

Wellsona Safety Improvements

Approximately 5 miles north of the City of Paso Robles
in the County of San Luis Obispo

05-SLO-101-61.7/62.1

EA: 05-1J780 Project ID: 05-1800-0052

SCH #2019099077

Initial Study with Mitigated Negative Declaration



Prepared by the
State of California Department of Transportation

December 2018



General Information About This Document

The Draft Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration circulated for public review and comment from September 20, 2019 to October 20, 2019. A Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration, as well as an offer to hold a public meeting, was published in the local newspaper (The Tribune) on Friday, September 20, 2019. The Notice of Intent and offer to hold a public meeting was mailed to a list of stakeholders that included both governmental offices and private citizens who are near the project area.

Comments received during this period are included in Appendix F, Comment and Responses, and have been added since the draft environmental document circulation. Since circulation of the draft environmental document, the post miles have been changed to 61.7 to 62.1. Additionally, the shoulder width on the frontage road has been reduced from 8 feet to 6 feet.

The project has completed the environmental compliance with the circulation of the draft document. When funding is approved, Caltrans can design and build all or part of the project.

Hard copies of this document as well as the technical studies are available at:

Caltrans District Office
50 Higuera Street
San Luis Obispo, California 93401

For individuals with sensory disabilities, this document is available in Braille, in large print, on audiocassette, or on computer disk. To obtain a copy in one of these alternate formats, please write to or call Caltrans, Attention: Matthew Fowler, Central Region Environmental, 50 Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo, California 93401; 805-542-2603 (Voice), or use the California Relay Service 1-800-735-2929 (TTY), 1-800-735-2929 (Voice), or 711.

SCH #2019069108
05-SLO-101-61.7/62.1
EA: 05-1J780 Project ID: 05-1800-0052

Construct Undercrossing at Highway 101 South of Wellsona Road
in San Luis Obispo County

**INITIAL STUDY
with Mitigated Negative Declaration**

Submitted Pursuant to: (State) Division 13, California Public Resources Code

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Transportation



John Luchetta
Office Chief, Central Region
Environmental Central Coast Office
California Department of Transportation

12-20-19

Date

Mitigated Negative Declaration

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) will reduce the number and severity of collisions at the intersection of Highway 101 and Wellsona Road in San Luis Obispo County. The intersection is experiencing severe collisions relating to drivers not yielding the right-of-way, including broadside and left-turn merge-related collisions. The project will construct an undercrossing south of Wellsona Road at post mile 61.88 and add new frontage roads to connect the undercrossing to Wellsona Road.

Determination

The project would have no effect on: agriculture and forest resources, mineral resources, public services, recreation, or tribal cultural resources.

The project would have no significant effect on: air quality, cultural resources, energy, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, noise, population and housing, community and growth, transportation, or wildfire or utilities and service systems.

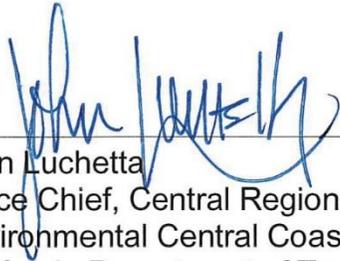
The project would have no significantly adverse effect on aesthetics because the following measures would reduce potential effects to less than significant:

- The slope paving under Highway 101 and bridge rail will have aesthetic treatment that will complement the rural visual character of the area.
- Landform grading techniques will be used to transform excess excavated material into natural landforms.
- Impacts to vegetation other than that required for undercrossing construction will be minimized to the greatest extent possible.
- Tree replacement planting will include aesthetic considerations as well as the inherent biological goals.

The project would have no significantly adverse effect on biological resources because the following measures would reduce potential effects to less than significant:

- Prior to any ground disturbance, a preconstruction survey will be conducted to identify any biological resources that may occur within the project area.
- All construction personnel will attend a preconstruction training held by a certified Caltrans biologist for the San Joaquin kit fox and American badger. If a species of concern is found, a Caltrans biologist will be notified immediately, and construction work will be halted.
- All construction pipes, culverts, or similar structures with a diameter of 4 inches or greater stored on the construction site overnight will be thoroughly inspected for any animal species prior to being buried, capped or otherwise used or moved.

- Excavations deeper than 2 feet will be covered with plywood or similar materials at the end of each work day, or escape ramps put in place to prevent any entrapment of species.
- Prior to soil disturbance, invasive plant species will be removed and disposed of at a certified landfill. If any soil is removed for construction, the top 6 inches containing the seed layer in areas of weedy species will be disposed of at a certified landfill. No rodenticides are allowed, and any herbicides used need to be approved by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- If feasible and regulatory approval allows, all vegetation removal for this project will be scheduled outside of the typical bird nesting season. If vegetation removal is scheduled within nesting season, a nesting bird survey will be conducted. If an active nest of a migratory bird is found, a buffer area will be established by a Caltrans biologist and an appropriate monitoring strategy will be determined.
- Prior to any ground-disturbing activities, Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing will be installed to prevent construction disturbance to biological resources.
- During construction, Best Management Practices will be implemented. Revegetation of temporarily disturbed areas will include regionally present, native species.



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Environmental Central Coast Office
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Section 1 Project Description and Background

1.1 Project Title

Wellsona Safety Improvements

1.2 Purpose and Need

The project site is near the intersection of Wellsona Road and Highway 101 approximately 5 miles north of Paso Robles and approximately 4 miles south of San Miguel. The existing intersection is a four-leg, at-grade intersection. At this location, Highway 101 is a four-lane roadway with two lanes of travel in either direction. Wellsona Road is a two-lane roadway perpendicular to Highway 101, with stop signs on Wellsona Road where it intersects Highway 101. The intersection and approaching areas contain an open median, left-turn lanes and merging lanes. Truck crossing warning signs and flashing beacons operate along Highway 101 near the intersection. Figure 1-1 and Figure 1-2 show the project's vicinity and location maps, respectively.

1.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the project is to reduce the number and severity of collisions at the intersection of Highway 101 and Wellsona Road in San Luis Obispo County.

1.2.2 Need

The intersection of Highway 101 and Wellsona Road is experiencing a pattern of broadside and left-turn merge-related collisions as documented through the Caltrans Traffic Accident Surveillance and Analysis System. The intersection has had a concentration of collisions related to drivers not yielding to the right-of-way. In the most recent 5-year period, this intersection has experienced 16 collisions; of these, 14 were multi-vehicle collisions and 3 were fatal collisions. Based on the analysis of accident statistics, the traffic collision rate at this location is higher than the statewide average and Caltrans determined that action would be required to reduce the potential for collisions at this intersection.

Figure 1-1 Project Vicinity Map

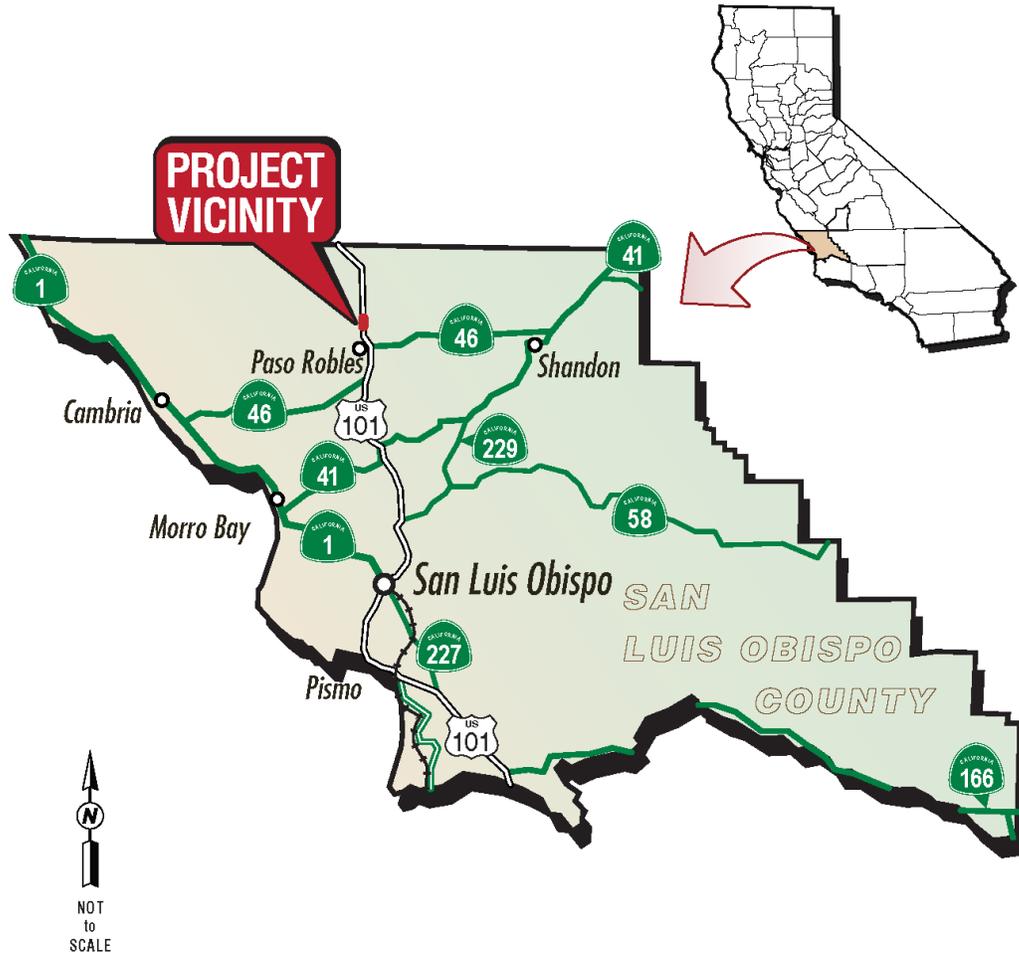
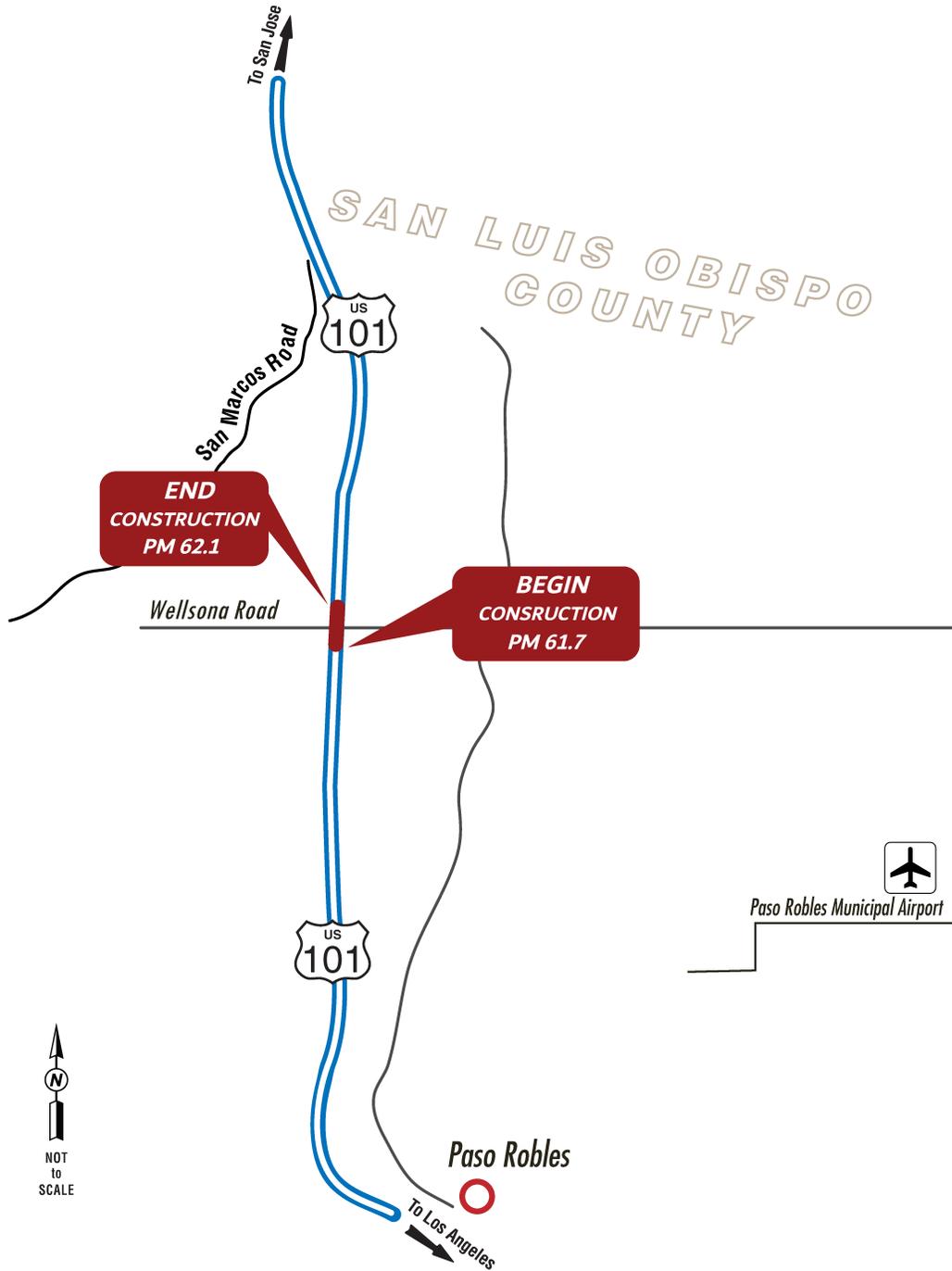


Figure 1-2 Project Location Map



1.3 Description of Project

Caltrans will construct an undercrossing beneath Highway 101 south of the existing intersection, eliminating the need for motorists to make left turns across traffic on Highway 101. This will help prevent future broadside and left-turn merge-related collisions at the intersection. The undercrossing will consist of a 112-foot-long bridge on Highway 101 matching the existing roadway geometry. Frontage roads will be constructed to connect the undercrossing with Wellsona Road on either side of Highway 101. Full closure of either Highway 101 or Wellsona Road is not expected for the project. The undercrossing will be constructed within the State right-of-way; however, the purchase of right-of-way will be required to construct the frontage roads that connect with Wellsona Road.

A preliminary layout map of the project is presented in Appendix D.

1.4 Project Alternatives

There are two alternatives currently under consideration: a Build Alternative and a No-Build Alternative.

The alternatives under consideration were developed by an interdisciplinary team to achieve the project purpose while avoiding or minimizing environmental impacts. Several criteria were taken into consideration when evaluating alternatives for the project, including the project purpose and need, project cost and environmental impacts.

1.4.1 Build Alternative

The project would construct an undercrossing beneath the existing Highway 101 and connect Wellsona Road by way of a frontage road.

The undercrossing structure would lie just south of the existing intersection (at approximately post mile 61.75). The undercrossing would consist of a 112-foot-long bridge on Highway 101, matching the existing roadway geometry. The roadway through the undercrossing would consist of two 12-foot travel lanes, 6-foot outside shoulders, with curbs or dikes. The undercrossing would be built with a vertical clearance of 16 feet.

Construction of the undercrossing would be done in stages. The first stage would temporarily shift traffic on Highway 101 to either the northbound or southbound lanes—having one lane of travel in either direction in the project area—to allow for construction of the first half of the undercrossing. Once the first half of the undercrossing is constructed, traffic on Highway 101 would be shifted over to the first half of the undercrossing—again, with one lane of travel in either direction in the project area—and the second half of the

undercrossing would be constructed. Once the undercrossing is completed traffic will return to using the normal through lanes.

The new frontage road that will connect the undercrossing with Wellsona Road would be approximately 2,400 feet long consisting of two 12-foot travel lanes and 6-foot shoulders per county standards. New intersections would be constructed at locations where the new frontage roads connect to the existing Wellsona Road. Regulatory signs and guide signs would also be installed at the new intersections. In order to construct the new frontage road, additional right-of-way would be required. The new frontage roads may be constructed simultaneously during construction of the undercrossing.

The existing open median and left-turn lanes on Highway 101 at this intersection would be closed/removed as part of this alternative.

1.4.2 No-Build (No-Action) Alternative

This alternative would leave the existing intersection of Highway 101 and Wellsona Road as is, without any changes.

1.5 Surrounding Land Uses and Setting

The communities nearest to Wellsona include San Miguel, about 3 miles north, and Paso Robles, about 4 miles south. The Salinas River runs next to these communities, and Lake Nacimiento lies about 10 miles west. The lake is used as a water resource and for recreational activities. There are also many wineries near Paso Robles, making the area a popular destination for wine tasting.

Wellsona is a rural community with various land use types: residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural. Within the vicinity of the community, there are few amenities. The nearest grocery store is about 3 miles south in Paso Robles, and the nearest bank is about 5 miles south in Paso Robles. The San Paso Car and Truck Stop, on Wellsona Road west of Highway 101, provides most of the services and needs of the local community and traveling public (gas station, mini mart, etc.). In addition to the truck stop, there is a recreational vehicle park, San Miguel Garbage, as well as other businesses and residences. No public transit provides service to the community.

1.6 Other Public Agencies Whose Approval is Required

No permits are expected, and none are required.

Section 2 CEQA Environmental Checklist

2.1 CEQA Checklist

This checklist identifies physical, biological, social, and economic factors that might be affected by the project. Potential impact determinations include Significant and Unavoidable Impact, Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated, Less Than Significant Impact, and No Impact. In many cases, background studies performed in connection with a project will indicate that there are no impacts to a particular resource. A No Impact answer reflects this determination. The words “significant” and “significance” used throughout the following checklist are related to the California Environmental Quality Act known as CEQA, not the National Environmental Policy Act known as NEPA, impacts. The questions in this checklist are intended to encourage the thoughtful assessment of impacts and do not represent thresholds of significance.

Project features, which can include both design elements of the project, and standardized measures that are applied to all or most Caltrans projects such as Best Management Practices and measures included in the Standard Plans and Specifications or as Standard Special Provisions, are considered to be an integral part of the project and have been considered prior to any significance determinations documented below.

2.1.1 Aesthetics

CEQA Significance Determinations for Aesthetics

Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:

a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

Less Than Significant with Mitigation—Scenic vistas in the project vicinity include distant views of rolling hills flattening out as they near the Salinas River corridor. Views of the surrounding scenic vista are most expansive seen from Highway 101 due to the roadway's elevated vantage points. Therefore, a substantial adverse effect is not expected.

The following minimization measures will be implemented:

1. Bridge rail on Highway 101 will be aesthetically treated.
2. The slope paving under Highway 101 will have aesthetic treatment that will complement the rural visual character of the area.
3. Landform grading techniques will be used to transform excess excavated material into natural landforms.
4. Impacts to vegetation other than that required for undercrossing construction shall be minimized to the greatest extent possible.
5. Tree replacement planting will include aesthetic considerations as well as the inherent biological goals.

b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

No Impact—In this corridor, Highway 101 is not classified as an Officially Designated State Scenic Highway.

c) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from a publicly accessible vantage point.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

Less Than Significant Impact—The existing visual character of the project area is mostly rural: open space, scattered oak-covered rolling terrain, and distant rolling hills. The nearby development of the Wellsona Truck Stop detracts somewhat from the overall character of the project site and its surroundings. The design for the undercrossing is a relatively simple, efficient style without extensive ornamentation. This design style is consistent with the overall semi-rural character of the area and therefore would not result in an adverse effect to the existing visual character of the project site and its surroundings.

The aesthetic treatment of the bridge rail and the slope paving would minimize the changes to the site and compliment the rural surroundings. The visual character would not be substantially reduced by the proposed changes. Introduction of the new undercrossing is consistent with the existing visual character because similar highway elements are commonly seen within the corridor.

d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

No Impact—The project does not include a new source of lighting or glare.

2.1.2 Agriculture and Forest Resources

CEQA Significance Determinations for Agriculture and Forest Resources

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment Project; and the forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board.

Would the project:

a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

No Impact—Based on San Luis Obispo County maps provided by the California Department of Conservation, the project is not on Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance.

b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?

No Impact—The project is zoned as residential and commercial based on County of San Luis Obispo zoning maps and would not interfere with any Williamson Act contracts.

c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?

No Impact—The project is not located in any land zoned as forest or timberland based on the County of San Luis Obispo zoning maps.

d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

No Impact—The project is not located in forest land. Therefore, there would be no loss or conversion of forest land.

e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

No Impact—The project would not result in the conversion of farmland or forest land. The land in the project area is zoned as residential and commercial based on County of San Luis Obispo zoning maps.

2.1.3 Air Quality

Information found in the Air Quality Report (April 23, 2019) prepared for this project was used to address questions in this section.

CEQA Significance Determinations for Air Quality

Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations.

Would the project:

a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

No Impact—The project is consistent with San Luis Obispo Air Pollution Control District air quality attainment goals as stated in the State Implementation Plan.

b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?

Less Than Significant Impact—The project location is in attainment for all federal air quality standards, and the State Particulate Matter 2.5 standards. The project is non-attainment for the State Ambient Air Quality Standards for

Ozone and Particulate Matter 10. It is expected that there will be no difference in long-term air emissions in the region with or without the project.

There will be short-term temporary increase in air emissions and particulate matter during the construction period. However, with the use of standard construction dust and emission practices and procedures, particulate matter and equipment emissions will be within the San Luis Obispo Air Pollution Control District daily thresholds.

c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

Less Than Significant Impact—Based on the Air Quality Assessment, there would be no difference in long-term air emissions with or without the project. There is minimal potential to subject surrounding sensitive receptors to inhalable emissions during project construction; however, temporary construction impacts would be minimized by using dust control practices as part of Caltrans' normal practice.

d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

Less Than Significant Impact—The project is not expected to result in other emissions that would cause an adverse effect. It is expected that the project would not alter long-term emissions in the region with or without the project. Temporary construction emissions are expected to be well within the San Luis Obispo Air Pollution Control District daily thresholds. It is expected that during project construction, temporary odors could inconvenience the nearby public.

2.1.4 Biological Resources

Information found in the Natural Environment Study (June 17, 2019) that was prepared for this project was used to address the questions in this section.

CEQA Significance Determinations for Biological Resources

Would the project:

a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

Less Than Significant with Mitigation—No special-status plant species (including species listed by the State and Federal Endangered Species Acts) were observed during appropriately timed floristic surveys within the project area, and no special-status plant species are expected to be impacted by the project.

Because of a lack of suitable habitat, the project would have no effect on the following federally listed species and their associated designated critical habitat: California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*), California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*), California clapper rail (*Rallus longirostris obsoletus*), California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*), least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*), southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*), South-Central California Coast steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), Kern primrose sphinx moth (*Euproserpinus euterpe*), vernal pool fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*), giant kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys ingens*), and blunt-nosed leopard lizard (*Gambelia silus*).

However, the following special-status species have the potential to be present in the project area during construction activities based on historic or recent records, or presence of suitable habitat conditions in the project area: San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*), American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), Salinas pocket mouse (*Perognathus inornatus psammophilus*), burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), and San Joaquin coachwhip (*Masticophis flagellum ruddocki*). Only the San Joaquin kit fox is listed by the State and Federal Endangered Species Acts.

The project has the potential to directly impact the San Joaquin kit fox, American badger, Salinas pocket mouse, and San Joaquin coachwhip if the species are present during project construction. However, the chances are low that any of these species would be present during construction given the relatively small project area and poor quality of habitat.

The following measures will be implemented to minimize potential impacts to sensitive species:

San Joaquin Kit Fox and American Badger Avoidance and Minimization Measures

1. Prior to any ground disturbance, a preconstruction survey will be conducted for the San Joaquin kit fox and American badger within 200 feet of the project area. The preconstruction/pre-activity survey will be conducted no less than 14 days and no more than 30 days prior to the beginning of ground disturbance and/or construction activities. The survey will identify any potential kit fox dens.
2. Prior to any ground disturbance, the contractor, all employees of the contractor, subcontractors, and subcontractors' employees will attend an employee education program conducted by a Caltrans or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist. The program will consist of a brief presentation by persons knowledgeable in San Joaquin kit fox and American badger biology, legislative protection, and measures to avoid impacts to the species during project implementation.
3. All construction pipes, culverts, or similar structures with a diameter of 4 inches or greater stored on the construction site overnight will be

thoroughly inspected for San Joaquin kit foxes prior to being buried, capped, or otherwise used or moved.

4. Excavations deeper than 2 feet will be covered with plywood or similar material at the end of each work day, or escape ramps put in place to prevent any entrapment. Each excavation will be inspected thoroughly before being filled.
5. If kit fox activity is observed in the project area, Caltrans will contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service immediately, and no work will occur within a 200-foot radius (50-foot radius for American badger activity) of the observation until approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
6. All food-related trash items must be disposed of in securely closed containers and removed at least once a week from a construction or project site.
7. Rodenticides will not be allowed, and herbicides must be approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Salinas Pocket Mouse and Coachwhip Avoidance and Minimization Measures

Avoidance and minimization measures for invasive species would offset potential long-term impacts to the Salinas pocket mouse and San Joaquin coachwhip:

1. During construction, Caltrans will ensure that the spread or introduction of invasive exotic plant species will be avoided to the maximum extent possible.
2. If the use of imported fill material is necessary, the imported material will be obtained from a source that is known to be free of invasive plant species; or the material will consist of purchased clean material such as crushed aggregate, sorted rock, or similar.
3. Weeds designated for removal will be removed prior to disturbing surface soils and disposed of the same day they are removed. A Caltrans biologist will locate and mark weeds to be removed in areas where surface soils will be disturbed.
4. Dense concentrations of invasive plants and all noxious weeds will be designated for removal prior to ground-disturbing activities.
5. Due to the high concentration of invasive species in the Biological Study Area, to prevent the spread of invasive species, all vegetation removed from the construction site will be taken to a certified landfill and, if any soil is removed for construction, the top 6 inches containing the seed layer in areas with weedy species will be disposed of at a certified landfill.

6. Project plans will avoid the use of plant species that the California Invasive Plant Council, California Department of Agriculture, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, or other resource organizations consider to be invasive or potentially invasive.
7. Revegetation of temporary impact areas will include regionally present, native species.

Special-Status and Native Migratory Birds

1. If feasible and regulatory approvals allow, all vegetation removal for this project will be scheduled to occur from October 1 to January 31, outside of the typical nesting bird season, to avoid potential impacts to nesting birds.
2. If vegetation removal or other construction activities are proposed to occur within 100 feet of potential nesting habitat during the nesting season (February 1 to September 30), a nesting bird survey will be conducted by a biologist determined qualified by Caltrans no more than three days prior to construction.
3. During construction and the typical nesting season, active exclusionary methods will be implemented to prevent native migratory birds from occupying nests in the construction zone. Inactive nest removal activities will be monitored by a qualified biologist.
4. If an active nest of a native migratory bird is found, a Caltrans biologist will determine an appropriate buffer and/or monitoring strategy based on the habits and needs of the species, and the types of project activities and distance from these activities to the nest that are allowable. The buffer area will be avoided until a qualified biologist has determined that juveniles have fledged.

b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

Less Than Significant with Mitigation—The project is not expected to result in direct impacts to jurisdictional areas. Indirect impacts may occur due to seasonal wetlands, intermittent stream and riparian habitat due to possible runoff of stormwater or pollutants, and tree trimming. However, avoidance and minimization measures can be implemented to minimize indirect impacts to jurisdictional areas.

Avoidance and Minimization Measures for Jurisdictional Areas

1. Prior to any ground-disturbing activities, Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing will be installed to prevent construction disturbance to jurisdictional areas next to the project limits. Caltrans-defined Environmentally Sensitive Areas will be noted on design plans and delineated in the field prior to the start of construction activities.

2. During construction, all project-related hazardous materials spills within the project site will be cleaned up immediately. Readily accessible spill prevention and cleanup materials will be kept by the contractor on-site at all times during construction.
3. During construction, erosion control measures will be implemented. Silt fencing, fiber rolls, and barriers will be installed as needed between the project site and jurisdictional areas.
4. During construction, the cleaning and refueling of equipment and vehicles will occur only within a designated staging area. This area will either be a minimum of 100 feet from jurisdictional areas, or if the area is less than 100 feet from jurisdictional areas, the area must be surrounded by barriers (e.g., fiber rolls or equivalent). The staging areas will conform to Caltrans Construction Site Best Management Practices applicable to attaining zero discharge of stormwater runoff.
5. Drainage ditches will be designed to avoid and minimize possible erosion of jurisdictional areas.

The project has the potential to improve the quality of the surrounding habitat by removing invasive species and replanting temporarily disturbed areas with native vegetation.

Avoidance and Minimization Measure for Invasive Species

1. During construction, Caltrans will ensure that the spread or introduction of invasive exotic plant species will be avoided to the maximum extent possible.
2. If the use of imported fill material is necessary, the imported material will be obtained from a source that is known to be free of invasive plant species; or, the material will consist of purchased clean material such as crushed aggregate, sorted rock, or similar.
3. Weeds designated for removal will be removed prior to disturbing surface soils and disposed of the same day they are removed. A Caltrans biologist will locate and mark weeds to be removed in areas where surface soils will be disturbed.
4. Dense concentrations of invasive plants and all noxious weeds will be designated for removal prior to ground-disturbing activities.
5. Due to the high concentration of invasive species in the Biological Study Area, to prevent the spread of invasive species, all vegetation removed from the construction site will be taken to a certified landfill, and if any soil is removed for construction, the top 6 inches containing the seed layer in areas with weedy species will be disposed of at a certified landfill.

6. Project plans will avoid the use of plant species that the California Invasive Plant Council, California Department of Agriculture, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, or other resource organizations consider to be invasive or potentially invasive.
7. Revegetation of temporary impact areas will include regionally present, native species.

c) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

No Impact—A wetland delineation was performed, and no wetlands were identified within the project area.

d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

No Impact—There are no migratory fish within the project area. The undercrossing is expected to result in long-term benefits to terrestrial species dispersal by providing a safer passage under the highway.

e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

No Impact—The project would not conflict with any local policies or ordinances available through the County of San Luis Obispo. The project is exempt from the Oak Woodland Ordinance of the San Luis Obispo County Land Use Ordinance because there will be less than one acre of oak woodland removal.

f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

No Impact—There is not an existing Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan within the project area based on the plans and reports available through the County of San Luis Obispo.

2.1.5 Cultural Resources

Information found in the Archaeological Survey Report (April 2019) and Historical Property Survey Report (June 7, 2019) that was prepared for this project was used to address the questions in this section.

CEQA Significance Determinations for Cultural Resources

Would the project:

a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?

No Impact—There is no evidence of prehistoric or early historic-period resources in or near the project area.

b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?

No Impact—There are no archaeological resources in the project area.

c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?

Less Than Significant Impact—The project is not expected to disturb human remains.

If human remains are discovered, California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 states that further disturbances and activities shall stop in any area or nearby area suspected to overlie remains, and the County Coroner contacted. If the remains are thought by the coroner to be Native American, the coroner will notify the Native American Heritage Commission, who, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5097.98, will then notify the Most Likely Descendent. The person who discovers the remains will contact the District 5 Environmental Branch, so that they may work with the Most Likely Descendent on the respectful treatment and disposition of the remains. Further provisions of Public Resources Code Section 5097.98 are to be followed as applicable.

2.1.6 Energy

CEQA Significance Determinations for Energy

Would the project:

a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?

Less Than Significant—The project would include standard construction practices and reasonable measures that will reduce wasteful, inefficient and unnecessary consumption (for example, turning off idling equipment, limiting materials transport, etc.) of energy and non-renewable resources during project construction. The project is not expected to require excessive consumption of energy resources for operation (Draft Project Report).

b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

No Impact—The project would not conflict with or obstruct the state or local energy plans.

2.1.7 Geology and Soils

Information found in the Preliminary Geotech Report (January 31, 2019) that was prepared for this project was used to supplement the responses in this section.

CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils

Would the project:

a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:

i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42?

Less than Significant Impact—The project is not within an earthquake fault zone, according to the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map.

ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?

Less Than Significant Impact—The undercrossing is expected to experience ground shaking in the event of a large earthquake on the San Andreas fault or another large Northern California fault. The project would be built with seismic reinforcing according to the Highway Design Manual.

iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

Less Than Significant Impact—San Luis Obispo County Planning and Building Department liquefaction maps show the project site has a low potential for liquefaction.

iv) Landslides?

Less Than Significant Impact—During construction of the undercrossing, localized landslides or soil movement could potentially occur during excavation activities and would be minimized with the implementation of Caltrans Standard Specifications for soil stabilization.

b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

Less Than Significant Impact—Disturbed areas would be treated with permanent erosion control.

c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?

Less Than Significant Impact—The project is located on soil that has a low potential for liquefaction. Construction of the undercrossing may create temporary unstable soils that could result in localized landslides or soil movement as a result of construction earthwork and/or excavations. This would be minimized with the implementation of Caltrans Standard Specifications for soil stabilization.

d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?

Less Than Significant Impact—Preliminary investigations have found that the project is located on soils that are composed of a mix of silt, sand, clay and gravel. Clay is commonly identified as an expansive soil. Further geotechnical investigation will be conducted prior to project construction to better identify the soil characteristics within the project area. The project would incorporate design features to protect structures from expansive soils.

e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?

No Impact—Based on the Draft Project Report, the project does not include the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems.

f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

No Impact—A paleontology review was completed for this project and anticipates that no paleontological resources/unique geologic features will be found in the project site.

2.1.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

CEQA Significance Determinations for Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Would the project:

a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

Less Than Significant Impact—The project is not expected to generate enough greenhouse gas emissions to significantly impact the environment. Construction-related greenhouse gas emissions would be unavoidable due to material processing, delivery, on-site construction equipment and potential traffic delays. Emissions would be produced at different levels throughout the construction phase. Frequency and occurrence can be reduced through innovations in plans and specifications and by implementing better traffic management during construction phases.

Construction climate change emissions were estimated using the Caltrans Construction Emissions Tool using default settings for an underpass construction. For this project, the estimated average carbon dioxide emissions total is 276 tons per year, and the construction phase would last about 200 working days (within one year). The estimated average carbon dioxide equivalent emissions total is 738.31 tons per year.

The greenhouse gas emissions discussion is based on climate change guidance provided by the Caltrans Division of Environmental Analysis. According to the guidance, there are several categories of projects that most likely would have minimal or no increase in operational greenhouse gas emissions, including roadway improvement projects such as this.

b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

No Impact—The project would not conflict with plans, policy or regulations for reducing emission greenhouse gasses. All construction contracts will include all Caltrans Standard Specifications that require compliance with all Air Resources Board's and local air district rules, regulations ordinances and statues, some of which can contribute to reducing construction greenhouse gas emissions (i.e., idling equipment restrictions, appropriate source point, etc.). Construction greenhouse gas emissions were estimated with the

Caltrans Construction Emissions Tool using default settings for the underpass construction.

2.1.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Information found in the Hazardous Waste Assessment (February 14, 2018) that was prepared for this project was used to supplement responses for this section.

CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Would the project:

a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?

Less than Significant—Construction of the project would involve the use, transport and disposal of potentially hazardous materials. However, the project will incorporate standard Caltrans specifications to clean up any potential spills during construction (Standard Specifications Construction Spill Prevention). It is not expected that project construction will result in significant hazards to the public or to the environment.

b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?

Less Than Significant—The project has the potential to result in spills or release of chemicals as result of project construction activities. The project will follow the 2018 Caltrans Standard Specifications for construction spill prevention. The project is not expected to result in significant hazards to the public or to the environment.

c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?

No Impact—Based on the County of San Luis Obispo planning department maps, there are no schools within one-quarter mile of the project.

d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?

Less Than Significant—According to the Hazardous Waste Assessment, there was previously an underground storage tank spill at the service station located on a parcel within the project site. The spill took place in the northern portion of the parcel, but only the southern portion will be acquired for the project. The southern portion, along with the other parcels within the project

area, have been evaluated and do not have indications of hazardous waste issues.

e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?

No Impact— Based on the County of San Luis Obispo planning department maps, the project is not within 2 miles of a public airport or proposed airport.

f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

No Impact—The project would not interfere with an emergency response or evacuation plan. Access will be maintained during project construction. A traffic management plan will be prepared in order to notify and coordinate with emergency responders during construction. Following completion of the project, there will be a new access across Wellsona via the newly constructed undercrossing.

g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?

Less Than Significant Impact—The project is partially located within an area identified as a high fire hazard severity zone (California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection—Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map), and the surrounding region is identified as a wildland area that may contain substantial fire risk and hazards (San Luis Obispo County Natural Hazard Disclosure—Fire). The project could expose workers to fire risk and hazards during construction. There is the potential that construction activities could create an unintended fire. However, precautions to prevent fire incidents would be used during construction as part of the code of safe practices in accordance with California Division of Occupational Safety and Health, Fire Protection and Prevention guidance.

At project completion, it is expected that the frontage road would be maintained and cleared of vegetation to reduce the potential risk of unintended fires by travelers.

2.1.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

Information found in the Draft Project Report and the Water Quality Assessment (June 19, 2019) that were prepared for this project was used to provide responses for this section.

CEQA Significance Determinations for Hydrology and Water Quality

Would the project:

a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?

Less Than Significant Impact—Standard construction practices and other Best Management Practices would be incorporated into the plans to minimize potential risk of runoff from construction activities into the swale and culvert. With the use of proper engineering controls and Best Management Practices, significant impacts to water quality are not expected.

b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

No Impact—The project would not affect groundwater recharge. Surface runoff from the completed frontage road will be directed to the adjacent natural drainage system.

c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:

i) Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;

Less Than Significant Impact—Disturbed areas would be treated with permanent erosion control. Erosion control materials would be selected to best address the various conditions within the project site, including the use of compost and hydroseed to promote long-term vegetation establishment.

ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site;

Less Than Significant Impact—The project would not increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner that would result in flooding. Best Management Practices would be incorporated to minimize potential risk of runoff from construction activities.

iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or

Less Than Significant Impact—Best Management Practices would be used to direct water into planned drainage systems to maintain water quality.

iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?

No Impact—Based on the County of San Luis Obispo Flood Hazards map, the project is not within an identified flood zone and the project is not expected to alter existing drainage patterns.

d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

No Impact— Based on the County of San Luis Obispo Flood Hazards map, the project is outside of the 100-year flood hazard zone. The project is not in a tsunami or seiche zone based on mapping provided by the California Department of Conservation.

e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

No Impact—The project would comply with the water quality control and sustainable groundwater management plans.

2.1.11 Land Use and Planning

Information from the Community and Growth Impact Analysis that was prepared for the project was used to address questions in this section.

CEQA Significance Determinations for Land Use and Planning

Would the project:

a) Physically divide an established community?

No Impact—The project would not divide an established community. Instead, the project would provide better connectivity in the vicinity with the creation of a new public route that could accommodate multimodal use and would improve community accessibility.

b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?

Less Than Significant Impact—The project is in an area that is part of the San Luis Obispo County-North County Planning Area. The project is not expected to conflict with any of the land use plans, policies or regulations of this area. Also, Caltrans has coordinated with the County of San Luis Obispo to ensure the project and the current North County Planning Area are not in conflict.

2.1.12 Mineral Resources

CEQA Significance Determinations for Mineral Resources

Would the project:

a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?

No Impact—Based on mapping provided by the California Department of Conservation there is no registered mineral source in the project location.

b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?

No Impact— Based on mapping provided by the California Department of Conservation there is no registered mineral resource recovery site in the project location.

2.1.13 Noise

Information from the Noise Study Report (May 6, 2019) that was prepared for this project was used to address questions in this section.

CEQA Significance Determinations for Noise

Would the project result in:

a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?

Less than Significant Impact—Operational noise levels are not predicted to approach or exceed Caltrans' noise abatement criterion. There will be temporary increases in ambient noise levels during construction but they will be controlled by Caltrans Standard Specifications.

b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

No Impact—The project is not expected to generate excessive groundborne vibration or noise as a result of construction activities.

c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

No Impact—The nearest airport is about 4 miles from the project.

2.1.14 Population and Housing

Information from the Community and Growth Impact Analysis (July 9, 2019) that was prepared for the project was used to address questions in this section.

CEQA Significance Determinations for Population and Housing

Would the project:

a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?

Less Than Significant Impact—The project would create a new frontage road that would provide new public access in the vicinity. However, the project is not expected to directly or indirectly induce substantial unplanned population growth.

b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

Less Than Significant Impact—The project would require partial property acquisition from five private properties. The project plans on acquiring only the minimum amount of property required to complete the project. A map detailing the partial property acquisition from each private property is available in Appendix E. The following table summarizes the partial property acquisition.

Table 1- Property Acquisition

| Assessor Parcel Number (APN) | Acres |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| 026-103-017 | 0.17 |
| 026-103-018 | 0.50 |
| 026-104-035 | 2.18 |
| 026-103-021 | 0.50 |
| 026-103-021 | 0.71 |

The partial property acquisition for this project is expected to be relatively small in scale and is not expected to result in the displacement of residents or their housing. Standard Caltrans procedures involving Caltrans Right-of-Way will be conducted.

2.1.15 Public Services

CEQA Significance Determinations for Public Services

a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:

Fire protection?

No Impact—The project’s purpose is to create a safe crossing for Highway 101. The project would not result in the need for new or physically altered fire protection facilities.

Police protection?

No Impact—The project’s purpose is to create a safe crossing for Highway 101. The project would not result in the need for new or physically altered police protection facilities.

Schools?

No Impact—The project’s purpose is to create a safe crossing for Highway 101. The project would not alter or increase need for public schools.

Parks?

No Impact— The project’s purpose is to create a safe crossing for Highway 101. The project would not alter or increase need for public parks.

Other public facilities?

No Impact—The project’s purpose is to create a safe crossing for Highway 101. The project would not affect other public facilities.

2.1.16 Recreation

CEQA Significance Determinations for Recreation

a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?

No Impact—The project would not result in development or growth or redirect traffic toward local parks and therefore would not increase existing use of neighborhood and regional parks. The nearest park is about 4 miles away.

b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

No Impact—The project does not include or require additional or expanded recreational facilities (see project description).

2.1.17 Transportation

CEQA Significance Determinations for Transportation

Would the project:

a) Conflict with a program plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?

No Impact—The project does not conflict with any program plans, ordinances or policies for transportation and would instead enhance access for pedestrians and bicycles across Wellsona Road.

b) Conflict with or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?

Less Than Significant Impact—The project is within one-half mile of an existing high transit corridor (Highway 101) and is not expected to significantly alter vehicle miles traveled (see project description).

c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?

No Impact—The project does not include geometric design features that would substantially increase hazards (see project description). Geometric design features will be consistent with the Highway Design Manual.

d) Result in inadequate emergency access?

No Impact—The project would not result in inadequate emergency access. Emergency access to the area will still be available through the use of the undercrossing and new frontage road.

2.1.18 Tribal Cultural Resources

CEQA Significance Determinations for Tribal Cultural Resources

Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

a) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k), or

No Impact—Based on the Archaeological Survey Report, there are no California or local register-eligible resources within or next to the project area.

b) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

No Impact—Consultation with the Native American Heritage Commission and various Native American tribes revealed there are no Native American cultural resources within the vicinity of the project area.

2.1.19 Utilities and Service Systems

CEQA Significance Determinations for Utilities and Service Systems

Would the project:

a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?

Less than Significant Impact—The project may involve temporary utility relocation during construction. No permanent utility changes are expected. Drainage for the frontage road will not be redirected to the existing culvert. Instead, storm water runoff from the new impervious surface will be collected by storm drain pipes that run along the edge of the shoulder, through the undercrossing, and directed to the east side of Highway 101 into an existing natural drainage (Draft Project Report).

b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?

No Impact—The project is not expected to require an excessive water supply for project completion. Caltrans complies with water conservation requirements by Executive Orders issued during Governor Edmund J. Brown's term and maintains a goal of reducing water consumption by 50% comparing 2013 baseline usage. During vegetation replanting, irrigations systems will be utilized to minimize water consumption and any system over 500 square feet will comply with the Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance.

c) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?

No Impact—The project would not require changes to existing wastewater capacity. It would not generate any wastewater that requires treatment (Draft Project Report).

d) Generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?

No Impact—The project is not expected to generate excessive waste. Solid waste generated by construction of the project would be transported to a disposal site with appropriate facilities to accommodate waste materials.

e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

No Impact—The project would comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste.

2.1.20 Wildfire

CEQA Significance Determinations for Wildfire

If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:

a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

Less Than Significant Impact—During project construction, any emergency response or evacuation plan requiring access to the project site may encounter delays. Standard practice is to coordinate with local emergency agencies and develop a transportation management plan to minimize potential delays to emergency services during project construction. At project completion, any existing emergency response plans or emergency evacuation plans may need to be updated to accommodate the new facility but is not expected to negatively affect evacuation plans in the area.

b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?

Less Than Significant Impact—The project is partially located within an area identified as a high fire hazard severity zone (California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection—Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map), and the surrounding region is identified as a wildland area that may contain substantial fire risk and hazards (San Luis Obispo County Natural Hazard Disclosure—Fire).

The project could expose workers to fire risk and hazards during construction. There is the potential that construction activities could create an unintended fire. However, the project construction crew would use standard precautions to prevent fire incidents during construction as part of the code of safe practices. The project will not construct any new housing or commercial facilities within the project area. Project occupants using the new road are expected to pass through the facility and not remain for extended periods of time.

c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?

Less Than Significant Impact—The project would construct a new frontage road. There is the potential that construction activities could create an unintended fire. However, the project would use adequate precautions to prevent fire incidents during construction as part of the code of safe practices. The construction of the road would remove untended weedy vegetation and act as a permanent fire break.

d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

Less Than Significant Impact—The project is partially located within an area identified as a high fire hazard severity zone (California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection—Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map), and the surrounding region is identified as a wildland area that may contain substantial fire risk and hazards (San Luis Obispo County Natural Hazard Disclosure—Fire). The project could expose workers to fire risk and hazards during construction. There is the potential that construction activities could create an unintended fire. Adequate precautions to prevent fire incidents will be implemented during project construction as part of the code of safe practices in accordance with California Division of Occupational Safety and Health Fire Protection and Prevention guidance.

Post-fire slope instability is not expected considering the project area is relatively flat and therefore not likely to be affected by downslope or downstream flooding or landslides.

The project site could be quickly evacuated in an emergency and it is expected that no work would continue until the emergency status has been lifted.

2.1.21 Mandatory Findings of Significance

CEQA Significance Determinations for Mandatory Findings of Significance

a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?

Less Than Significant with Mitigation—The project does not have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment.

The project would result in disturbance to the natural environment. Project construction would result in impacts to marginal potential habitat for wildlife species. Project construction would require vegetation and tree removal. The project has the potential to disturb, displace or remove wildlife species within the project area. However, the project would implement appropriate measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate for temporary and permanent impacts to wildlife species and their associated habitats.

It is expected that the creation of the undercrossing would improve wildlife connectivity in the region and potentially improve wildlife range. No important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory are found within the project limits.

b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.)

Less Than Significant with Mitigation—The project has the potential to cause cumulative biology and visual impacts; however, the avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures adopted for this project will minimize cumulative impacts to biological and visual resources.

The project also has the potential to attract new development with the construction of the frontage road, which could result in cumulative impacts to community and growth. However, the project is not expected to substantially contribute to local growth. The land use plan for the region had already expected development within the project area because of future population growth in the region. Land surrounding the project area is zoned for development and is currently under construction. It is expected that the project would result in a cumulative benefit to the community with the completion of the frontage road.

c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

Less Than Significant Impact—The project is not expected to cause substantial adverse effects on human beings.

It is expected that project construction may result in temporary and sporadic disturbance to local residences and the traveling public. Caltrans standard construction measures would be implemented to reduce any potential inconveniences to local residences and the traveling public because of project construction activities.

Appendix A **Coordination**

Early and continuing coordination with the general public and public agencies is an essential part of the environmental process to determine the scope of environmental documentation, the level of analysis required, potential impacts and avoidance, minimization and/or mitigation measures and related environmental requirements.

Agency consultation for this project has been accomplished through a variety of formal and informal methods, including Project Development Team meetings, interagency coordination meetings, and so on.

This chapter summarizes the results of Caltrans' efforts to identify, address, and resolve project-related issues through early and continuing coordination.

Biological Resource Coordination

The National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service were contacted about this project when Caltrans submitted official species lists in October 2017, and again when submitting updated lists in April 2019.

Caltrans contacted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on May 17, 2019, to discuss the expected informal consultation for the San Joaquin kit fox.

Caltrans performed a habitat assessment for the San Joaquin kit fox in June 2019 at the recommendation of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biologist Amrita Duggal following Sacramento Field Office guidelines (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1999).

Caltrans received a Letter of Concurrence from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office on July 17, 2019 for potential project effects to the San Joaquin kit fox.

Cultural Resource Coordination

Caltrans sent a Section 106 and AB-52 letter to 11 regional Native American Tribal Associations in February 2019, as part of the project's tribal consultation efforts. No formal consultation was requested by any of the tribal associations.

Appendix B List of Preparers

- Butler, Hannah. Associate Environmental Planner. B.S., Environmental Management and Protection, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo; 1 year of environmental planning experience. Contribution: Prepared Initial Study with Mitigated Negative Declaration.
- Carr, Robert. Associate Landscape Architect. B.S., Landscape Architecture, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo; 29 years of experience preparing Visual Impact Assessments. Contribution: Visual Impact Assessment.
- Fowler, Matt. Senior Environmental Planner. B.A., Geographic Analysis, San Diego State University, 18 years of experience in environmental planning. Contribution: Oversight of the Initial Study.
- Geramaldi, Geramaldi. Environmental Planner. B.S., Environmental Geography, California Polytechnic State University, Pomona; 3 years of environmental planning experience. Contribution: Coordinated environmental process, prepared Community and Growth Study and Initial Study.
- Gomez, Raymond. Transportation Engineer. B.S., Civil Engineering, Carroll College, MT. Less than 1 year experience in Air Quality, Noise, and Water Quality assessments. Contribution: Noise Study Report.
- Kloth, Joel. Engineering Geologist. B.S., Geology, California Lutheran University; more than 30 years of experience in petroleum geology, geotechnical geology, and environmental engineering/geology-hazardous waste. Contribution: Hazardous Waste studies.
- Koradia, Rajvi. Transportation Engineer. M.S., San Jose State University, San Jose; B.S., L.D College of Engineering, India; 2 years of experience in Environmental Engineering. Contribution: Air Quality Assessment.
- Leckie, Daniel. Associate Environmental Planner/Architectural Historian. M.S. (Historic Preservation), University of Vermont; 5 years of experience in Architectural History and Historic Preservation Planning. Contribution: Historical Property Survey Report.
- Leyva, Isaac. Engineering Geologist. B.S., Geology; 29 years of experience in petroleum geology, environmental geology, geotechnical engineering. Contribution: Paleontology and Water Quality Review.

Rosa-Figueroa, Alvin S. Environmental Planner (Archaeology). B.S., Anthropology, University of California, Riverside; 6 years of Prehistoric Central American and California Anthropology/Archaeology/Ethnology experience; 2 years of Cultural Resource Management and 4 months of environmental planning experience. Contribution: Historical Property Survey Report and Archaeological Survey Report.

Trask, Mindy. Associate Environmental Planner (Natural Sciences). M.R.P., Environmental and Regional Planning, Washington State University, Pullman; M.S., Rangeland Resources, Oregon State University, Corvallis; B.S., Ecology and Systematic Biology, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo; more than 20 years of environmental planning and biological sciences experience. Contribution: Field studies, documentation, regulatory permitting, monitoring, and reporting. Contribution: Natural Environment Study.

Appendix C Distribution List

Local Libraries and Government

Paso Robles Public Library, 1000 Spring Street, Paso Robles, California 93446

San Miguel Library, 254 13th Street, San Miguel, California 93451

San Luis Obispo County Planning and Building Department, 976 Osos Street, Room 200, San Luis Obispo, California 93408

San Luis Obispo Council of Governments, 1114 Marsh Street, San Luis Obispo, California 93401

Local Businesses

Paso Car and Truck Stop, 81 Wellsona Road, Paso Robles, California 93446

Vines RV Resort, 88 Wellsona Road, Paso Robles, California 93446

Local Residences

6440 Viborg Road, Paso Robles, California 93446

6324 Viborg Road, Paso Robles, California 93446

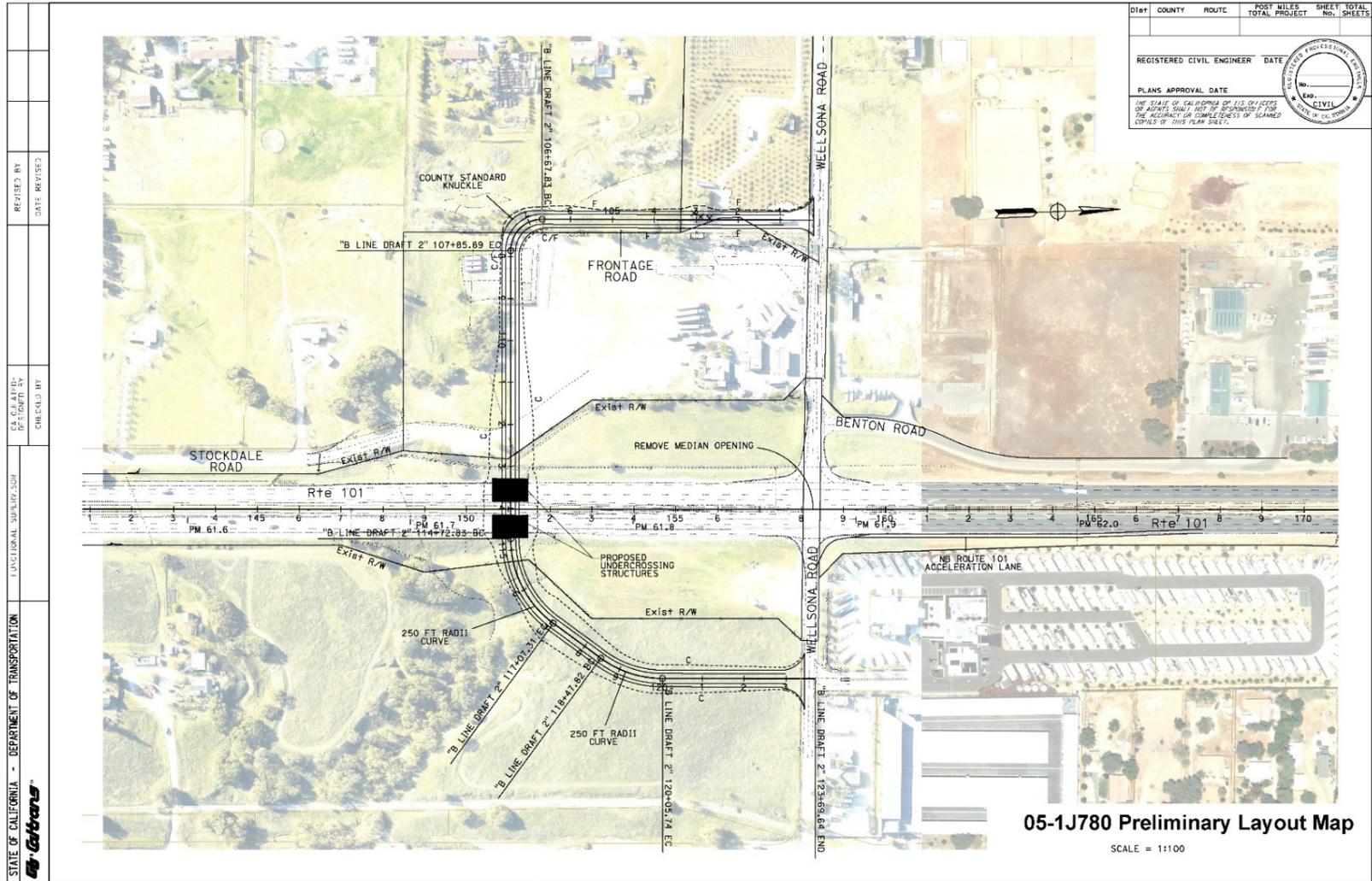
6229 Monterey Road, Paso Robles, California 93446

80 Wellsona Road, Paso Robles, California 93446

90 Wellsona Road, Paso Robles, California 93446

6510 Trailblazer Lane, Paso Robles, California 93446

Appendix D Project Preliminary Layout Map



STATE OF CALIFORNIA - DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Caltrans
 FUNCTIONAL SURVEY
 CHECKED BY
 DESIGNED BY
 REVISIONS BY
 DATE REVISED

| DIST | COUNTY | ROUTE | POST MILES TOTAL PROJECT | SHEET NO. | TOTAL SHEETS |
|------|--------|-------|--------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| | | | | | |

REGISTERED CIVIL ENGINEER DATE

PLANS APPROVAL DATE

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA OF ALL OFFICERS OR AGENTS SHALL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF SCANNED COPIES OF THIS PLAN SHEET.

Appendix F Comments and Responses

1. Neil B. Collins September 26, 2019 via email:

“Thanks for moving forward with these vital project. The proposed resolution for improving the Wellsona Rd. intersection couldn't happen soon enough. The recent addition of signage and lighting has improved the intersection, but rarely a day we do not witness a near miss. Good luck with important project and getting the ball rolling.”

Caltrans' response to Neil Collins:

Thank you for your comment, we look forward to helping reduce the number of collisions at this intersection.

2. Peter Grinnell September 26, 2019 via email:

“My name is Peter and I want to share something with you that I noticed just the other day.

I was south bound 101 and turning left on welsona Rd. I was in a water truck and pulling a trailer with a dozer on the back.

While I was in the turn lane waiting for traffic another North bound big rig was turning into the San Paso truck stop. When the two of us were there at the same time waiting to turn, I realized that neither of us could see the oncoming traffic unless we both inched out into the oncoming traffic. However, we both made it easily.

I wonder if the turn lanes offset are creating the problem.

Just a thought. Best of luck finding a solution.”

Caltrans' response to Peter Grinnell:

The undercrossing will eliminate the need for left turns across the highway. This will help prevent future broadside and left-turn merge-related collisions at the intersection.

3. John G. September 27, 2019 via email:

“Great idea, long over due!

I've experienced many close calls at this location over 30 years, lost several acquaintances to fatal accidents and one collision that totaled my vehicle.

Ignore the negative push back this project is necessary due to so many unskilled, impatient, and discourteous drivers on our highways.

Also get the county to re establish the Wellsona river crossing to connect River road and tie it in to your project.”

Caltrans’ response to John G.:

Thank you for your comment, we look forward to helping reduce the number of collisions at this intersection.

Several decades ago (in the 1980s), Wellsona Road was open across the Salinas River seasonally as a low water crossing. That proved too difficult to maintain and was eventually closed to all traffic. It is currently gated at the banks of the Salinas River. There is no intention to reopen and it is not in the Regional Transportation Plan. Use of the right-of-way would require constructing a sizeable bridge in order to stay out of jurisdictional waterways. Crossing of the Salinas River occurs on River Road in San Miguel, Route 46 East, and 13th Street Bridge in the City of Paso Robles.

More recent studies in the 1990’s and 2000’s looked at possibly realigning Route 46 East, north of the current City Limits, to connect back to Highway 101 in the area south of Wellsona Road. But that was also rejected/not pursued.

4. Katherine Brieg September 27, 2019 via email:

“Really how much \$\$\$\$ is it going to cost to do an underpass? Are you looking for the most expensive way possible to solve the solution? What a waste. How about putting in signals, they will eventually be needed just like at Buena Vista and 101. Lets look at the best solutions and not waste tax payers money. Who is going to profit from this? As I always say follow the \$\$\$\$\$. How about doing what is best for the tax payers and not waste \$\$\$\$\$.

Simple solution with lights and cost efficient.”

Caltrans’ response to Katherine Brieg:

A traffic signal at this location does not meet the project’s purpose and need “to reduce the number and severity of collisions.” Highway 101 at Wellsona Road intersection is experiencing a pattern of broadside and left turn merge related collisions. Broadside collisions from red light runs would continue to occur with a traffic signal.

The 1953 Freeway Agreement indicates the section of Highway 101 within the project limits as a freeway. Current planning documents, including the Transportation Concept Report for Highway 101 and The San Luis Obispo Council of Governments’ 2014 Regional Transportation Plan, additionally support upgrading the facility to freeway standards and eliminating at-grade crossovers.

5. Peter Davis October 17, 2019 via mail:

“The California Highway Patrol Templeton Office informed me that the accidents at Wellsona Road and Highway 101 in the last few years involved drivers under the influence and/or vehicle code violations. In essence the intersection is not the problem but the drivers traveling through the intersection.

Section 1.4.2 No Build (No-Action) Alternative states,

‘leave existing intersection of Highway 101 and Wellsona Road as is, without any changes.’

Currently the truck crossing warning signs and flashing beacons are ineffective, especially for drivers exceeding the speed limit on Highway 101. South bound traffic passes through a 70 miles per hour miles per hour (MPH) section from King City to San Miguel. It is not uncommon to see traffic in excess of 80 MPH traveling southbound.

One suggestion is to install large, flashing electric signs warning ‘End of Freeway’, ‘Reduce Speed’ and ‘Dangerous Truck Crossing’ along with rumble strips.

On Wellsona Road, install large flashing signs warning of high speed cross traffic.

If an underpass is built, will it become a homeless gathering spot in hot or inclement weather? Will excess pedestrians create a safety concern?

Did the Wellsona Road and Highway 101 intersection become a problem after the recreational vehicle park opened? Are there more collisions involving southbound Highway 101 vs. northbound traffic.? Are there ample merge lanes for the trucks and recreational vehicles to turn onto Highway 101?

At this time, I was unable to gather detailed statistics regarding the traffic and collisions.”

Caltrans’ response to Peter Davis:

Interim features (including signing, lighting and acceleration lanes) were installed and did not reduce the number and severity of collisions occurring at this intersection. These features are considered interim because ultimately the route will be converted to freeway standards. The 1953 Freeway Agreement indicates the section of Highway 101 within the project limits as a freeway. Current planning documents, including the Transportation Concept Report for Highway 101 and The San Luis Obispo Council of Governments’ 2014 Regional Transportation Plan, additionally support upgrading the facility to freeway standards and eliminating at-grade crossovers.

The proposed undercrossing will eliminate the at-grade crossover and does not preclude future conversion to freeway by adding on and off ramps. Over the years

development has occurred in Paso Robles and San Miguel, including the recreational vehicle park, which has increased traffic. The route through these areas has been updated to Freeway standards. With increased development coming to the area, including projects that will increase large truck traffic, additional signage and flashing beacons would not solve the problem. High speed drivers would continue to mix with low speed left-turning truck traffic creating conflict points. The existing merge lanes meet design standards; collisions are occurring at the intersection. The breakdown of percentages at the northbound and southbound intersection are 48.5% and 51.5%, respectively. The proposed undercrossing will completely eliminate conflict points associated with left-turn movements.

The frontage road on both sides of Highway 101 will have 6-foot shoulders for bicyclists and a 5-foot non-paved path to accommodate for pedestrians. Pedestrians are not expected to cause a safety concern. Caltrans performs routine maintenance of facilities which is likely to deter homeless encampments.

6. Robert Young October 19, 2019 via email:

Over twenty years ago the property was developed by Ole Viborg and at that time I purchased the property at 6324 Viborg Road.

The property was improved with only a single-family residence. The parcel has a gentle slope from Viborg Road on the west to the Paso RV Truck Stop in part on the east. The balance of the east property line has been part of the natural water shed for all the adjacent properties converging in the ravine lined with old growth Oak Trees to the frontage road adjacent to Hwy 101. When viewing from above you can see the natural distribution of vegetation on both the east as well as the west side of Hwy 101. The eastern portion of my property has become a natural low spot. During the rainy season a pond is created and slowly drains under Hwy 101 thru existing drainage culverts and drain piping.

Over the past decades the ravine has been systematically filled by the truck stop and elevated to up to 6 ft at my east property fence line. If you proceed with the project expect to find debris, old tires and discarded construction materials.

During the past 20 years we have endured homeless encampments and unexplained losses of many items. Over the years several short term "campers" have occupied the area.

As shown in Appendix E of the State report, the project is intended to be placed to the north of the existing area drainage system. If the project is necessary, this location is preferred and I agree with its location.

However, the west portion of the truck stop is unimproved except for an above ground petroleum storage tanks. Is it the intention of the project to have the above ground petroleum storage tanks to remain in place or be moved eastward and replaced with more modern and environmentally sound double wall underground tanks? If no modernization and upgrade of the petroleum storage is required by the

project, will the proximity to the proposed road be an environmental or safety problem?

Has there been a traffic study of the impact of the increased traffic imposed on Viborg Road and Woodland Road? Will the project include the upgrade of Viborg and Woodland Roads to accommodate the severe increase traffic in both volume and weight of the vehicles? Has a study been performed to evaluate the impact of the increased noise on the residences along Viborg Rd and Woodland Rd?

I realize that we are merely private property owners, but the project will have a major impact on our families. Please consider the following.

Beginning on Hwy 101 at the "End of Freeway" sign at San Marcos Rd and traveling south to Wellsona Rd, a full 1.85 miles, Hwy 101 is unencumbered by local access roads of any type. Heading south from the top of a small rise, there is an unobstructed 0.65 miles of straight road to the Wellsona Rd intersection.

With a distance of 0.9 miles between Wellsona Rd and Exline Rd the present highway design will accommodate all traffic conditions presented by a traffic light system at both Wellsona Rd and Exline Rd in a safe and controlled manner.

Wellsona crossing at Hwy 101.

Starting at 0.65 miles north of Wellsona Rd Hwy 101 is straight with excellent visibility.

Traveling south approaching Wellsona Rd there are deceleration lanes on Hwy 101 to access Wellsona Rd to both the west and east directions.

Entering south onto Hwy 101 from Wellsona Rd from both east and west sides of Hwy 101 there are acceleration/merge lanes to ease the access and obtain highway speed.

Traveling north approaching Wellsona Rd there are deceleration lanes on Hwy 101 to access Wellsona Rd to both the west and east directions.

There is an acceleration/merge lane for traffic entering north bound Hwy 101 from the west at Wellsona Rd and proceeding north to ease the access and obtain highway speed.

Exline crossing at Hwy 101

Traveling south approaching Exline Rd there is a left turn deceleration lane on 101 to access Exline Rd to the east.

Entering south bound Hwy 101 from west bound Exline Rd onto Hwy 101 there is an acceleration/merge lane to ease the access and obtain highway speed.

Entering north bound Hwy 101 from east bound Exline Rd there is an acceleration/merge lane to ease the access and obtain highway speed.

Traveling north approaching on Hwy 101 there is a left turn deceleration lane to access Exline Rd to the west.

Local Businesses

The following is a partial list of businesses existing from the Exline Rd to Wellsona Rd intersections.

Traveling from south to north:

Paso Robles RV.Ranch & camp grounds

Gars Transmission

A-1 Metals & Auto Salvage

Rigo Auto Repair

U Haul Neighborhood Dealer

Central Coast Propane

Pacific Coast Transportation

Paso RV Truck Stop

Vines RV Resort

Mars Mega Storage

San Miguel Garbage

Canterbury Tails Dog Resort

Please note that at each of the intersections there are very large RV Camping grounds and at Wellsona Rd. This type of vehicle is generally slow to attain adequate traffic merge speed in a relatively short distance. In addition, at Wellsona Rd is the RV Truck Stop with introduce semi-truck traffic as well.

Similar to Hwy 46

Similar conditions exist on Hwy 46 approaching Paso Robles from the east. From Golden Hill Rd and Buena Vista Dr to Union Rd/Paso Robles Blvd. Traffic is controlled in an efficient and cost effective manner.

The similarities are striking. Both areas are similar with heavy commercial, industrial development adjacent to intersections as well as general non local traffic.

Considering that traffic entering the Hwy 101 at both Wellsona Rd and Exline Rd are primarily RV's or semi-trucks, placing a traffic signal system at each intersection would not only provide the safest and quickest, but also a most cost effective solution to the immediate problems created by the increased

Recreational Vehicle traffic.

Perhaps in the future a proper overpass or other solution will be best. The construction of an underpass will take years and cost a great deal of money.

How many accidents will be prevented by the installation of two traffic signal systems? How many lives will be lost while are further studies performed?

Caltrans' response to Robert Young:

The project would construct the undercrossing at a natural low spot; however, the project would not alter existing hydraulic conditions. The roadway would collect/direct any runoff eastward, following the natural drainage pattern of the area.

The undercrossing would be maintained by Caltrans. Caltrans performs routine maintenance of facilities which is likely to deter homeless encampments. The frontage roads will be relinquished and maintained by the county.

Existing above ground storage tanks for diesel, water and propane on Parcel D (APN 026-103-021) may need to be relocated to accommodate set back requirements for the easement secured on the western boundary. However, relocation is not anticipated at this time. Caltrans intends the frontage road to maintain a 25 miles per hour speed limit and therefore does not anticipate a safety problem. It is also possible that Caltrans or the county may install a barrier to ensure traffic is separated from the storage tanks. The county may also request the gas station to upgrade or replace the above ground storage tanks.

The purpose of this safety project is to provide a safer crossing and reduce collisions at Wellsona Road and Highway 101. The project is not intended to be a capacity increasing project. The existing traffic will be redirected through the undercrossing rather than across Highway 101. No upgrades to Viborg or Woodland Road are proposed as part of this project. A noise study was conducted in May 2019 and concluded the predicted noise levels would not result in a substantial increase in noise.

A traffic signal is not a viable option. The 1953 Freeway Agreement indicates the section of Highway 101 within the project limits as a freeway. Current planning documents, including the Transportation Concept Report for Highway 101 and The San Luis Obispo Council of Governments' 2014 Regional Transportation Plan,

additionally support upgrading the facility to freeway standards and eliminating at-grade crossovers.

7. Rebecca Young October 20, 2019 via email:

“I recieved a notice about the cal trans project that is going to be in my backyard. I am very concerned about this!! I would like a public hearing. I have lived at 6324 Viborg Rd for over 27 years. I have seen first hand how this intersection has changed, what has caused it and I believe what is the best solution. The truck stop is directly behind me. I have four children that will be affected by this underpass going in part of the backyard and bringing the big trucks, and vehicles closer to where my children play. This is very concerning!!”

Caltrans' response to Rebecca Young:

The new frontage road will be designed with a speed limit of 25 miles per hour. There is potential for the project to include additional measures for residences affected by the project in order to address concerns associated with traffic operations on the new frontage road. As part of the Caltrans property acquisition process, an assigned Caltrans right-of-way agent will coordinate and negotiate with property owners an appropriate compensation and any potential measures.

Caltrans staff from Design, Project Management and Environmental Planning met with you at the proposed project site on November 27, 2019. The purpose of the meeting was to listen to and address your stated concerns and to further describe the project details.

List of Technical Studies

Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Assessment (April 23, 2019)

Noise Study Report (May 6, 2019)

Water Quality Assessment (June 19, 2019)

Natural Environment Study (June 17, 2019)

Historical Property Survey Report (June 7, 2019)

Archaeological Survey Report (April 2019)

Paleontology Review (June 20, 2019)

Community and Growth Impact Analysis (July 9, 2019)

Preliminary Geotechnical Report (January 31, 2019)

Hazardous Waste Assessment (February 14, 2018)

Visual Impact Assessment (May 2019)

To obtain a copy of one or more of these technical studies/reports or the Initial Study, please send your request to the following email address: info-d5@dot.ca.gov

Please indicate the project name and project identifying code (under the project name on the cover of this document) and specify the technical report or document you would like a copy of. Provide your name and email address or U.S. postal service mailing address (street address, city, state and zip code).