings have been made for each reported impact.

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 Funding 04-Son-101, PM 21.7/29.3 Resolution E-08-24

- 1.1 **WHEREAS**, the California Department of Transportation (Department) has completed a Final Environmental Impact Report pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines for the following project:
- Route 101 in Sonoma County – Widen Route 101 from four to six lanes between Steele Lane Interchange to Windsor River Road Interchange in the unincorporated community of Windsor near Santa Rosa.
- 1.2 **WHEREAS**, the Department 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 California Transportation Commission, as a responsible agency, has considered the information contained in the Final Environmental Impact Report; and
- ~~1.4 **WHEREAS**, the Final Environmental Impact Report did not identify significant effects after mitigation.~~
- 1.4 **WHEREAS**, the Final Environmental Impact Report **and Findings identified effects less than significant** after mitigation.
- 2.1 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the California Transportation Commission does hereby approve **the Findings and** the above referenced project to allow for funding.

FINDINGS

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FINDINGS FOR THE SONOMA 101 HIGH OCCUPANCY VEHICLE (HOV) LANE WIDENING AND IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

THE SONOMA 101 HOV LANE WIDENING IS FROM STEELE LANE IN THE CITY OF SANTA ROSA TO WINDSOR RIVER ROAD IN THE TOWN OF WINDSOR OF SONOMA COUNTY. THE SONOMA 101 HOV WIDENING IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT PROPOSES THE CONSTRUCTION OF HOV LANES IN EACH DIRECTION BY WIDENING THE HIGHWAY 101 MEDIAN.

The following information is presented to comply with Section 15091 of the State 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 (FEIR) 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, but are mitigated to levels that are less than significant with mitigation incorporation. Effects found not to be significant have not been included. Mitigation monitoring plans regarding the effects discussed below will be developed and adopted.

Aesthetics

Adverse Environmental Effects:

The project would result in visual changes to the environment. Motorists, residents and recreational users would be affected by changes in the visual setting including: new on/off ramps; retaining walls; noise barriers; and vegetation/tree loss.

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.

Statement of Facts:

To lessen visual effects, the following mitigation measures are proposed:

- Vines would be planted to cover or completely screen views of new soundwalls and retaining walls constructed as part of this project.
- Aesthetic design for soundwalls would be developed in coordination with Sonoma County, the City of Santa Rosa and the Town of Windsor.
- Areas where vegetation is removed for project construction shall be revegetated with similar types of tree and shrub species.

- Existing redwood tree clusters in areas affected by project construction shall be replaced with redwood trees of the same or approved species.

Biological Resources

Adverse Environmental Effects:

The project would have adverse impacts on biological resources.

Aquatic Habitat

The project would permanently affect 0.0063 hectares (ha) (0.016 acres [ac]) of aquatic habitat at Mark West, Pruitt and Pool creek that is suitable for coho salmon, steelhead and chinook salmon.

Approximately 0.005 ha (0.0212ac) of aquatic habitat for the Russian River tule perch at Mark West and Pool creeks would also be permanently affected. Additionally, up to 0.0137 ha (0.034ac) of aquatic habitat for the western pond turtle at Piner, Paulin and Mark West creek would be permanently affected. The proposed project would permanently affect 0.0032 ha (0.008 ac) of aquatic habitat at Mark West Creek for northern red-legged frog, foothill yellow-legged frog and northwestern pond turtle.

The roadway improvements could affect these species by direct take, destruction of habitat, and increased run-off of sediments that could degrade bottom habitat and water quality and construction of barriers to fish movement.

Findings:

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

Statement of Facts:

To lessen aquatic habitat resource effects, the following mitigation measures are proposed:

- Modifications at Mark West, Paulin, Piner, Pruitt and Pool creek crossings would be developed in consultation with NOAA fisheries, and protective measures would be implemented to minimize incidental take and to avoid jeopardizing the species.
- Riparian habitat will be restored with consultation with NOAA Fisheries, USFWS and CDFG.
- Mitigation measures will be incorporated to ensure that threatened and endangered fishes, their habitat and designated Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) in the project area streams are not likely to be adversely affected.
- Project design will be consistent with: the *California Salmonoid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual* (CDFG, 2003), which provides measures to ensure fish passage and to enhance or restore riparian habitat, the *Recovery Strategy for Coho Salmon* (CDFG, 2004); *Guidelines for Salmonoid Passage at Stream Crossings* (NMFS, 2001); and the *NMFS Southwest Regions Habitat Protection Policy* (NMFS, 1991).

- Mitigation measures for impacts to habitat for coho salmon, steelhead, and chinook salmon would be provided for the Russian River tule perch.
- Preconstruction surveys for the northern red-legged frog, foothill yellow-legged frog, western and northwest pond turtle will be conducted at Mark West, Piner, and Paulin creek.

California Tiger Salamander (CTS)

The project will affect 6.35 ha (15.72 ac) of CTS habitat.

Findings:

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

Statement of Facts:

To lessen CTS resource effects, the following mitigation measure is proposed:

- Caltrans and SCTA will provide compensation for the loss of 6.36 ha (15.72 ac) of CTS habitat with the acquisition and preservation of 1.27 ha (3.14 ac) of habitat for the CTS. Compensation will be achieved by the purchase of credits in a conservation bank approved by the USFWS.

Wetland and Other Waters of the U.S.

The project would permanently fill 0.086 ha (0.212 ac) of wetlands and other waters of the U.S.

Findings:

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

Statement of Facts:

To lessen wetland and other waters of the U.S. resource effects, the following mitigation measure is proposed:

- Purchase of credits in a USACE approved mitigation bank would ensure no net loss of wetlands and compensate for impacts to other waters.

Special Status Species

The project would affect 6.36-ha/15.72 ac of habitat suitable for vernal pond plants.

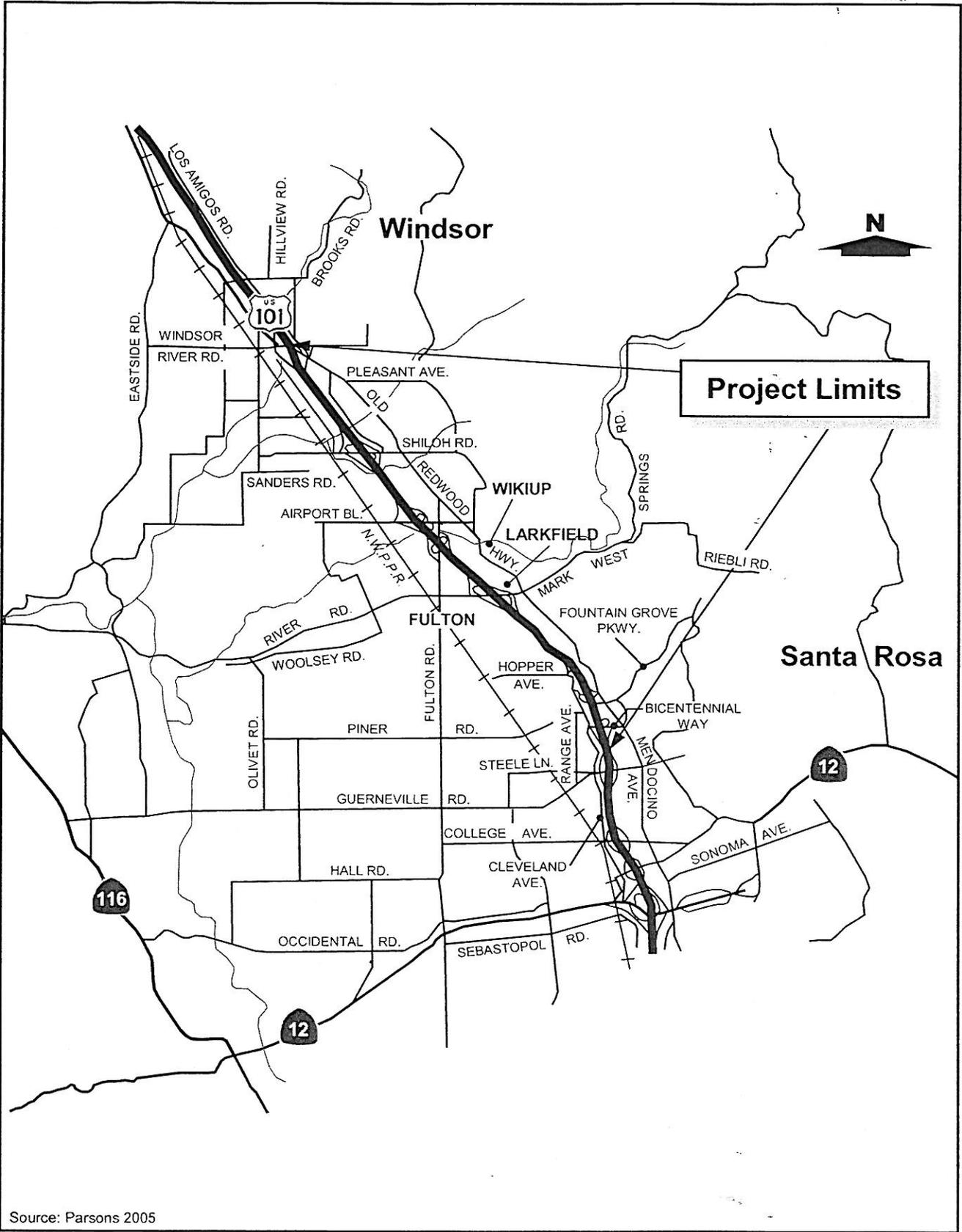
Findings:

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

Statement of Facts:

To lessen special status species resource effects, the following mitigation measures are proposed:

- Mitigation compensation will be provided for the loss of habitat suitable to contain vernal pool plants.
- Plant surveys are recommended during the bloom period prior to construction to ensure that there are no impacts to special-status plant species.



Source: Parsons 2005

SCTA Highway 101 HOV Lane Widening Project:
 Steele Lane, Santa Rosa to
 Windsor River Road, Windsor



PROJECT VICINITY
 Figure 1.1-2