

JUSTIFICATION FOR CHANGES TO COMPLETE STREETS FACILITIES (PROJECT DELIVERY)

DISTRICT 11

EA 11-43155

SHOPP ID 23224

COUNTY: IMPERIAL ROUTE: 78 & 86

PROJECT POSTMILES: 34.0/41.1 & PHASE: PA&ED (ENVIRONMENTAL)
55.9/56.3

APPROVED BY: DONNA BERRY, CHIEF ENGINEER, SEPTEMBER 1, 2026

Complete Streets Scope Change:

This is a State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP) Project on State Route (SR) 86 and State Route (SR) 78 with pavement rehabilitation as the anchor asset and Complete Streets improvements. This project is identified in the District's Caltrans Active Transportation (CAT) Plan as a Tier 2 priority on SR-86 at the intersection of S Marina Drive / Borrego Salton Sea Way and a Tier 3 priority on SR-78 from Coachella Canal Road to Ted Kipf Road. At Project Initiation, one (1) mile of shoulder widening was identified along SR-78 to be widened from the existing width of two (2) feet to the proposed width of eight (8) feet, in the Tier 3 location (lowest priority needed). During Project Approval phase, the District determined the need to remove this shoulder widening scope along SR-78 due to environmental and right-of-way constraints that would delay the delivery of the project.

In addition, the project scope expanded in the Project Approval phase to include pavement rehabilitation along SR-86 at the intersection of Borrego Salton Sea Way / S Marina Drive. At this location, a CAT Plan Tier 2 priority, four (4) existing crosswalks have high visibility crosswalks, there are four (4) curb ramps and a pedestrian refuge island.

Justification:

During the Project Approval Phase, the District identified Environmental & Right-of-Way constraints that incur schedule and cost delays that would jeopardize the delivery of the project. Endangered rare plant species were identified through field investigations along SR-78 in the direct path of the proposed shoulder widening. Due to this impact, the project would be elevated to a mid-level environmental document instead of a Categorical Exclusion/Categorical Exemption (CE/CE) that was assessed during PID phase. A Supplemental Project Report would be required to environmentally clear the proposed shoulder widening scope and identify mitigation measures for the impacted rare plant species. At this time, the mitigation method for the rare plant species along SR-78 is unknown by District Biologists. This could prompt a schedule delay due to the longer environmental mid-level study. In addition, it was also discovered that the permanent easement from the Bureau of Land Management required to perform the shoulder widening would require 18-24 months of additional time to acquire.

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Per Design Information Bulletin (DIB) #79, Pavement Projects are classified as "2R" or "3R" at or before the Project Initiation phase, based on a Safety Screening and results of a Pavement Condition Analysis. The project was certified as a "2R" Pavement Project upon Project Initiation and therefore adheres to design standards set by DIB-#79. By removing the 1 mile of shoulder widening along SR-78, the existing shoulder width of 2' satisfies design standards based on the traffic volumes.

Due to current SHOPP budget constraints, the project will be rescoped and reprogrammed into a future SHOPP cycle. To complete PA&ED at this time, the PDT elected to deliver the project based on the existing environmental clearance, project schedule, and available budget. Pursuing a Supplemental Project Report to include additional scope would require a mid-level environmental study and delay the project approximately 12-18 months. This delay would likely prevent the project from receiving funding within the current programming cycle due to limited programming capacity, potentially placing the project on hold for an undetermined period.

Therefore, the District proposes to proceed with the pavement improvements on the original schedule to provide timely benefits to the traveling public. Shoulder widening and additional Complete Streets elements will be considered for scoping in future projects along SR-78.