Route 156 West Corridor Project

Comments and Responses
from Circulation of the Draft Environmental Document

Volume II of II

In Monterey County, on State Route 156 from 0.18 mile east of the State Route 156/183 Separation to U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 Separation and on U.S. Route 101 from 0.1 mile north of Pesante Road to 0.2 miles north of Messick Road

05-MON-156-PM R1.6/T5.2
05-MON-101-PM 94.6/96.8
05-316000
Project ID 0500000497
SCH #1999111063

The environmental review, consultation, and any other action required in accordance with applicable federal laws for this project is being, or has been, carried out by the California Department of Transportation under its assumption of responsibility pursuant to 23 U.S. Code 327.

January 2013

Caltrans

General Information About This Document

What's in this document?

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), as assigned by the Federal Highway Administration, has prepared this Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment, which examines the potential environmental impacts for the proposed project in Monterey County, California. The document describes why the project is being proposed, alternatives for the project, the existing environment that could be affected by the project, potential impacts from each of the alternatives, and the proposed avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures.

The Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment was circulated to the public from June 30, 2009 to August 17, 2009. Comments were received from the public during this circulation period and those comments. The comments and Caltrans' responses to those comments are provided in this volume (Volume II) of the Route 156 West Corridor Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment.

Note: In Volume I, a vertical line in the right margin of the page indicates where changes have been made to the document since the draft document was circulated. The updated information supersedes and/or clarifies information contained in the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment. Because this volume (Volume II) is entirely new, as noted here, no vertical line will appear in the right margin in this volume.

Printing this document: To save paper, this document has been set up for two-sided printing (to print the front and back of a page). Pages without body text occur where needed throughout the document to maintain proper layout of the chapters and appendices.

Table of Contents

Introduction to this Volume of Comments and Responses

This volume contains all comments received during the public review period for the Route 156 West Corridor Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment circulated from June 30, 2009 to August 17, 2009.

Caltrans received comments from the public, governmental agencies, departments, public interest groups and other individuals. Written comments were submitted as in the form of comment cards, emails and letters. A total of 55 comment cards, emails and letters were received. In addition, a court reporter recorded oral comments expressed during the public hearing for the project on July 20, 2009. Some of the comments received expressed approval of the proposed improvements, but others expressed concerns about:

- Farmland Conversion
- Relocation of Businesses
- Traffic
- Noise
- Coastal Resources
- Growth
- Biological Resources
- Funding

A Caltrans response follows each comment letter, email, comment card and court reporter transcript entry. Responses are numbered to correspond to the specific comment or question presented. Comments and responses are presented in the following order:

- State Agencies and Departments
- Federal Agencies
- Local and Regional Agencies and Departments
- Individuals

Tables 1 to 3 list agencies and departments, and individuals that submitted comments during the public review period for the draft environmental document. The entire court reporter's transcript is provided in this volume at the end of the comments and responses.

Table 1 Agencies and Departments that Submitted Comments for the Draft Environmental Document

California Coastal Commission	Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
		U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
California Department of Fish and Game	Monterey County Resource Management Agency Planning Department	U.S. Geological Survey
County of Monterey Public Works Transportation Section		

Table 2 Individuals that Submitted Comments for the Draft Environmental Document

Anonymous	Gerald (Jerry) Gifford	Bill and Tosca Lewis	Martha A. Rau
Charles Asmus	Robert Gowers	Edward P. and Caroline L. Lyman	Brad Rose
Ute Battig	Ken Goebel	Rod Karg	Dale I. Scoggin
Gene Bentle	Jean and Ken Goebel	Sig Matt	Peggy Scoggin
R. Boese	Linda A. Grier	Marilyn D. McLoughlin	Helen and Ed Shaw
P.R. Burger	Jeanette Haas	Jan Mitchell	Bill Theyskens
Scott Clark	Roger Huff	Gloria Morton	Donald Thomas
Bruce Elliot	Barbara Hughes	Kevin Olson	Vee Thomas
A.J. Farrar	Sharon Joyce	Patty Olson	Marty Wiggins
Landwatch Monterey County	Prunedale Property Owners and/or Concerned Citizens Affected by This Project		Ag Land Trust

Table 3 Individuals that Submitted Comments through the Court Reporter for the Draft Environmental Document

Jack Bentle	Dell Matt	Andrew Reiter
Jeanne Bentle	Toyoko Mayer	Joanne Reiter
	Art McLaughlin	
Jeanne Bindel	Ed Mitchell	Bee Thomas
Dorothy Lawson	Martha Rau	Hazel Tompkins
		Mary Tsie

State Clearinghouse Letter

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE *of* PLANNING AND RESEARCH
STATE CLEARINGHOUSE AND PLANNING UNIT

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER
GOVERNOR

CYNTHIA BRYANT
DIRECTOR

August 27, 2009

G. William "Trais" Norris III
Caltrans
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93706

Subject: Route 156 West Corridor
SCH#: 1999111063

Dear G. William "Trais" Norris III:

The enclosed comment (s) on your Draft EIR was (were) received by the State Clearinghouse after the end of the state review period, which closed on August 24, 2009. We are forwarding these comments to you because they provide information or raise issues that should be addressed in your final environmental document.

The California Environmental Quality Act does not require Lead Agencies to respond to late comments. However, we encourage you to incorporate these additional comments into your final environmental document and to consider them prior to taking final action on the proposed project.

Please contact the State Clearinghouse at (916) 445-0613 if you have any questions concerning the environmental review process. If you have a question regarding the above-named project, please refer to the ten-digit State Clearinghouse number (1999111063) when contacting this office.

Sincerely,

for Scott Morgan
Acting Director, State Clearinghouse

Enclosures
cc: Resources Agency

1400 10th Street P.O. Box 3044 Sacramento, California 95812-3044
(916) 445-0613 FAX (916) 323-3018 www.opr.ca.gov

Comment from California Coastal Commission (letter, 15 pages)

STATE OF CALIFORNIA – THE RESOURCES AGENCY ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, *Governor*

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION
CENTRAL COAST DISTRICT OFFICE
725 FRONT STREET, SUITE 300
SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060
PHONE: (831) 427-4863
FAX: (831) 427-4877

Sept. 8, 2009

Trais Norris, Branch Chief
Sierra Pacific Environmental Analysis Branch
California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
2015 East Shields Ave., Ste.100
Fresno, CA 93726

Subject: **Route 156 West Corridor--Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (DEIR/EA), June 2009 (SCH #1999111063)**

Dear Mr. Norris:

We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments on the DEIR/EA document for this major State Highway improvement project in Monterey County. Our comments and recommendations are as follows:

Key Recommendation: The DEIR/EA provides a useful comparison of the local impacts of the build and no-build alternatives. As noted below for Section 2.3, certain additional information will be needed to make the assessment of the biological environment fully adequate. Both of the build alternatives will widen Route 156 from the existing 2-lane configuration to a 4-lane highway. This will unavoidably result in agricultural land conversion and disruption of sensitive natural habitats. Such conversions and impacts are inconsistent with the policies and standards of the Monterey County Local Coastal Program (LCP). 1

Amendment of the LCP to allow the project may be appropriate, if the proposed highway widening is determined to be the least environmentally damaging feasible alternative necessary for meeting regional circulation and public access needs consistent with the Coastal Act. Such an LCP amendment would need to be backed with a rigorous regional analysis that demonstrates that such widening within the 156 corridor would be the most effective way to provide necessary transportation services and protect coastal resources in the Monterey Bay region, overall. This regional analysis would also assist decision makers understanding of how to best link transportation and land use in order to meet the build out goals of the Monterey LCP. In our view, the current DEIR/EA document is incomplete because it does not provide such analysis. 2

Accordingly, we recommend in the strongest possible terms that--if the proposal is to move forward--the DEIR/EA be augmented with a regional-level environmental and alternatives analysis. The first step for this analysis would be to clearly define the specific and current transportation needs of the region, grounded in the land use and infrastructure visions and constraints of 2009. This step is necessary since the purpose and need for this particular project was articulated over a decade ago and numerous changed circumstances have occurred in the

intervening years. Among the many changes, for example, is the advancement of rail alternatives for the region.

Commission staff believes that Caltrans' ongoing Corridor System Management Plan (CSMP) for Route 1 around Monterey Bay provides a timely opportunity for developing important regional information needed to guide transportation decisions affecting the coastal zone. This planning effort can assist in fully considering alternative transportation modes and routes—including Hwy.101/Route 156 for traffic originating in the SF Bay area. Another appropriate vehicle for the recommended regional analysis would be AMBAG's current update of the Monterey Bay Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), being done in coordination with the RTP (Regional Transportation Plan) updates by TAMC and SCCRTC.

Coastal Zone context. The Coastal Zone portion of the overall project includes the addition of two through traffic lanes on or along approx. 4 miles of State Route 156, within the Elkhorn Slough watershed between the communities of Castroville and Prunedale. Linking the Highway 101 freeway to Coast Highway 1, the existing highway is one of two primary regional connectors providing access from the main population centers of northern California to the Monterey Peninsula and the Big Sur Coast. The other primary regional access connector is the 2-lane segment of Highway 1 through the Moss Landing corridor, conveying San Francisco Bay Area traffic via I-880/State Route 17 and Highway 1 in Santa Cruz County.

The Highway 156-West DEIR/EA also covers that portion of the project outside the State's defined Coastal Zone boundary, i.e., reconstruction of the existing Highway 101-156 interchange and neighboring County road intersections immediately northwards along Highway 101. Improvements in this area, although outside the Coastal Zone, have the potential to facilitate regional circulation in a way that will impact or benefit coastal resources to the west. Accordingly, while these comments are focused primarily on the seaward (Coastal Zone) portion of the project along Route 156, it is also essential that the broader regional traffic demand, planned growth and environmental context be fully examined.

Project Purpose and Need. The purpose and need for the proposed project are stated as:

Improve safety and operations;

Improve local road access to State Route 156;

Improve interregional traffic flow along State Route 156; and

Relieve existing congestion and provide capacity for future increases in traffic volume.

LCP Policies and Standards: The applicable land use policy document is the North County Land Use Plan (LUP, contained in Monterey County's LCP (certified in 1982). The LCP's companion implementing ordinances provide standards consistent with these policies, and applicable to this highway development project.

LUP Key Policy 3.1.1 states: "State Highways in the North County coastal area should be upgraded to provide for a safe and uncongested flow of traffic…" Further, LUP policy 3.1.2.2 states: "Highway 156 should be expanded to four lanes of traffic on the current alignment…" 3

But, these policies are not internally and/or explicitly reconciled with other LCP provisions that protect coastal resources. For example, other LUP policies: bar non-agricultural development on agriculturally-designated lands (LUP 2.6.3.2); allow agricultural land conversions only "where there is an overriding need to protect the public health and safety" (LUP 2.6.2.2); protect oak woodlands from significant disruption (LUP 2.3.3.A.4); prohibit the "construction of roads and structures" in environmentally sensitive wetland habitats (LUP 2.3.2.1); and, require that existing native trees "be retained to the maximum extent possible" (LUP 2.2.3.6).

In other words, LCP policies describing highway expansion and upgrade must also be understood in relation to LCP policies protecting coastal resources.

Alternatives analyzed by Caltrans. The DEIR/EA identifies only two proposed construction alternatives (Alternatives 11 and 12) for addressing the project purpose and need, in addition to the No-Build Alternative.

For each alternative, the DEIR/EA comprehensively identifies the range of environmental issues that can be anticipated within the immediate vicinity of the proposed construction. The evaluation, however, lacks an analysis of the potential growth inducement of either alternative. In addition, at least three of the identified environmental impacts from the widening proposals raise significant coastal resource issues. These are: 1) highway construction within and adjacent to wetland habitat; 2) loss of substantial Coast live oak woodland, representing both natural habitat and a visual resource; and, 3) conversion of productive agricultural land. 4

Both Alternative 11 and Alternative 12 would result in the existing two-lane Route 156 highway being upgraded to a 4-lane freeway. Alternative 12 would accomplish this by adding two eastbound lanes, parallel to the existing two highway lanes, much of it within the existing highway right-of-way (ROW). The existing two lanes would become the freeway's westbound direction. Two new grade-separated interchanges would be needed, one each at Castroville Boulevard and at Cathedral Oak Road.

The existing Route 156 ROW has been protected from agricultural clearing, and is now occupied in substantial measure by oak woodlands. Because Alternative 12 would add two new lanes mainly within the existing ROW, a substantial portion of this wooded corridor (about 33 acres) would be impacted.

In addition, Alternative 12's two new interchanges would substantially encroach on adjacent agricultural lands, currently in strawberry production. The total area to be converted would be an aggregate 82 acres of land designated by the LCP for agricultural preservation. In terms of

Coastal Act and LCP policies, although there are some limited exceptions, such land conversions are to be avoided.

Alternative 11, in contrast, would result in construction of a new 4 lane highway generally parallel to the existing roadway, but outside the existing ROW. The existing two lanes would be repurposed as a frontage road (and possibly) bikeway to accommodate local circulation needs. Only one new interchange, at Castroville Boulevard, would be needed.

While the conversion of farm acreage for interchange construction would be reduced by half, Alternative 11's new eastbound lanes would be constructed largely on lands designated for agriculture in the LUP (for a net conversion of 147 designated acres). The trade-off would be reduced impacts on the oak habitat corridor (less than 17 acres), as compared to Alternative 12's oak habitat loss of about 33 acres.

Each alternative would temporarily disturb about 2 acres of coastal maritime chaparral habitat, and permanently impact about 4-5 acres of riparian habitat. As well, each would permanently impact approximately 2 acres of "jurisdictional" wetlands. However, we believe there are difficulties in the DEIR/EA's methodology for delineating these wetland areas, as detailed under the "Biological Environment" comments below.

Changing circumstances. As originally conceived by State Senator Fred Farr in 1957, today's Route 156 was envisioned as a modern parkway-style highway, providing connections to and from the newly-widened Highway 101. Senator Farr promoted the route as a scenic gateway to the Monterey Peninsula, and the route was accorded State Scenic Highway status. Only two lanes of the originally-imagined highway were constructed. This project if constructed would bring it up to a full four lanes of width.

At the time of LCP certification, widening of Route 156 West corridor (along with Route 1) was seen as the way to accommodate regional transportation needs. Following this, the purpose and need for this particular project was articulated over a decade ago.

However, many things have changed since the project was originally conceived. The adjoining oak savanna landscape has become the Oak Hills residential tract on the north, and strawberry fields to the south. A relatively dense Coast live oak forest now occupies the unbuilt part of the highway right of way. And, more global issues have arisen since that time of cheap and abundant gasoline, minimum concern about atmospheric greenhouse gases, and no inkling of future sea level rise.

We now recognize that the addition of more lanes to existing highways is not a universal panacea. There is a better understanding of the need to coordinate transportation planning with land use planning. Prospects for regional transportation alternatives for the region, particularly by rail, are much improved.

5

6

Coastal resource protection--strategic considerations to minimize regional impacts. Regional coastal resource analytical considerations, either not explicitly addressed, or only partially addressed by the DEIR/EA, include:

- regional public access, especially for visitors from the San Jose-SF Bay area coming to the Monterey Peninsula;
- the relative benefit of the proposed highway widening in comparison to other modalities (i.e., rail, bikeway, footpath, trip reduction) for meeting *regional* transportation needs;
- the highway's potential role in relieving demand for transportation improvements in areas where widening to increase capacity would have even more severe impacts on coastal resources (e.g., wetlands, scenic resources and farmland within the Route 1 Moss Landing corridor);
- configuration of the roadway itself (as a visual resource consideration), and its role relative to maintaining the scenic two-lane character of Route 1 through the Moss Landing corridor (consistent with Coastal Act Section 30254);
- the highway as an instrument for directing new development to those areas best able to accommodate it, especially within existing urban centers and with reference to the forthcoming Monterey County General Plan Update (GPU), Castroville Community Plan (CCP), and anticipated companion Local Coastal Program (LCP) Update; and,
- facilitation of "smart growth" land use patterns responding to the need to maintain stable urban-rural boundaries, minimize vehicle miles traveled, conserve energy resources, and meet air quality mandates--especially as will be needed to minimize and adapt to sea level rise (SLR) and other climate change effects resulting from cumulative greenhouse gas (GHG) impacts.

Other project alternatives. Developments in the coastal zone are required to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts to coastal resources to the greatest extent possible. All feasible alternatives to avoid such impacts, and mitigation for any unavoidable impacts, must be fully evaluated.

7

As documented by the DEIR/EA, potential impacts have been partially minimized through careful alignment selection and containment of project footprint. We are aware that there are several options for access to the Oak Hills tract being considered at the local government level that could further reduce these impacts, by avoiding the need for interchange(s) and/or additional lanes. These options, potentially including but not limited to extension of Meridian Road along an abandoned former alignment or completion of an access road from Castroville Blvd., appear to merit additional consideration as part of this project evaluation.

In addition, it appears that further avoidance and minimization measures may be feasible on a more regional scale. In particular, this would entail examination of the potential for improvements to other existing systems, including expansion of rail services to meet part of the region's transportation needs; identification of additional alignment and design alternative(s); and integration of more robust mitigation measures, and updating of the LCP to reflect the regional smart growth and transportation strategy that best protects coastal resources overall. 8

These considerations suggest several project alternatives, more fully explained below: 1) Project as proposed by Alternatives 11 or 12, but with modified interchange at Castroville Boulevard; 2) Project with modified (split) alignment that combines features of both Alternatives 11 and 12, in a way that reflects the original State Scenic Highway concept; and, 3) a No-widening alternative, predicated on implementation of "smart-growth" land use patterns and maximum improvements to transportation facilities (other than adding through traffic lanes to existing highways). 9

Coastal resource protection——alternative intersection design to minimize "urban sprawl" impacts at Castroville. The project "build" alternatives both include realignment of Castroville Boulevard, to accommodate proposed expansion plans for the community of Castroville, as shown in the Castroville Community Plan (not part of the certified LCP). Commission staff has identified this plan as raising significant Coastal Act policy consistency issues. The proposed interchange location would not only impact known ESHA/wetland resources, but will also facilitate urban growth on existing farmlands around Castroville. 10

New development needs to be consistent with LCP land use designations—in this instance, for example, with Agricultural Preservation policies. Infrastructure improvements that will tend to induce expansion beyond urban limit lines should be avoided. Any future LCP amendments will need to be consistent with Coastal Act policies that call for maintaining stable urban-rural boundaries, and avoiding public service and facility expansions that would impair agricultural viability (see, for example, Coastal Act Sections 30241 and 30241.5).

A different interchange location, closer to the existing urban-rural boundary, with a more compact design, appears feasible. Such a design would potentially reduce wetland impacts, minimize farmland conversion and mitigate the growth-inducing aspects of the project. A potential additional advantage (depending on site selection) would be more direct access to a proposed new Caltrain station, thus encouraging non-automotive transportation alternatives. The DEIR/EA should evaluate such alternative interchange design as a measure to avoid, minimize or mitigate project impacts.

A "hybrid" split-alignment design to minimize coastal resource impacts. Build Alternative 11 would retain a substantial amount of the native oak forest that has grown in the Highway 156 corridor. It also avoids the sprawling intersection that would convert dozens of acres of farmland at the entrance to Cathedral Oak Road. It would leave the existing Highway 156 alignment for local circulation purposes, potentially to include a future bikeway. But, this alternative requires 11

two new bridges over a natural coastal wetland and the conversion of more than 100 additional acres of farmland.

Build Alternative 12 would incorporate much of the existing 2-lane highway alignment into the new 4-lane configuration, thereby conserving resources and farmland that would otherwise be converted for the proposed widening. But, it would still encroach on the Moro Cojo wetland, require conversion of farmland for an additional interchange at Cathedral Oak Road, and double the amount of native oak habitat eliminated (compared to Alternative 11).

If other options for meeting the transportation needs of the region are not available, and in order to minimize coastal resource impacts, would it be possible to combine the best features of both Alternatives 11 and 12, and then minimize the footprint of the resulting "hybrid" alternative?

By way of illustration, such an alternative design could incorporate the following measures:

- At the Castroville Boulevard intersection, reduce farmland conversion by adopting a "compact diamond" or other space-saving interchange configuration; and, consider a frontage road to access Monte del Lago/Simonville, similar to that shown for Alternative 12.

12

- At the Moro Cojo crossing, retain the existing highway lanes for local circulation as in Alternative 11, but reduce the "footprint" over the wetland by shifting the alignment of the new bridges as close as possible to the existing highway surface--and to each other (so that the bridges would cover the existing fill area rather than water area).

- East of Moro Cojo, build (only) the 2 new northbound lanes on the outboard (southerly) side of the existing highway ROW, immediately adjacent to the native oak corridor. This measure would save the oak habitat similarly to Alternative 11, but will reduce the amount of farmland that would otherwise have to be converted for Alternative 11's four lanes of width.

- West of approximately PM 1.8, convert the existing 2-lane Highway 156 to a frontage road, as in Alternative 11. Access to the Oak Hills tract would be provided via a new 2-lane street connection to Charter Oak Boulevard in the vicinity of Madras Court.

- East of approximately PM 1.8, convert the existing 2-lane Highway 156 to become the two southbound lanes of the new freeway. The existing intersections with Cathedral Oak Road and Oak Hills Drive could potentially be retained, but for southbound ingress/egress only. The wooded corridor between the two directions of travel would be retained, providing a visual experience worthy of this designated State Scenic Highway.

- A frontage road would be extended from the easterly end of Charter Oak Boulevard to Valley Road, and on to Meridian Road, to provide northbound egress from the Oak Hills tract.

- Meridian Road would be reconnected to the existing Route 156 alignment as shown for Alternative 12, or on an alignment shifted slightly to the north to take advantage of the existing County right of way at Meridian Spur.

We recommend that Caltrans evaluate a combination design that incorporates the above and other similar impact-minimization measures. We acknowledge that split alignment alternatives were previously evaluated but not selected. Nonetheless, with improved insight provided by the DEIR/EA, the advantages of a combined, split alignment that retains the wooded oak corridor while minimizing farmland conversion should be reevaluated.

Formulation and evaluation of such a design alternative should be undertaken, we believe, as a critical step in identifying the combination of measures that will optimally avoid, minimize and mitigate unavoidable project impacts on farmland, wetland and native oak habitat, consistent with Coastal Act and LCP policies.

Can regional transportation needs be met without highway widening? Are there other ways to solve the transportation problem in this instance? Are there other feasible ways to address the identified project need and purpose? 13

More specifically, can regional transportation needs be met through a combination of measures other than highway widening? Such measures would presumably include demand reduction, implementation of "smart growth" land use policies, and improved rail and non-motorized access modes. In other words, is there a "non-widening" alternative? The DEIR/EA does not address this question from the perspective of the Monterey Bay Region.

LCP Amendment needed to meet regional circulation and public access needs.
One possible analytical outcome is that the other-than-widening measures alone may not be a feasible way to meet regional transportation needs. In such case, it can be hypothesized that widening of Route 156—in *addition* to other measures--will be needed to preserve the public's ability to access the coast from inland population centers. 14

Hypothetically, widening of Route 1 could similarly address regional public access capacity. One of the policies in the LCP's North County Land Use Plan includes language that contemplates this possibility. But, the attendant significant impacts on both prime agricultural lands and the salt marsh wetlands of the Elkhorn Slough System make this option unacceptable, as well as inconsistent with the Coastal Act's and LCP's resource protection policies.

In any case, widening of one State Highway route or the other will unavoidably convert designated agricultural lands and impact natural habitat areas. By widening Route 156, the more

severe impacts of widening Route 1 may be avoidable. Thus, it may be possible that widening of Route 156, if found to be necessary in the regional context, represents the least damaging feasible alternative.

If the proposed Route 156 widening is demonstrated as both necessary, and the least environmentally damaging feasible alternative, an LCP amendment would nonetheless be required in advance of the required coastal development permit (CDP). Such an amendment would, for sake of illustration, presumably allow an exception for conversion of agricultural lands and oak habitat parallel to the existing Route 156, subject to:

- off-setting mitigation;
- explicit provisions for appropriate rail and bikeway enhancements, including the MBSST (Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail) component of the CCT (California Coastal Trail) and connecting bikeways; and, 15
- deletion of the LCP policy calling for the widening of the Route 1 corridor through the rural, scenic Moss Landing corridor.

The standard of review for LCP amendments that include modifications to the certified land use plan is conformity with the Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act. At this time we are unable to determine whether an LCP amendment to provide for the project could be found consistent with the Act, particularly because of the absent regional transportation and land use planning analysis. There may be options for addressing any inconsistencies with the Coastal Act if other Coastal Act policies would not be met by the no-build alternative. We would advise that Caltrans coordinate closely with us as the analysis of the project moves forward, in order to determine the feasibility of any proposed LCP amendment.

The current DEIR/EA does not attempt an analysis of a potential LCP amendment or Coastal Act requirements for such; therefore, on its own, it will not be sufficient to support the anticipated LCP amendment request. 16

Appropriate authority for regional environmental analysis. As noted above, we recommend that any LCP amendment to allow highway widening be based on a robust regional planning study that identifies all reasonable alternatives for addressing the project purposes of relieving existing congestion and improving interregional traffic flow. The alternatives should include, at minimum: a) the no-project alternative; b) enhancement of all modes (roadway-rail-bicycle) *without* adding new through highway lanes; c) same, but with 2 lanes added to Highway 156, only; and, d) with 2 lanes added to both Highways 1 and 156 (as predicated in selected North County LUP policies).

The environmental impacts of each alternative should be evaluated, at least on a broad-gauged "strategic" scale. The recommended regional study would need to explicitly identify the actual 17

origins and destinations of the people, goods and services intended to be addressed by this project. All modes should be evaluated with *at least* a 55-inch projected sea level rise (SLR) by 2100[1] for any areas that might be susceptible to SLR. The environmental analysis component of the recommended study needs to include a rigorous comparison of impacts to farmlands, wetlands and other ESHAs, taking into account projected SLR.

Two major regional-level transportation planning efforts currently in development, 1) the Corridor System Management Plan (CSMP) for State Highway Route 1, being undertaken by Caltrans District 5 and, 2) the joint Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)/Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) updates process, appear to offer excellent supplemental information sources for the needed Route 156 regional planning study. Each of these processes will be conducted consistent with CEQA requirements and represent a potential opportunity to complete an integrated comparative analysis of alternatives to meet the region's transportation and land use needs.

18

Corridor System Management Plan (CSMP) for State Highway Route 1. The CSMP will consider all transportation modes and roads that effectively provide mobility through the designated Highway 1 corridor. This will include connecting highways and alternative routes—presumably including Route 156. According to Caltrans, development of each CSMP involves a six-step process:

- Defining the Corridor System Management Plan transportation network including, but not limited to, State Highways, major local streets and roads, intercity rail service, regional rail service, primary regional transit service, and key regional bicycle facilities.
- Summarizing existing travel conditions along the corridor.
- Evaluating existing system management practices along the corridor.
- Forecasting future travel conditions along the corridor, including modal performance.
- Preparing a corridor management strategy, including proposed detection and monitoring strategies, needed capital improvement projects, and the roles and responsibilities of each jurisdiction in the corridor management process.
- Acceptance by the applicable regional transportation planning agency.

Caltrans has commenced the CSMP process for the State Highway Route 1 (SR 1) corridor around Monterey Bay. State Route 156 West merges with SR 1 south of Castroville, well within

[1] Based on current available scientific estimates for projected sea level rise (SLR) as cited in the Public Review Draft of 2009 California Climate Adaptation Strategy Discussion Draft—A Report to the Governor of the State of California in Response to Executive Order S-13-2008. A greater allowance for SLR may be required if Greenland and Antarctic ice sheet melt rates accelerate.

the CSMP limits. The corridor transportation network for this study will undoubtedly include the portion of SR 156 in the Coastal Zone ("SR 156 West"), since it comprises the primary feeder to SR 1 from points north and east of the Monterey Peninsula. Improvements along SR 156 West also represent a potential measure to relieve at least some portion of demand on the 2-lane segment of SR 1, north of Castroville through Moss Landing.

The District 5 website summarizes the CSMP process for State Highway Route 1 (SR 1) as follows:

> The Highway 1 CSMP will assess current performance, identify causal factors for congestion, and based on testing of alternative improvement scenarios (typically through micro or macro-simulation) propose the best mix of project improvements, strategies and actions to restore throughput, improve travel times, increase reliability and safety, and preserve the corridor. The Corridor is not limited to project boundaries and includes all transportation components (not just highways) that affect mobility on a major travel path.
>
> The portion of the State Highway System to be included in this CSMP covers two counties; Santa Cruz County in the north and Monterey County in the south. The limits of this corridor study are from the interchange of State Route 1 and State Route 68 (West) in Monterey County to the intersection of King Street in Santa Cruz County. This segment of SR 1 is surrounded by urban and rural/agricultural land uses.

Monterey Bay Area Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). The other comprehensive transportation planning effort now underway is the update of the Monterey Bay Area MTP. Given the role of AMBAG (Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments) in updating the MTP, it would appear that that agency would be a key partner for conducting the recommended regional-level transportation alternatives and impacts analysis. Such regional analysis would presumably be done in concert with the Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC) and the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC)—both are already in the process of updating their respective RTPs (regional transportation plans).

Specific comments on DEIR/EA Section 2.3 (Biological Environment). Route 156 intersects the Coastal Zone boundary immediately seaward of the Highway 101 intersection, where it crests a low summit and enters the Elkhorn Slough System watershed. All portions of the project seaward of this point fall within the Coastal Zone, and will be subject to review in accordance with the standards of the California Coastal Act and the Monterey County LCP. Portions of the project, in particular the crossing of the south branch of Moro Cojo Slough (part of the Elkhorn Slough complex), have the potential to impact wetlands and other environmentally sensitive habitat areas (ESHAs) as defined in the Coastal Act.

19

Because this project will potentially impact such ESHAs, the LCP's implementing ordinances require that a biologic survey be conducted. The ordinance includes particular standards for conducting such surveys (Monterey County LCP Regulations Section 20.144.040.A, Biological

Survey Requirement). Biological studies were in fact conducted for this project, and are reported in the DEIR/EA. However, the LCP standards are not mentioned in the DEIR/EA document, and it is likely that at least some of the locally-applicable criteria have not been addressed.

Additional problematical aspects of the DEIR/EA's biological analysis include:

a. Although acreage totals for "coastal jurisdictional wetlands" are reported in the summary table, it appears that the wetland delineations may not have been conducted according to LCP standards. Potentially, all the estimates of impact are incorrect and underestimated in terms of LCP (and Coastal Act) guidance. Further consultation is essential to clarify the methodologies utilized.

b. The three habitat types that are likely to be impacted are coast live oak woodland, central maritime chaparral, and various types of riparian forest. The latter two are often considered environmentally sensitive habitat area (ESHA) under the Coastal Act. All three habitats will be impacted. The DEIR/EA is inadequate in that it does not contain a discussion of ESHA (or other Coastal Act/LCP requirements).

c. Coast live oak woodland is stated to be a "habitat of special concern" according to CDFG. The DEIR/EA does not cite a source for this, nor a reference to that term of art. But if this is accurate, we would likely consider this habitat ESHA as well.

d. Mitigation of impacts on ESHA is proposed to be restoration of areas within the right-of-way. No discussion of mitigation ratios and no map of mitigation areas is provided. Moreover, greater evaluation of whether an ESHA mitigation site can appropriately function within a freeway right-of-way or not is needed.

e. With regard to wetlands, it is pointed out that "In certain circumstances, the Coastal Commission…may also be involved." True. But, the document does not provide the basis for determining whether or not the impacts would constitute a significant disruption of wetland ESHA. Nor, does it provide the information needed to determine if the wetland alterations resulting from the project would qualify as one of the Coastal Act's allowable exceptions to the general prohibition on wetland fill (e.g., for incidental public service purposes, as referenced in Section 20.144.060.C.2.e of the County's LCP regulations).

f. Compensatory mitigation for wetland impacts is proposed. It is stated that the mitigation ratio "…would be based on resource agency recommendations, as well as the function and quality of aquatic habitat that needs to be replaced." But, this mitigation measure apparently is limited to in-situ preservation, which the Commission has generally *not* accepted as sufficient.

g. All the habitat types are described generically; there is no description of the actual areas of habitat present, nor their size, condition, and relationship to the landscape. There are no photographs of habitat and no maps showing habitat outside the project area.

h. Pajaro manzanita and Hooker's manzanita are both CNPS 1b species, both are part of the maritime chaparral and both will be impacted. Although the summary table totals the acreage for temporary and permanent maritime chaparral impacts, no quantitative estimates of impact to these particular species is provided. Mitigation is limited to "restoration of habitat."

i. The Southwest pond turtle is probably present. There will be preconstruction surveys and individuals will be moved. The presence of the federally "threatened" California tiger salamander is documented; the presence of the federally and state "endangered" Santa Cruz long-toed salamander is assumed. The federally "threatened" California red-legged frog is present adjacent to the project area. There would be a permanent loss of over 40 acres and a temporary loss of around 40 acres of upland habitat for the salamanders and individuals would be displaced during construction. Individuals of these somewhat elusive species could be killed. Occupied frog habitat will be filled and frogs might be killed as well. The specter of these kinds of potential impacts underscores the need to more fully evaluate other alternatives to meet the region's needs.

j. "Temporary impacts" are not defined. If such impacts result in the significant ground disturbance, in the death of vegetation, or last longer than 12 months, they should generally be treated as "permanent" for purposes of mitigation.

k. Regarding NEPA compliance, will there be a separate EIS? Will a Federal consistency process be undertaken for those portions of the project outside the Coastal Zone?

Priority of work. It may be tempting to first emphasize the site-specific biologic work needed to address the above concerns. But, we would instead encourage that priority be placed upon establishing project need and function in the wider regional context—including the project's potential role for minimizing coastal resource impacts within the Monterey Bay region, overall. Without that, there is little reason to dwell on the further particulars of on-site biologic impacts.

20

Offer of assistance. In order to address Coastal Act/LCP compliance needs, it is evident that additional work will be needed to supplement the Biological Environment section of the DEIR/EA. To avoid confusion or misinterpretation, we suggest direct collaboration with our staff ecologists regarding technical wetland delineation and ESHA determinations.

Similarly, additional opportunities for effective collaboration with our staff specialists are anticipated with respect to several other topics not discussed in these comments. These include, but are not limited to, project-specific measures to avoid and reduce GHG emissions--as well as identifying appropriate responses to anticipated sea level rise.

Please contact our transportation liaisons for assistance in making the necessary arrangements.

Summary and Conclusion. Substantive issues are raised by the proposed development in regards to consistency with the policies of the County's certified LCP and the Coastal Act. Please note that, at this early stage, these should be considered only preliminary comments and general direction in regards to these concerns. There appear to be a combination of alternative transportation system improvements and designs for highway alignment and interchange configuration that merit consideration, particularly since they may better minimize environmental impacts. We anticipate that additional issues and comments may be raised during the planning and review process.

The DEIR is helpful for understanding the localized context of the Castroville-to-Highway 101 corridor—but does NOT contain the environmental information needed to evaluate it in the broader context of the entire Monterey Bay region. Thus, unless augmented by supplemental environmental review, the DEIR will not be adequate as the basis for certifying—in the context of the entire region—that this particular transportation alternative (widening Route 156) is the least environmentally damaging feasible alternative.

A supplemental analysis will be needed to identify overall regional transportation needs—and, to evaluate potential transportation/land use management strategies that will address those needs, consistent with the Coastal Act (and AB 375, etc.). Such regional analysis will also serve to underpin any LCP Amendment that may be brought forward.

Long term growth and build-out patterns will be a key consideration. In particular, we need to understand what regional transportation infrastructure improvements will be needed if we assume that Highway 1 through Elkhorn Slough is never expanded, or if it cannot be feasibly modified to adapt to projected sea level rise. What planning adaptations will then be needed, in land use policy and transportation infrastructure? Will these necessarily include the widening of Route 156?

In summary, we believe that we can thoughtfully shape future regional growth and transportation patterns by deciding how current highways should be modified---or not. These actions, in terms of the Coastal Act context, need to be compatible with projected and acceptable build out conditions under approved land use plans and should facilitate continued public access to and along the coast, preserve productive farmland and public views, and protect coastal wetlands and other ESHAs. Thus, it is critical that a thorough and complete regional-level alternatives study be prepared, identifying and comparing the various alternatives for meeting future transportation needs in the Monterey Bay region.

We are prepared to meet with Caltrans staff regarding this matter in order to discuss possible solutions that will comply with the LCP and Coastal Act policy standards. With respect to regional-level studies, we will want to meet as well with our counterparts at AMBAG, SCCRTC

and TAMC. Please let us know when and how we may contribute to this process, and feel free to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,

Lee Otter, Transportation & Public Access Liaison

cc:
Monterey County Supervisor, Second Dist.
County of Monterey Planning & Bldg.Insp. Dept.
AMBAG
TAMC
SCCRTC

Response to comment from the California Coastal Commission

1. A technical working group comprised of staff from the County of Monterey, Transportation Agency of Monterey County, and the California Department of Transportation has met several times to begin the process of amending the Monterey County Local Coastal Program for the Route 156 West Corridor project.

   This letter from the Coastal Commission focuses on the worthy effort to protect natural resources like agricultural land and biological resources. The Route 156 West Corridor project is one of the largest improvements in decades for public access to the Monterey County coastline. Congestion that the traveling public faces today and into the future is a clear impediment to free coastal access for Californians that live inland. The Route 156 West Corridor project's preferred alternative, would provide congestion free travel to the coast by car and provide safer pedestrian and bicycle access via the new frontage road.

2. A regional-level environmental and alternative analysis for the overall Monterey Bay region is beyond the scope of this highway project. A stand alone regional-level environmental and alternative analysis for the overall Monterey Bay region is the responsibility of organizations such as the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG), Transportation Agency of Monterey County (TAMC), and Monterey County Resource Management Agency (MCRMA).

   The AMBAG Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) as well as the associated Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) for the three counties (Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Benito) are the regions' vision for a comprehensive series of projects and programs to address their transportation needs. The purpose of the MTP/RTPs is to encourage and promote the safe and efficient management, operation and development of a regional intermodal transportation system that serves the mobility needs of goods and people. It describes a 20-year blueprint and transportation strategy to respond to the challenges of future growth and documents the financial resources needed. To accomplish this, the regions use a variety of data sources, including the AMBAG Regional Travel Demand Forecast Model, to identify existing and future deficiencies and to develop a balanced set of strategies to mitigate these deficiencies. Among the strategies identified in the AMBAG MTP and TAMC RTP is the widening of State Route 156.

Amtrak provides rail and bus service in Monterey County. The Coast Starlight runs from Seattle to Los Angeles with stations in Salinas, Gilroy and King City. Thruway bus stations are in Carmel by the Sea, Monterey and Salinas. Service is presently limited. The Transportation Agency for Monterey County is sponsoring a project called the Commuter Rail Extension to Monterey County Project. This project proposes to extend rail service south to Salinas as discussed in the 2010 Regional Transportation Plan. The extension includes three new station stops: Pajaro/Watsonville, Castroville and Salinas. Even though additional rail service is being planned in the area, it is many years away from being up and running. Even when fully operational, the new rail system will have little effect on mitigating the projected (2041) traffic volumes on State Route 156.

The Ridership Validation Report (Parsons, January 2009) that was completed as part of the Commuter Rail Extension Project found the projected 2035 ridership would be about 800 people a day. Compared to the projected Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) of 40,200 on State Route 156, there would only be a 2 percent improvement realized by the improved rail service. This small improvement is insufficient to mitigate the existing and future traffic volumes on State Route 156. Therefore, adding additional lanes to State Route 156 is necessary with or without improvements to the rail system. The Ridership Validation Report is found online at http://tamcmonterey.org/programs/rail/pdf/Ridership_Validation_Final_Report.pdf).

Regarding the Corridor System Management Plan (CSMP) for State Route 1, the State Route 1 CSMP is a comprehensive, integrated management plan for increasing transportation options, decreasing congestion and improving travel times in the State Route 1 corridor. A CSMP includes all travel modes in a defined corridor-highways and freeways, parallel and connecting roadways, public transit (bus, bus rapid transit, light rail, intercity rail) and bikeways along with intelligent transportation technologies (ramp metering; coordinated traffic signals; changeable message signs for traveler information; incident management; bus/carpool lanes and carpool/vanpool programs; and transit strategies). A CSMP incorporates both capital and operational improvements. The State Route 1 CSMP is a corridor-based effort intended to assess the performance of State Route 1 and any parallel facilities to maximize the movement of people and goods. To accomplish this, the CSMP uses existing data from a variety of sources to determine the existing and forecasted deficiencies within the corridor. It is not intended to evaluate the regional distribution of trips.

3. Please see response number 1 for information about amending the Local Coastal Plan (LCP), the Land Use Plan (LUP) and Coastal Implementation Plan (CIP) for North Monterey County.

4. A growth inducement analysis was done for the State Route 156 West Corridor project as part of the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment process. The result of the study is documented in the Growth Inducement Analysis Report for the Route 156 West Corridor project (April 2009). The Growth Inducement Analysis Report reviewed the growth inducement potential of both alternatives of the proposed State Route 156 West Corridor project. A gravity model was used to compute the changes in accessibility to jobs that could result from the proposed improvements. Growth-related factors including those provided in general plans for the neighboring cities were also taken into consideration. The growth inducement analysis suggests the proposed project would not stimulate unplanned residential or commercial growth and would support existing planned growth for the corridor. Major factors preventing unplanned growth in the corridor include resource constraints and planning policies that limit growth in the region. Consequently, project-related growth would not put pressure on or cause growth to occur.

The project team considered many of the trade-offs described in the adjacent comments. Alternative 11 struck the best balance between agricultural land impacts, oak woodland impacts and impacts to homes and businesses and because of that is selected as the preferred build alternative for the Route 156 West Corridor project.

Caltrans follows the wetland/waters definition and delineation procedures agreed to by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The delineation procedure describes a three-parameter approach that includes presence of hydrophytic vegetation, wetland hydrology, and hydric soils. Wetland/waters must be delineated by a qualified biologist—as is the case for the Route 156 West Corridor project)—trained in soils, hydrology, local vegetation, as well as the USACE Wetlands Delineation Manual. The biologist uses site information and background materials to prepare a Wetland/Waters Delineation and Assessment Report, a prerequisite to the 404 permit process.

5. Amtrak provides rail and bus service in Monterey County. The Coast Starlight runs from Seattle to Los Angeles with stations in Salinas, Gilroy and King City. Thruway bus stations are located in Carmel by the Sea, Monterey and Salinas. Service is presently limited. The Transportation Agency for Monterey County is sponsoring a project called the Commuter Rail Extension to Monterey County Project. This project proposes to extend rail service south to Salinas as discussed in the 2010 Regional Transportation Plan. The extension includes three new station stops: Pajaro/Watsonville, Castroville and Salinas. Even though additional rail service is being planned in the area, but is many years away from being up and running. Even when fully operational, the new rail system will have little effect on mitigating the projected 2041 traffic volumes on State Route 156.

   The Ridership Validation Report (Parsons, January 2009) that was completed as part of the Commuter Rail Extension Project found that the projected 2035 ridership would be about 800 people a day. Compared to the projected Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) of 40,200 on State Route 156, there would only be a 2 percent improvement realized by the improved rail service. This small improvement is insufficient to mitigate the existing and future traffic volumes on State Route 156. Therefore, adding additional lanes to State Route 156 is necessary with or without improvements to the rail system. The Ridership Validation Report is found online at http://tamcmonterey.org/programs/rail/pdf/Ridership_Validation_Final_Report.pdf).

6. Discussion of the regional public access for visitors from the San Jose-San Francisco Bay area to the Monterey Peninsula is beyond the scope of the Route 156 West Corridor project and should be discussed in a separate regional analysis. Regional transportation needs analysis is handled by the following agencies for Monterey County: Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) and the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC).

   The AMBAG Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) as well as the associated Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) for the three counties (Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Benito) are the regions' vision for a comprehensive series of projects and programs to address their transportation needs. The purpose of the MTP/RTPs is to encourage and promote the safe and efficient management, operation and development of a regional intermodal transportation system that serves the mobility needs of goods and people. It describes a 20-year blueprint

and transportation strategy to respond to the challenges of future growth and documents the financial resources needed. To accomplish this, the regions use a variety of data sources, including the AMBAG Regional Travel Demand Forecast Model, to identify existing and future deficiencies and to develop a balanced set of strategies to mitigate these deficiencies. Among the strategies identified in the AMBAG MTP and TAMC RTP is the widening of State Route 156.

The purpose of the Route 156 West Corridor project is to improve safety and operations, improve local road access to State Route 156, improve interregional traffic flow and route continuity along State Route 156, relieve existing congestion and provide capacity for future increases in traffic volume. Discussions of project features and analysis of environmental impacts in the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment and the Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment are within the context of the widening project. An analysis in relieving demand for transportation improvements along the State Route 1 Moss Landing corridor should be discussed in a separate study.

The entire length of State Route 156 throughout the project limits is an officially designated State Scenic Highway. As such, special scenic treatment and design considerations within the right-of-way of officially designated State Scenic Highways must be used and may include provisions of scenic outlooks, vegetation and highway structures. Consideration in maintaining the scenic two-lane character of State Route 1 is outside the scope of the Route 156 West Corridor project environmental study limits and is therefore not addressed in this document.

These following mitigation measures for the Route 156 West Corridor project are outlined in the Visual/Aesthetics section of the draft environmental document:

- Include landscaping as part of all bridge structures. Landscaping would mitigate the urban appearance of the project by using natural elements to reduce the perceived scale of the bridges, filter cumulative views of the ramps, frontage roads and other project features where applicable, and provide a natural transition from the adjacent landscape to the project.

- Include landscaping as part of all retaining walls and soundwalls. Landscaping would mitigate the potential for graffiti and would reduce the urban appearance of the project by using natural elements to reduce the perceived scale and "canyon effect" of the walls, filter cumulative views of the walls, and provide a natural transition from the adjacent landscape to the project.
- Reduce the perceived scale of the large retaining wall on State Route 156 across from McGuffie Road by including measures such as stepping it back or tiering. Tiering the wall would reduce its visual dominance and would allow opportunities for integral planting, which would further minimize its potential impacts.
- Include aesthetic treatment on all retaining walls and soundwalls visible from the highways or the community. Aesthetic treatment can reduce the graffiti potential, would reduce the urban appearance, and would result in the project being more consistent with community aesthetic values.
- Use open-type bridge rail on the Moro Cojo Slough bridge. Open-style bridge rail would allow better visual access to the creek bed and would be more in keeping with coastal planning policy.
- Involve the community in the aesthetic design of the all visible bridges, retaining walls and soundwalls.
- Determine the location and appearance of storm water basins and other highway visible storm water prevention measures in consultation with a Caltrans Landscape Architect. To the greatest extent possible considering their function, all such storm water features should be placed and designed to appear natural and to minimize their effect on existing vegetation as well as on planting opportunities. Associated fencing shall be minimized. If fencing is required, alternatives to chain link shall be considered. If chain link is required, it shall be vinyl-clad black. Planting shall be included in the design of storm water elements to screen views from the public and make the elements visually blend with the surroundings.
- Place all overhead utility lines affected by the project along State Route 156 underground where feasible per State Scenic Highway policy.
- Include contour-grading and slope-rounding on all new slopes along State Route 156 where such measures would not cause additional tree removal or adverse effects to other resources. Unnatural-appearing landform remnants should be removed or re-graded. This measure would minimize the

engineered appearance of the project and result in a more natural-appearing landform.

- Make all project fencing on State Route 156 (except on the bridge structures) from wood or metal T-post and wire.
- Make sure all lighting on bridge structures is hooded or includes cut-off shields to reduce visibility of the light source from off-site locations.
- Darken all metal-beam guardrail beams and posts along State Route 156 by acid-etching or a comparable method.
- Use avoidance measures such as slope-warping and timber tree wells to protect existing trees to the greatest extent possible.
- Replace all removed trees with native or other horticultural-appropriate trees at a minimum ratio of 5 to 1, in coordination with other tree planting requirements identified in this document. Replacement trees should be planted along the highway corridors within sight of the highways to the greatest extent possible. All planting should include a plant establishment period sufficient to ensure the survival of the plants and consistency with the intent of the planting concept.

Land use plans and resource constraints (adequate water source, land availability) and economics influence where development will occur. Furthermore, the growth inducement analysis conducted for the State Route 156 West Corridor project as part of the Draft Environmental Report/Environmental Assessment and Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment process suggests the proposed project would not stimulate unplanned residential or commercial growth and would support only existing planned growth for the corridor. The extension of that conclusion would also suggest that this project cannot be used to direct where future development will occur. Major factors preventing unplanned growth in the corridor include resource constraints and planning policies that limit growth in the region.

The result of the study is documented in the Technical Report, The Growth Inducement Analysis Report for the State Route 156 West Corridor project (April 2009). This growth inducement analysis reviewed the growth inducement potential of both alternatives of the proposed State Route 156 West Corridor project. A gravity model was used to compute the changes in accessibility to jobs that could result from the proposed improvements. Growth-related factors including those provided in general plans for the neighboring cities were also

taken into consideration. Land use patterns are determined by land use policies set by local governments.

Caltrans projects must comply with federal and state laws pertaining to air quality. Under 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments, the U.S. Department of Transportation cannot fund, authorize, or approve federal actions to support programs or projects that are not first found to conform to the State Implementation Plan for achieving the goals of the Clean Air Act requirements. Conformity must be on the regional and project level. Features incorporated into the project that minimizes effects of greenhouse gas emissions include:

- The proposed project would be designed to minimize removal of existing trees, especially mature trees. The project would plant the intersections/interchanges and other disturbed areas with a variety of native and drought tolerant trees and shrubs in ratios sufficient to replace the air quality and cooling benefits of trees removed by construction of the project. Additional trees would be planted as space allows to further increase those benefits. Trees would be planted from large-size containers to accelerate reestablishment of the greenhouse gas sink and to shade the pavement. Riparian planting would also be included to maintain shade along creek corridors.
- Landscaping reduces surface warming, and through photosynthesis, decreases CO_2. The project would seed slopes, drainage channels, and other disturbed areas with native and drought tolerant shrubs, perennials and grasses.
- Crossing the highway from the west side of the community to the east side is currently safely possible only by vehicle. Sidewalks would be incorporated into the overhead structure to help facilitate pedestrian use allowing crossing of the highway by means other than car such as on foot or by bicycle.
- The project would incorporate the use of energy efficient lighting such as LED traffic signals.
- Monterey County provides ridesharing services and park-and-ride facilities to help manage the growth in demand for highway capacity. A park-and-ride facility located within the current project limits will be relocated and incorporated within the proposed project. The relocated park and ride lot would include a lockable locker for bicycles and a pedestrian bus shelter and benches. Use of the locker would be based on a first-come, first served basis or coordinated through a reservation system administered by the Monterey Salinas Transit or Monterey County.

The following "green" practices and materials would be used in the project as part of highway planting and erosion control work:

- Compost and soil amendments derived from recycled wood products and green waste materials.
- Fiber produced from recycled pulp such as newspaper, chipboard, cardboard.
- Wood mulch made from green waste and/or clean manufactured wood or natural wood.
- Native and drought-tolerant seed and plants species.
- Irrigation controllers including water conservation features.
- Restricted pesticide use and reduction goals.

7. Caltrans investigated access alternatives for the Oak Hills community in 2009 that included at-grade signals at Cathedral Oak Road and State Route 156. A safety analysis at the Cathedral Oak Road intersection was conducted by Caltrans for a three-year period from July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2006 using the most current data available. Results show that the actual total collision rate at this location is similar to the statewide average for similar locations. Based on existing traffic volumes, intersection analyses were performed comparing the average delay between the existing stop controlled-intersection to the proposed half traffic signal alternatives. If a signal were installed at Cathedral Oak Road, the delay to the traveling public would increase 18 percent during the morning peak and 28 percent in the evening peak travel times. Based on the best information and analysis to date, Caltrans staff has determined that a signal at Cathedral Oak Road and State Route 156 would not be an acceptable solution.

   The Monterey County Department of Public Works did propose an access road from the north end of Cathedral Oak Road to Castroville Boulevard in the year 2007. This proposal was abandoned due to Environmental and Right of Way issues and the high cost of the project. During that same time, the Monterey County Department of Public Works also explored the idea of extending Meridian Road to the current U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange. This proposal was also abandoned due to Environmental, Right of Way and cost issues. It should be noted that even if these projects were constructed, they were considered temporary in nature as they only improved local circulation but did nothing to improve the congestion problems facing Route 156. It should also be noted that

the selected Alternative 11 will provide improved access for the Oak Hills community by converting the existing Route 156 to a new frontage road.

8. Analysis of regional transportation needs is handled by two agencies for Monterey County. The two agencies are the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) and the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC). The AMBAG Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) as well as the associated Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) for the three counties (Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Benito) are the regions' vision for a comprehensive series of projects and programs to address their transportation needs. The purpose of the MTP/RTPs is to encourage and promote the safe and efficient management, operation and development of a regional intermodal transportation system that serves the mobility needs of goods and people. It describes a 20-year blueprint and transportation strategy to respond to the challenges of future growth and documents the financial resources needed. To accomplish this, the regions use a variety of data sources, including the AMBAG Regional Travel Demand Forecast Model, to identify existing and future deficiencies and to develop a balanced set of strategies to mitigate these deficiencies. Among the strategies identified in the AMBAG MTP and TAMC RTP is the widening of State Route 156.

   Please see response number 1 for information amending the Local Coastal Plan (LCP), the Land Use Plan (LUP) and Coastal Implementation Plan (CIP) for North Monterey County.

9. Since December 2003, a wide range of project alternatives have been extensively analyzed by the Project Development Team (PDT). The Project Development Team consists of staff from the California Department of Transportation, the Transportation Agency of Monterey County, the Monterey County Department of Public Works, the Monterey County Planning Department, local elected officials and numerous other agencies. In March of 2006, a staff representative from the Coastal Commission joined the PDT to help in the analysis of proposed alternatives. To date, approximately 20 PDT meetings have been held over the last nine years. The PDT has studied hybrid and split alignment alternatives.

   Additionally, a Community Advisory Group (CAG) was established in February 2007 to provide community input from a broad range of local perspectives. The group's purpose was to review project alternatives, advise the PDT of issues to be

studied in the environmental process, articulate key community design principles to be considered in the project, review information provided in the technical studies, identify recommended strategies for addressing community concerns and serve as communication conduit from the project team back to the community. The CAG met about nine times and was allowed to sunset September 23, 2009 after the Public Hearing was held.

Over the last 9 years, the Project Development Team has wrestled with 12 different alternatives and concluded that the best two alternatives were 11 and 12. The project team considered many of the trade-offs between Alternative 11 and Alternative 12. Alternative 11 struck the best balance between agricultural land impacts, oak woodland impacts and impacts to homes and businesses and because of that it is selected as the preferred build alternative for the Route 156 West Corridor project.

10. The Project Development Team developed and analyzed alternatives that proposed to solve the existing and future congestion and safety issues facing State Route 156. The environmental document does examine future growth and how this project would affect that growth. A growth inducement analysis was conducted for the State Route 156 West Corridor project as part of the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment process. The result of the study is documented in the Technical Report, The Growth Inducement Analysis Report for the State Route 156 West Corridor project (April 2009). The Growth Inducement Analysis Report reviewed the growth inducement potential of both alternatives of the proposed State Route 156 West Corridor project. A gravity model was used to compute the changes in accessibility to jobs that could result from the proposed improvements. Growth-related factors including those provided in general plans for the neighboring cities were also taken into consideration. The growth inducement analysis suggests the proposed project would not stimulate unplanned residential or commercial growth and would support existing planned growth for the corridor. Major factors preventing unplanned growth in the corridor include resource constraints and planning policies that limit growth in the region. Consequently, project-related growth would not put pressure on or cause growth to occur.

The driving forces behind development of the Castroville Community Plan are beyond the scope and reach of the Project Development Team and are the sole responsibility of the City of Castroville and Monterey County.

Please see response number 1 for information about amending the Local Coastal Plan (LCP), the Land Use Plan (LUP) and Coastal Implementation Plan (CIP) for North Monterey County. An amendment would include new provision for the Route 156 West Corridor project for the addition of four traffic lanes to new alignment, south of the existing State Route 156 in Monterey County. Additional amendments relating to coastal resource protections for agricultural land conversions, wetland impacts, oak woodland habitat impacts, and public view shed would also be included in this process.

In late 2009, at the suggestion of Monterey County Supervisor Calcagno and with the concurrence of the Project Development Team (PDT), the design unit was to examine whether the design of Alternatives 11 and 12 could be "tightened up" to reduce the amount of agricultural land being impacted. At the November 5th, 2009 PDT meeting, the design unit unveiled an improved design for each alternative. For Alternative 12, the improvement included a new tight diamond interchange configuration at the Castroville Boulevard that removed the larger loop on-ramp concept. This same smaller footprint design for the Castroville Boulevard was incorporated into Alternative 11. In addition, the new design for Alternative 11 also included shifting the new four lanes closer to the existing 156 alignment on the west end of the project. These changes dramatically reduced the overall footprint of the project and the corresponding impacts to agricultural land.

11. Please see response number 9 for alternative discussion.

    It should be noted that any use of the existing Route 156 lanes as might be proposed in a "hybrid" solution would limit its use as a new frontage road system for locals, pedestrians and bicyclists. Alternative 11 costs less than Alternative 12 and still provides a "new" frontage road system.

    Alternative 11 will not remove the current soil wall at the Moro Cojo Slough along the existing State Route 156. This will preserve the wetland immediately to the south. However, Alternative 11 will result in impacts to at least 4 acres of wetlands related to cut and fill activities and bridge abutment and pile placement. Alternative 12 would have resulted in approximately 9 acres of wetland impacts.

12. See response number 10, paragraph 4. The recent modifications to Alternative 11 (the preferred alternative) resulted in a 6 percent reduction to coastal agricultural-zoned land conversions and a 19 percent reduction in all other coastal-zoned land use conversions for the Route 156 West Corridor project.

Additionally, the tighter design for the lanes also reduced the impacts to the Moro Cojo Slough.

The perception that building only two new additional lanes to the east of the Moro Cojo Slough will save the oak trees is incorrect. If the existing State Route 156 lanes are used for the new expressway, they will need to be upgraded to current standard. This will require either the addition of shoulders or widening of the existing shoulders and in turn will require additional cut and fill slopes. This upgrade will cause the removal of most of the oak trees. Therefore, the concept of a "split alignment" alternative (using parts of Alternative 11 and 12) will not work. Alternative 11 is the only alternative that saves the oak trees. Using the input received from the public comment period, and weighing the pros and cons between Alternative 11 and Alternative 12, the Project Development team concluded that Alternative 11 struck the best balance between impacting agricultural lands and biological resources (oak trees).

Additionally, for either Alternative 12 or the split alignment concept to work properly, an interchange at Cathedral Oak Road needs to be constructed. This will allow traffic from the Oak Hills community the ability to head east or west safely. One of the goals of the Route 156 Corridor project is to improve safety. Retaining at-grade intersections doesn't work with the high traffic volumes on Route 156. The new interchange at Cathedral Oak Road will cause more agricultural land conversions as well as additional oak tree takes. Alternative 11 removes the need for an interchange at Cathedral Oaks by allowing east and west travel from Castroville Boulevard (west end of the project) to Prunedale North Road (east side of the project).

13. Please see response number 6 for the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) discussion. AMBAG MTP and TAMC MTP do not have any suggested non-widening alternatives that would solve the congestion problem on State Route 156.

14. The purpose of the Route 156 West Corridor project is to improve safety and operations; improve local road access to State Route 156; improve interregional traffic flow and route continuity along State Route 156; relieve existing congestion; and provide capacity for future increases in traffic volume. Discussions of project features and analysis of environmental impacts in the draft environmental document are focused on the improvements proposed on State

Route 156 only. An analysis in relieving demand for transportation issues along the State Route 1 should be discussed in a separate study.

15. A technical working group consisting of staff from the County of Monterey, Transportation Agency of Monterey County, and the California Department of Transportation has met several times to begin the process of amending the Local Coastal Plan (LCP) and Coastal Implementation Plan (CIP) for North Monterey County. An amendment would include a new provision for the Route 156 West Corridor project for the addition of four traffic lanes on a new alignment, south of the existing State Route 156 in Monterey County. Additional amendments relating to coastal resource protections for agricultural land conversions, wetland impacts, oak woodland habitat impacts, and public view shed would also be included in this process.

Oak habitat mitigation is discussed in the environmental document. After construction is complete, areas within the Caltrans highway right-of-way which are biologically feasible for planting and which meet traffic safety parameters, would be used for revegetation of effected plant communities. The areas would be replanted with an appropriate assemblage of native riparian, wetland, and upland vegetation suitable for the location, as recommended by the project biologist and the project landscape architect in coordination with the resource agencies. Specific mitigation and restoration sites within the highway right-of-way have not been identified yet.

Planting in the highway right-of-way for biological mitigation would also be considered part of the mitigation required for visual impacts and part of the replacement planting needed to meet Caltrans standard highway planting policy requirements. Revegetation outside the highway right-of-way would be done only if agreed upon mitigation requirements for effected native plant communities could not be met within the right-of-way.

Revegetation methods would include seeding, container planting, and a plant establishment period. Plant salvage, local seed collection, and contract growing are also techniques that might be used to propagate plants for the replacement of individual coast live oak trees and special-status plant species that would be removed during construction.

Mitigation would be based on habitat quality/values and replaced according to recommendations made by the resource agencies with final concurrence by the Caltrans Project Development Team.

Reference to policy development for the State Route 1 corridor through the Moss Landing corridor is beyond the scope of the Route 156 West Corridor project.

Lee Otter, California Coastal Commission representative for transportation projects has been included in the early project development process prior to completion of the draft environmental document for the Route 156 West Corridor project. Mr. Otter has been present in discussions on alternative analysis, natural resource impacts, potential agricultural land conversions and traffic volume and operations. Caltrans will continue to work closely with the California Coastal Commission throughout the duration of the Route 156 West Corridor project.

Further, the purpose of the Route 156 West Corridor project is to improve safety and operations; improve local road access to State Route 156; improve interregional traffic flow and route continuity along State Route 156; relieve existing congestion; and provide capacity for future increases in traffic volume. Caltrans, as assigned by the Federal Highway Administration, has prepared this Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment to examine the potential environmental impacts of alternatives being considered for the Route 156 West Corridor project. It is a project level document and describes why the project is being proposed, alternatives for the project, the existing environment that could be affected by the project, potential impacts from each of the alternatives, and the proposed avoidance, minimization and/or mitigation measures.

16. A regional-level environmental and alternative analysis for the overall Monterey Bay region is beyond the scope of this highway project. A stand alone regional-level environmental and alternative analysis for the overall Monterey Bay region should be the responsibility of organizations such as the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments, Transportation Agency of Monterey County, and Monterey County Resource Management Agency.

    The Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment for the Route 156 West Corridor project in addition to land use, transportation and natural resource data from Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments, Transportation Agency of Monterey County, and Monterey County Resource

Management Agency will be sufficient to support the anticipated Local Coastal Plan amendment.

17. The Route 156 West Corridor project is near the communities of Castroville and Prunedale. The Pacific Institute prepared mapping for Caltrans that showed flooding risks with sea level rise. The mapping determined that two locations may be at risk with a 55-inch sea level rise; there are no areas at risk of coastal erosion predicted to occur in 2100. One area at risk is near post mile 1.6 in Castroville. There are no homes or businesses within the immediate area. Potential damage to structures by flooding due to sea level rise is minimal. The elevation of the highway in that area is 37 feet. Castroville Boulevard will be realigned and an interchange will be built where it meets on the new highway alignment south of the existing State Route 156. The second location is at Moro Cojo Slough. Presently there is a culvert at the slough. The project proposes to build a bridge for east and westbound traffic on the new alignment. The current highway elevation at the slough is 44 feet. The proposed bridge and new alignment will be at higher elevation. The land use adjacent to the highway is agricultural; there are no beachfront properties within the project limits. Flooding would occur to agricultural lands before reaching the highway. Additionally, the Pacific Ocean is more than 10 miles away. Considerations during project design included features that would reduce impacts to the highway from potential flooding.

18. Regarding the Corridor System Management Plan (CSMP) for State Route 1, the State Route 1 CSMP is a comprehensive, integrated management plan for increasing transportation options, decreasing congestion and improving travel times in the State Route 1 corridor. A CSMP includes all travel modes in a defined corridor: highways and freeways; parallel and connecting roadways; public transit (bus, bus rapid transit, light rail, intercity rail); bikeways; and intelligent transportation technologies such as ramp metering, coordinated traffic signals, changeable message signs for traveler information, incident management, bus/carpool lanes and carpool/vanpool programs, and transit strategies. A CSMP incorporates both capital and operational improvements. The State Route 1 CSMP is a corridor based effort that is intended to assess the performance of State Route 1 and any parallel facilities to maximize the movement of people and goods. To accomplish this, the CSMP uses existing data from a variety of sources to determine the existing and forecasted

deficiencies within the corridor. It is not intended to evaluate the regional distribution of trips.

Please see response number 6 for the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) discussion.

19. Caltrans is aware that State Route 156 within the project limits is located within the boundaries of the coastal zone and is subject to review in accordance with the standards of the California Coastal Act and the Monterey County Local Coastal Program.

    Biological surveys are done by Caltrans biologists who are approved by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Caltrans biologists are trained and, if required, licensed to conduct protocol surveys under U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and California Fish and Game requirements. Consultant biologists are used when a Caltrans biologist is not licensed for specific survey work. To the extent possible, biological studies and assessments meet the standards set forth by multiple state and federal resource agencies.

    a. Wetland delineations are conducted according to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers survey protocol and guidance material. Caltrans follows the protocols and guidance provided by the U.S Army Corps of Engineers. Formal wetland delineations are pending the start of the permitting phase of this project and adequate access permission. At this time access has been restricted to more than 50 percent of parcels with suspected jurisdictional waters. Once acquisition of parcels is completed formal delineation of wetlands will occur. Estimates of potential temporary and permanent impacts to jurisdictional waters were determined using historic data, some field survey work, and aerial photography.

    b. Information presented in section 2.1.1.3 Coastal Zone, subheading Avoidance, Minimization and/or Mitigation Measures for Biology of the final environmental document discusses General Policy 2.3.2 Environmentally Sensitive Habitats, states that field surveys were conducted per federal and state agency guidelines for special status, endangered and threatened species and natural communities. Agency consultation is ongoing and will continue through permit application.

c. Coast live oak woodland is one of the natural communities that would be affected by project activities. Coast live oak woodland is considered as a habitat of special concern by the California Department of Fish and Game. The Caltrans prepared Natural Environmental Study completed in 2008 references coast live oak woodland as a habitat of special concern by the California Department of Fish and Game, in Chapter 4.1, page 43. See Appendix J, Figures J-1 to J-4, of the final environmental impact report/environmental assessment for maps showing the impacts to coast live oak woodland habitat. Caltrans recognizes that the California Coastal Commission considers this habitat as environmentally sensitive habitat area.

d. A Biological Assessment has been completed by the Caltrans biologist and sent to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service for their approval. Approval from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be in the form of a Biological Opinion. The Biological Opinion issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service includes avoidance and minimization measures for federal threatened/endangered species. These include having a Service approved biological monitor on site during construction, placement of Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing around habitat areas, and restricting work in potential habitat areas to the dry season.

e. Estimated impacts to coastal wetlands for Alternative 11 are:
Other Waters of the U.S.: Temporary 1.79 acres; Permanent 0.68 acres.
Perennial Wetlands: Temporary 0.0 acres; Permanent 0.95 acres.
Seasonal Wetlands: Temporary 2.47 acres; Permanent 0.0 acres.
Riparian acreage impacts are for the entire project, those within and outside of the coastal zone: Temporary 4.23 acres; Permanent 3.98 acres. Estimates of temporary and permanent impacts were based on aerial photography and existing delineation data from National Wetland Inventory (2009). Impact estimates will be adjusted once formal wetland delineations and analyses are possible. Formal wetland delineations are pending the start of the permitting phase of this project when property acquisition has been initiated and Caltrans is able to gain access to needed properties.

f. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Game preferences are to mitigate for species as close to the project site as possible. These agencies and departments require

impacted resources be mitigated with like resources in close proximity to the project. The Biological Opinion issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service includes avoidance and minimization measures for federal threatened/endangered species. These include having a Service approved biological monitor on site during construction, placement of Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing around habitat areas, and restricting work in potential habitat areas to the dry season. Discussion is ongoing regarding mitigation ratios for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and California Department of Fish and Game.

g. This Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment is a project-level document and describes why the project is being proposed, alternatives for the project, and the existing environment that could be affected by the project. The Natural Environmental Study describes natural communities of concern. It also includes information on wildlife corridors, fish passage, habitat fragmentation and threatened and endangered species. Information about potential impacts to biological resources from each of the alternatives, and the proposed avoidance, minimization and/or mitigation measures described in the Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment are referenced from the Natural Environmental Study. Impacts are analyzed within the project area. Appendix J of the Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment includes four pages of biological mapping for the project.

h. All sensitive species within the maritime chapparal habitat impacted by this project will be replaced (mitigated for) at an appropriate ratio of at least 3:1. This will include Pajaro and Hooker's Manzanita, as well as other maritime chapparal species identified on site.

i. All impacts to state and federally listed species will be fully mitigated. Efforts to minimize or avoid impacts will be pursued as part of permit consultation during the permitting phase of the project.

j. Temporary impacts to sensitive biological resources are defined as impacts resulting in no permanent loss of habitat as a result of temporary construction activities. All temporarily effected habitat will be restored to pre-construction conditions or improved/enhanced from pre-construction conditions.

k**.** Effective July 1, 2007, Caltrans has been assigned environmental review and consultation responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) pursuant to 23 US Code 327. Under NEPA the project is evaluated as an Environmental Assessment, with a Finding of No Significant Impact. There will be no federal consistency process undertaken for those portions of the project outside the Coastal Zone.

Some impacts determined to be significant under the California Environmental Quality Act may not lead to a determination of significance under the National Environmental Policy Act. Because the National Environmental Policy Act is concerned with the significance of the project as a whole, it is quite often the case that a "lower level" document is prepared for the National Environmental Policy Act. One of the most commonly seen joint document types is an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment.

20. This Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment is a combined CEQA/NEPA project-level document and describes why the project is being proposed, alternatives for the project, the existing environment that could be affected by the project, potential impacts to biological resources from each of the alternatives, and the proposed avoidance, minimization and/or mitigation measures. Impacts are analyzed within the project area.

Comment from the California Department of Fish and Game (letter, 8 pages)

California Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
Central Region
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ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, Governor
DONALD KOCH, Director

August 26, 2009

G. William "Trais" Norris, III, Branch Chief
Sierra Pacific Environmental Analysis Branch
California Department of Transportation
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, California 93726

Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Report
Route 156 West Corridor
05-MON-156 PM R1.6 - T5.2
05-MON-101 PM 94.6 - 96.8
EA 05-316000
SCH No. 1999111063

Dear Mr. Norris:

The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) prepared for the above Project. Approval of the Project would result in a widening of State Route (SR) 156 between United States (U.S.) Route 101 and west of Castroville Boulevard and would include rebuilding the U.S. Route 101/SR 156 interchange in Monterey County. Three alternatives are considered in the DEIR; two build alternatives (11 and 12) and the No-Build Alternative. Alternative 11 would add two new lanes in both eastbound and westbound directions, while the existing highway would essentially function as a frontage road for the residents and communities next to SR 156 and U.S. Route 101. The new alignment for SR 156 would allow uninterrupted traffic flow to the Monterey Peninsula. Alternative 12 would use the existing highway for the westbound part of the alignment and would add two new lanes south of the existing highway for the eastbound. A diamond interchange would be put in at the existing at-grade intersection of SR 156 and Cathedral Oaks Road. Both build alternatives would include improvements at the U.S. Route 101/SR 156 and San Miguel Canyon interchanges, including new connectors to northbound and southbound U.S. Route 101.

We are aware that the public comment period for this project ended on August 24, 2009. However, we respectfully request that our late comments be considered in the development of minimization and mitigation measures for this Project, particularly in regards to potential Project-related impacts to species that are listed under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) or that are fully protected; issues that must be addressed irrespective of the public review period for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). DFG has concerns about the likely Project-related impacts to special status species habitat, the presence of the State candidate California tiger salamander and the assumed presence of Santa Cruz long-toed salamander, a fully protected species, in the Project area.

Our specific comments follow.

Conserving California's Wildlife Since 1870

DFG JURISDICTION

Trustee Agency Authority: DFG is a Trustee Agency with responsibility under CEQA for commenting on projects that could impact plant and wildlife resources. Pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 1802, DFG has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and the habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species. As a Trustee Agency for fish and wildlife resources, DFG is responsible for providing, as available, biological expertise to review and comment upon environmental documents and impacts arising from project activities, as those terms are used under CEQA (Division 13 (commencing with Section 21000) of the Public Resources Code). 1

Responsible Agency Authority: DFG has regulatory authority over projects that could result in the "take" of any species listed by the State as threatened or endangered, pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 2081. If the Project could result in the "take" of any species listed as threatened or endangered under CESA, DFG may need to issue an Incidental Take Permit for the Project. CEQA requires a Mandatory Finding of Significance if a project is likely to substantially impact threatened or endangered species (Section 21001{C}, 21083, Guidelines Section 15380, 15064, 15065). Impacts must be avoided or mitigated to less than significant levels unless the CEQA Lead Agency makes and supports Findings of Overriding Consideration (FOC). The CEQA Lead Agency's FOC does not eliminate the Project proponent's obligation to comply with Fish and Game Code Section 2080. The Project has the potential to reduce the number or restrict the range of endangered, rare, or threatened species (as defined in Section 15380 of CEQA), including: Santa Cruz long-toed salamander (*Ambystoma macrodactylum croceum*), which is State and Federally endangered, and also a fully protected species, and California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*), which is Federally threatened and a State candidate for listing under CESA. 2

Other Rare Species: Species of plants and animals need not be officially listed by the State as Endangered, Rare, or Threatened (E, R, or T) to be considered E, R, or T under CEQA. If a species can be shown to meet the criteria for E, R, or T, as specified in the CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15380), it should be fully considered in the environmental analysis for the Project. The Project has the potential to reduce the number or restrict the range of the Federally Threatened California red-legged frog (*Rana aurora draytonii*), the Federally endangered Robust spineflower (*Chorizanthe robusta var. robusta*), and Yadon's Rein orchid (Piperia yardonii), the Federally threatened Monterey spineflower (*Chorizanthe pungens var. pungens*), the State Species of Special Concern Western pond turtle (*Actinemys* marmorata), and the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) List 1B Pajaro manzanita (*Arctostaphylos andersonii var. pajaroensis*), Hooker's manzanita (*Arctostaphylos hookeri* ssp. *hookeri*), Congdon's tarplant (*Centromadia parryi* ssp. *congdonii*), and pine rose (*Rosa pinetorum*). 3

Fully Protected Species: DFG has jurisdiction over fully protected species of birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and fish pursuant to Fish and Game Code Sections 3511, 4700, 5050, and 5515. "Take" of any fully protected species is prohibited and DFG cannot authorize their "take" for development. The Santa Cruz long-toed salamander is a fully protected species that is known to occur in the Project area vicinity. Additional comments regarding potential Project-related impacts to this species follow. 4

Stream/Lake Alteration (1602) Notification: Pursuant to Fish and Game Code Sections 1600 et seq., it is unlawful for any person to divert, obstruct, or change the natural flow or the bed, channel, or bank of any river, stream or lake designated by DFG without first submitting plans to DFG for approval. If DFG determines that the Project may substantially and adversely affect fish or wildlife resources, then a Streambed Alteration Agreement would be required.

Bird Protection: DFG also has jurisdiction over actions which may result in the disturbance or destruction of active nest sites or the unauthorized "take" of birds. Sections of the Fish and Game Code that protect birds, their eggs, and nests include Sections 3503 (regarding unlawful "take," possession or needless destruction of the nest or eggs of any bird), 3503.5 (regarding "take," possession, or destruction of any birds-of-prey or their nests or eggs), and 3513 (regarding unlawful "take" or possession of any migratory nongame bird).

PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

California Tiger Salamander (CTS): The Project has the potential to impact California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*) (CTS), which is Federally threatened and a State candidate. The Fish and Game Commission (Commission) adopted "Emergency Action to Add Section 749.4, Title 14, CCR," which is a "Special Order Relating to Incidental Take of California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*) During Candidacy Period Pursuant to Section 2084 of the Fish and Game Code ("FGC")." Section 2084 of the Fish and Game Code authorizes, subject to the terms and conditions prescribed, the taking of any candidate species while DFG and the Commission evaluate whether the species should be listed as threatened or endangered under CESA. 5

Because the Commission has designated CTS as a candidate species, individuals engaging in activities that could result in "take" of CTS would, in the absence of the adopted 2084 regulations for this species, need to obtain a State Incidental Take Permit or a consistency determination pursuant to FGC Sections 2081, and 2080.1, respectively. However, the adopted 2084 regulations for CTS authorize and provide for "take" of CTS during the candidacy period when such "take" is consistent with and otherwise authorized pursuant to the Federal Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. § 1531 et seq.).

It is important to note that the "take" authorized under the 2084 regulations adopted for CTS are only valid during the candidacy period, which will not extend beyond February 2010. If CTS is listed as State threatened or endangered at the end of the candidacy period, and if portions of the Project that could result in "take" of CTS are not yet constructed or completed, a State Incidental Take Permit would be required prior to initiation or resumption of activities that could result in "take" of CTS. DFG can issue Incidental Take Permits for CTS during the candidacy period, which for some projects may be the preferred path forward to avoid any unnecessary delays that could result from regulatory changes during or immediately prior to project implementation. We recommend consultation with DFG well in advance of Project implementation to determine if "take" of CTS could occur as a result of the Project and to decide on the most appropriate permitting mechanism under CESA.

Santa Cruz Long-Toed Salamander (SCLTS): This species could be present on the Project site and has been documented in the Project area vicinity. Page 151 of the DEIR states that there are 21 confirmed breeding sites in southern Santa Cruz and northern Monterey counties. In Monterey County the breeding sites include Moro Cojo Slough. Page 152 of the DEIR states that aquatic surveys were conducted for SCLTS in spring 2006 and winter 2007 and that these surveys did not confirm the presence of SCLTS within the Project area. However, presence is being assumed because of suitable habitat. Page 154 of the DEIR states that a protocol spring season survey was conducted for CTS and SCLTS, and on July 6, 2006, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) submitted the survey results to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), which reported that CTS were observed south of SR 156 during protocol surveys. SCLTS were not observed, but as they occur in the same habitat, they will be afforded protection through mitigation measures implemented for CTS. 6

Also on page 154, the DEIR states "Caltrans will prepare a biological assessment and initiate formal consultation with the USFWS for potential effects to CTS and CRLF. The USFWS biological opinion (BO) will include a statement authorizing the take of listed species incidental to project activities. If DFG determines the incidental take statement in the USFWS BO is not consistent with state requirements, if may require Caltrans to obtain a Section 2081.1 permit for the incidental take of SCLTS...." However, because SCLTS is fully protected, no "take" can be authorized by DFG in the form of a State Incidental Take permit or otherwise. As a result, "take," as defined in Section 86 of the FGC, must be completely avoided. The DEIR specifies that "take" of SCLTS could or would occur with implementation of several of the Project alternatives. Suitable SCLTS surveys must be conducted well in advance of any ground-disturbing activities in all areas of suitable SCLTS habitat. These surveys must be conducted in a way that negative findings would reasonably assure DFG that "take" of this fully protected species will not occur as a result Project implementation. In the event that this species is detected during surveys, consultation with DFG is warranted to discuss how to implement the Project and avoid "take." Since there can be no "take" of SCLTS, mitigation and compensation must be purely to address impacts to potential SCLTS habitat, as opposed to compensating for impacts associated with direct "take" of SCLTS, the latter of which is prohibited by State law.

Under avoidance and minimization measures, page 160 of the DEIR states that preconstruction surveys would be done to identity small mammal burrows that may provide upland habitat. Pre-construction surveys are not adequate to demonstrate absence of this species. Focused surveys, conducted during the period of optimum detectibility, must be conducted for SCLTS for the reasons stated above. Enclosed are protocol-level survey procedures for SCLTS. Also enclosed for your reference are protocol-level survey procedures for CTS.

Stream/Lake Alteration (1602) Notification: As noted in the DEIR on page 139, DFG's jurisdictional limits are usually defined by the tops of the stream or lake banks, or the outer edge of riparian vegetation, whichever is wider. Wetlands under the jurisdiction of the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) may or may not be included in the area covered by a Streambed Alteration Agreement obtained from DFG. As noted on page 144 of the DEIR, a 7

Section 404 permit would be required from the USACE and also a 401 permit from the Regional Water Quality Control Board. The Project will also require a Stream Alteration Notification for work that occurs at all waterways jurisdictional under Fish and Game Code Sections 1600 et seq., including Prunedale Creek and Moro Cojo Slough.

Nesting Birds and Raptors: Trees and shrubs within the Project area can provide nesting habitat for songbirds and/or raptors. Any tree or shrub removal should occur during the non-breeding season (mid-September through January). If construction activities or tree removal must occur during the breeding season (February through mid-September), surveys for active nests should be conducted by a qualified biologist no more than 30 days prior to the start of construction. A minimum no-disturbance buffer of 250 feet should be delineated around active nests until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified biologist has determined that the birds have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest or parental care for survival.

8

Plant Species: Page 146 of the DEIR states that most of the individual Pajaro manzanita and Hooker's manzanita plants would be replaced when the mitigation measures for coast live oak woodland and central maritime chaparral natural community types are implemented. To minimize impacts where plants cannot be avoided, individual plants that can be salvaged would be moved and replanted at designated sites within the Project limits. If feasible, seeds and topsoil free of noxious weeds would be collected and stored to use for re-seeding the temporarily disturbed areas where these species occur. Also on page 146, the DEIR states that Monterey pines that are lost during construction would be replaced at an appropriate replacement ratio. DFG recommends a replacement ratio of 3:1 for trees with a diameter at breast height (dbh) of 4 to 25 inches, and a ration of 10:1 for trees with a dbh greater than 25-inches dbh.

9

Page 153 of the DEIR states that portions of the proposed Route 156 West Corridor Project fall within designated critical habitat Unit G: Prunedale Unit. However, pages 161 to 162 of the DEIR states that all individual Monterey spineflower and Yardon's Rein-orchid plants would be avoided and that no mitigation is proposed for these two species. DFG recommends that repeated floristic surveys for rare, threatened, and endangered plants and natural communities be conducted by a qualified botanist multiple times during the appropriate floristic period(s) in order to adequately assess the potential Project-related impacts to listed plant species (DFG, 2000; USFWS, 2000).

Consistency Determination: In order for DFG to issue a Consistency Determination for any project, DFG must be able to determine that the conditions specified in the finalized Federal incidental take statement and Biological Opinion (BO) are consistent with CESA Incidental Take Permit issuance criteria. If DFG determines that the Federal incidental take permit/BO is not consistent with CESA, the applicant must then apply for a State Incidental Take Permit under Section 2081(b) of the Fish and Game Code. It is important to note that a Consistency Determination, pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 2080.1, can be used only for species that are listed under both the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) and CESA and cannot be applied to species designated as fully protected or for species that are listed under CESA but are not Federally listed.

10

Acquisition of 2081(b) permits are usually preferable to 2080.1 Consistency Determinations for the following reasons:

a) DFG cannot condition the Consistency Determination in any way, including the addition or removal of conditions that would facilitate meeting the full mitigation standard required by CESA. If all mitigation measures and permit issuance criteria required by CESA are not included in the Federal permit, DFG must issue an Inconsistency Determination or give the applicant the option to withdraw their request for a Consistency Determination. DFG is willing to work with the USFWS while the Federal permit is being drafted in order to include measures that would facilitate the likelihood that the Federal permit could be used for a Consistency Determination, provided that the USFWS and applicant are willing to coordinate with DFG during the drafting of a Federal permit.

b) Often BOs do not contain the detail required by CESA in describing mitigation measures.

c) The Federal standard for including plants is jeopardy, whereas protection of listed plants and wildlife are not differentiated under CESA.

d) If pertinent sections of FESA change, the Consistency Determination would become invalid, and we would have to issue a State Incidental Take (2081 (b)) Permit for the Project. This is a likely scenario since there are proposed modifications to Section 7 of FESA currently out for review and comment in the Federal Register (FR Vol. 73, No. 159, 47868).

e) If there are any substantive changes to the Project as described in the final BO, including changes to the avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures, or if the USFWS amends or replaces the BO, a new Consistency Determination or a State Incidental Take (2081 (b) Permit would be required to comply with CESA.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this Project and for your willingness to involve DFG in the development of this Project. If you have any questions regarding these issues, please contact Laura Peterson-Diaz, Environmental Scientist, at the address provided on this letterhead, by e-mail at lpdiaz@dfg.ca.gov, or by telephone at (559) 243-4017, extension 225.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey R. Single, Ph.D.
Regional Manager

Enclosures (2)

cc: See Page Seven

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ec: Julie Vance
Department of Fish and Game

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Department of Fish and Game

Literature Cited

Interim Guidance on Site Assessment and Field Surveys for Determining Presence or a Negative Finding of the California Tiger Salamander, October 2003

DFG, 2000. Guidelines for Assessing Effects of Proposed Projects on Rare, Threatened and Endangered Plants and Natural Communities. California Department of Fish and Game. May, 2000. http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/cnddb/pdfs/guideplt.pdf

Sampling Procedures for Determining Presence or Absence of the Santa Cruz Long-toed Salamander, May 1993

Response to comment from the California Department of Fish and Game (letter, 8 pages)

1. Caltrans acknowledges that California Department of Fish and Game is a Trustee Agency with responsibility under California Environmental Quality Act for commenting on projects that could impact plant and wildlife resources, and pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 1802, the California Department of Fish and Game has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection and management of fish, wildlife, native plants and the habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species.

2. Caltrans acknowledges that California Department of Fish and Game has regulatory authority over projects that could result in the "take" of any species listed by the State as threatened or endangered, pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 2081.

3. Impacts, avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures are discussed in sections 2.3.3 through 2.3.5 of the environmental document.

4. Caltrans acknowledges that the Santa Cruz long-toed salamander is a fully protected species and understand that "take" of any fully protected species is prohibited. Additionally, the Department of Fish and Game cannot authorize their "take" for development. Discussions with the Department of Fish and Game and the California Department of Transportation regarding the Santa Cruz long-toed salamander are ongoing.

5. Caltrans will submit an application for a take permit authorization under Section 2081(b) for the California tiger salamander after the candidate period. The permit application, along with the final environmental document will be submitted as part of the plans, specifications, and estimate phase of the project prior to construction.

6. Caltrans acknowledges that the Santa Cruz long-toed salamander is a fully protected species and understand that "take" of any fully protected species is prohibited and the Department of Fish and Game cannot authorize their "take" for development. Wording in the environmental document has been adjusted to reflect its fully-protected status. On December 12, 2011, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Caltrans and the Department of Fish and Game (via telephone) met to discuss recommendations for the Biological Opinion with

regard to the Santa Cruz long-toed salamander. Caltrans acknowledges that mitigation and compensation must address impacts to Santa Cruz long-toed salamander habitat as opposed to compensating for impacts associated with direct "take" of the species. Discussions with the Department of Fish and Game and the Caltrans regarding the Santa Cruz long-toed salamander are ongoing.

7. An application for a 404, 401, and 1602 Streambed alteration agreement will be submitted as part of the plans, specifications, and estimate phase of the project that follows signing the environmental document.

8. All tree removal and trimming will take place during the non-nesting season to avoid impacts to nesting birds and raptors. Where this is not possible, comprehensive pre-removal surveys will be conducted. All trees with active nests will be avoided (100 foot buffer) until trees are no longer in use by nesting birds or the end of the nesting season (whichever is first). This is in accordance with Caltrans' migratory bird protection standard provision.

9. Replacement of Monterey pines will be to the greatest extent practicable. Often this ration exceeds the ratios suggested by the California Department of Fish and Game. Multiple floristic surveys have been conducted over a 9-year period. Caltrans is confident that these surveys are sufficient to determine impacts to sensitive plant species.

10. Caltrans will not seek a consistency determination for California tiger salamanders. Caltrans will apply for a State Incidental Take permit under section 2081(b). The California Tiger Salamander Central California Distinct Population Segment is listed as Federally Threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act (09/22/05) and as State Threatened under the California Endangered Species Act (05/20/10).

Comment from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (letter, 3 pages)

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

August 17, 2009

G. William "Trais" Norris, III
Branch Chief
Sierra Pacific Environmental Analysis Branch
California Department of Transportation
2025 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726

Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment for the Route 156 West Corridor, Monterey County, California

Dear Mr. Norris:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the above-referenced document pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act. The State of California has assumed responsibilities under NEPA for this project pursuant to the *Memorandum of Understanding Between the Federal Highway Administration and the California Department of Transportation Concerning the State of California's Participation in the Surface Transportation Project Delivery Pilot Program.*

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to widen State Route 156 between U.S. Route 101 and west of Castroville Boulevard and rebuild the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange in Monterey County. Two build alternatives are proposed to expand the existing two-lane facility to a four-lane facility.

EPA has concerns about the project's impacts to wetlands and waters of the U.S. and to threatened and endangered species habitat, as described below. We believe that the information included in the Environmental Assessment (EA) regarding these impacts should be verified prior to selection of an alternative and determination of a "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI) for the project. The comments below provide specific recommendations regarding what analyses and documentation are needed prior to making an assessment of potential significant impacts.

Printed on Recycled Paper

Impacts to Moro Cojo Slough

EPA has concerns about the analysis of impacts to wetlands and to threatened and endangered species habitat in the vicinity of Moro Cojo Slough. The EA states that the area of the slough north of the highway has both saltwater and freshwater influences, and that south of the highway it is entirely composed of freshwater. EPA questions this determination and whether Caltrans has tested the salinity of waters in this area. Based on the restricted flow of saltwater into Moro Cojo Slough, and on previous water sampling performed in this area, EPA believes that waters on both sides of the highway may be freshwater. If this is the case, potential impacts of removal of the soil wall would differ from those discussed in the EA. 1

The EA states that removal of the wall under Alternative 12 would allow saltwater north of the wall to mix with the freshwater south of the wall, changing the salinity of the environment and affecting the presence of the California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, and Santa Cruz long-toed salamander. This impact is described as a temporary impact to wetlands, based on the fact that only salinity of the waters would be changed, but a permanent impact to listed species. EPA would like clarification on how the acreage of temporary impacts (8.95 acres with Alternative 12 versus 2.47 acres with Alternative 11) to wetlands was calculated. 2

We also believe that if waters north of the highway are actually freshwater, then the impact of removal of the soil wall under Alternative 12 could be to drain the seasonal pond south of the highway, rather than increase the salinity of waters in that area. This would constitute an impact to wetlands and to listed species habitat, though different from that discussed in the EA.

Recommendations:

- EPA recommends that Caltrans verify existing conditions in the vicinity of Moro Cojo Slough, specifically the salinity of waters north and south of Route 156. If conditions are found to differ from those stated in the EA, Caltrans should perform a new analysis of potential impacts of removal of the soil wall on wetlands and listed species habitat. 3
- Caltrans should also clarify how the amount of temporary impacts to wetlands and waters is determined.
- Results of the verification and any new analysis should be shared with EPA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and California Department of Fish and Game, and used to determine which of the alternatives is selected and whether a FONSI is warranted.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this EA. When the final environmental document is released for public review, please send two copies to the address above (mail code: CED-2). If you have any questions, please contact Carolyn Mulvihill of my staff at 415-947-3554 or mulvihill.carolyn@epa.gov or Melissa Scianni of EPA's Wetlands Regulatory Office at scianni.melissa@epa.gov or 415-972-3821.

2

Sincerely,

Kathleen M. Goforth, Manager
Environmental Review Office (CED-2)

cc: David Pereksta, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Marija Vojkovich, California Department of Fish and Game
Jane Hicks, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

3

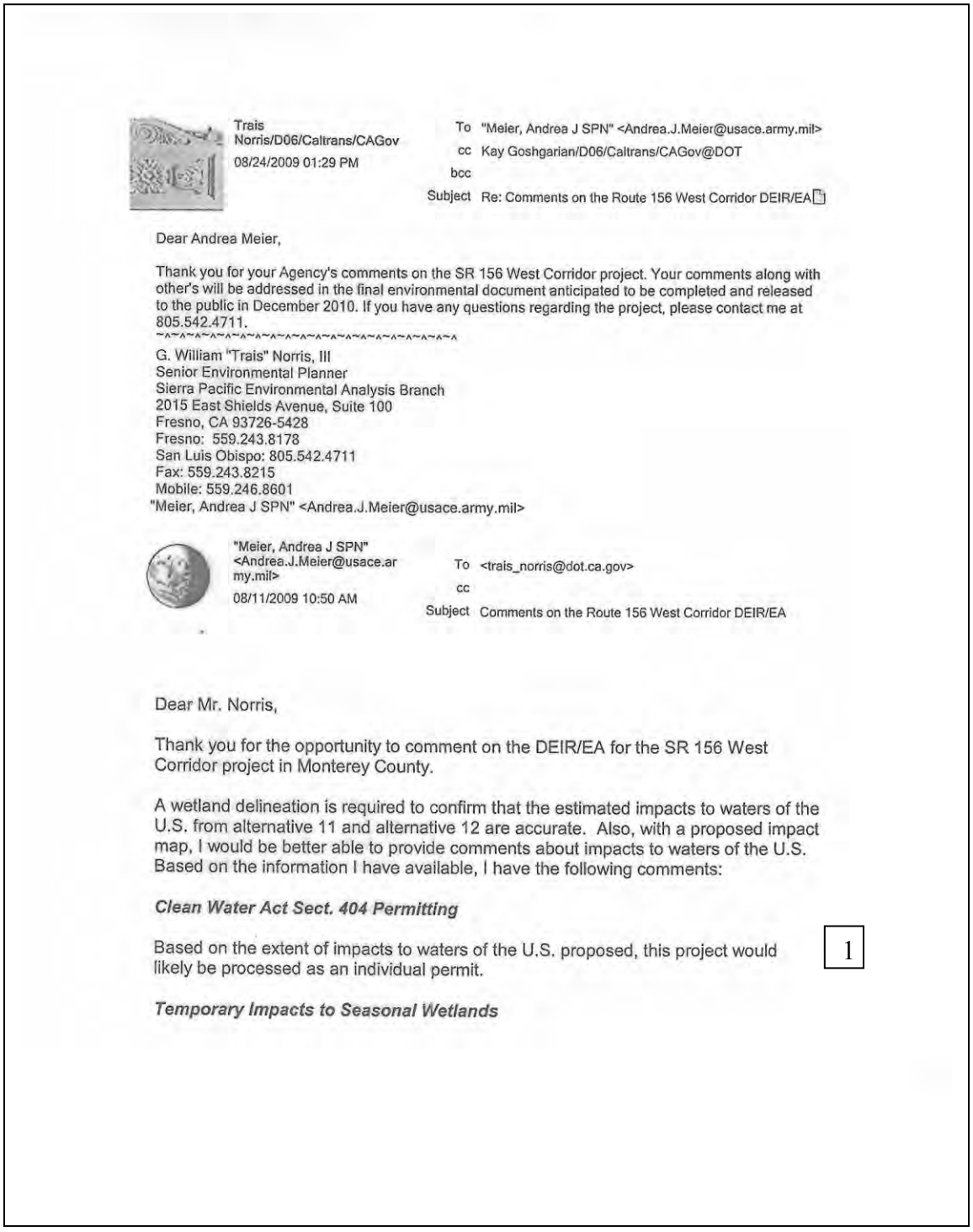
Response to comment from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (letter, 3 pages)

1. Formal wetland delineations are pending the start of the permitting phase of this project and adequate access permission. Estimates of temporary and permanent impacts were based on aerial photography and existing delineation data from National Wetland Inventory (2009). The National Wetland Inventory and existing survey data from the Elkhorn Slough Foundation concur that the wetland north of the soil wall is brackish saltwater marsh and freshwater seasonal pond south of the soil wall. Impact estimates will be adjusted once formal wetland delineations and analyses are possible.

2. Alternative 11 was selected as the Preferred Alternative. The National Wetland Inventory and existing survey data from the Elkhorn Slough Foundation concur that the wetland north of the soil wall is brackish saltwater marsh and the freshwater seasonal pond is south of the soil wall. Alternative 11 would have a smaller temporary impact because the soil wall would remain intact and only localized coffer dams would be required for construction and have no permanent effect on hydrology or salinity. Impact estimates would be adjusted once formal wetland delineations and analysis are possible. Surveys are not completed at this time due to access limitations to private property. Results of formal surveys are pending the start of the permitting phase of this project and adequate access permission.

3. Recommendations will be evaluated during the start of the permitting phase of this project. If conditions are remarkably different, additional studies will be undertaken and the document may be revalidated with the new information.

Comment from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (email, 3 pages)



Trais
Norris/D06/Caltrans/CAGov
08/24/2009 01:29 PM

To "Meier, Andrea J SPN" <Andrea.J.Meier@usace.army.mil>
cc Kay Goshgarian/D06/Caltrans/CAGov@DOT
bcc
Subject Re: Comments on the Route 156 West Corridor DEIR/EA

Dear Andrea Meier,

Thank you for your Agency's comments on the SR 156 West Corridor project. Your comments along with other's will be addressed in the final environmental document anticipated to be completed and released to the public in December 2010. If you have any questions regarding the project, please contact me at 805.542.4711.

~^

G. William "Trais" Norris, III
Senior Environmental Planner
Sierra Pacific Environmental Analysis Branch
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726-5428
Fresno: 559.243.8178
San Luis Obispo: 805.542.4711
Fax: 559.243.8215
Mobile: 559.246.8601
"Meier, Andrea J SPN" <Andrea.J.Meier@usace.army.mil>

"Meier, Andrea J SPN"
<Andrea.J.Meier@usace.army.mil>
08/11/2009 10:50 AM

To <trais_norris@dot.ca.gov>
cc
Subject Comments on the Route 156 West Corridor DEIR/EA

Dear Mr. Norris,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the DEIR/EA for the SR 156 West Corridor project in Monterey County.

A wetland delineation is required to confirm that the estimated impacts to waters of the U.S. from alternative 11 and alternative 12 are accurate. Also, with a proposed impact map, I would be better able to provide comments about impacts to waters of the U.S. Based on the information I have available, I have the following comments:

Clean Water Act Sect. 404 Permitting

Based on the extent of impacts to waters of the U.S. proposed, this project would likely be processed as an individual permit. 1

Temporary Impacts to Seasonal Wetlands

I am concerned about the temporary impacts to seasonal wetlands, described on page 142. It is not clear where these impacts would occur in the project alignment. Also, conversion of a freshwater wetland to a brackish wetland is a permanent impact, even though those wetlands would not be filled. Not only would there be substantial visual changes in the vegetation and animal species present if the freshwater seasonal wetlands were converted to saltwater or brackish wetlands, but there would also be substantial chemical, physical, and other biological changes to the wetlands that may not be as easily seen. The hydroperiod, pH, oxygen content, nutrient cycles (such as method and rate of organic material decomposition), the types of microflora present, the types of microinvertebrates present, and other changes up the food chain could follow. I do not believe that the DEIR/EA sufficiently explores the impacts to these seasonal wetlands and why those impacts could not be avoided. 2

I am interested in knowing whether the seasonal wetlands were historically brackish or saltwater marsh. It would be useful to have this information to determine the degree of impacts to the seasonal wetlands and the appropriate mitigation for those impacts. Is it possible to reconstruct the soil wall at a different location minimize impacts from saltwater intrusion on the seasonal wetlands?

Impacts to Low-Income Communities

Since community impacts and environmental justice are not within our general scope of expertise, the following comments can be considered at your discretion. The guidance prepared by Council of Environmental Quality, entitled "Environmental Justice, Guidelines Under the National Environmental Policy Act", suggests that U.S. Census Bureau data *should* be used to determine where low-income communities exist. The DEIR/EA for the project states that the federal low-income level or federal poverty level of $21,200/yr for a 4-person family (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services). I believe the federal number grossly underestimates the cost of living for a family of 4 in Monterey County. I spent a few minutes going to the websites of the Housing Authority of Monterey County and the City of Monterey to determine what the City and County considered to be a "low-income" family of four under their housing assistance programs. Currently, the City's definition of a low-income family of 4 is $51,850 and below and the County's definition of a low-income family of 4 is $53,850 and below. Using the City and County numbers that better represent local conditions in your analysis, could revise the definition of receptor groups and potentially affect the outcome of the environmental justice and community impacts discussion in the DEIR/EA. Based on the 2000 census data in Table 2.11, around 44% of the people in the project area would be considered low-income if you used the City/County definitions, versus 17.8% using the federal low-income definition. The Council's use of the word "should" instead of "shall", provides some flexibility in analyzing other information in forming a description of the community in the project area. I would also suggest that you define "low-income" and "poverty level", since I am not sure if they fall under the same definition. 3

Cumulative Impacts to Waters of the U.S.

The discussion of cumulative impacts to waters of the U.S. should include context for wetland losses in California and regionally. This information is easy to obtain from the California Environmental Resources Evaluation System (CERES) website. I would recommend you consider including a brief summary of wetland losses due to agricultural conversion, urbanization, and other anthropogenic activities and reflect on the remaining wetlands and services they provide to the watershed, region, and state. The analysis does not have to be lengthy or complex, but it should provide the reader a context for the resource being impacted. 4

Cumulative Impacts to Maritime Chaparral and Endangered Species

Since maritime chaparral habitat loss is a state/coastal issue, the cumulative effects for this project should be considered within that broader scope. The same concept would apply to endangered species. Data on the historic and current distribution of endangered species (such as the California red-legged frog and California tiger salamander) are available in the species' recovery plans on the SUFIS and NOAA-Fisheries websites. Again, these analyses do not need to be length, but should serve to provide context and information about the resource being impacted. 5

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Andrea Meier, Sr. Regulatory Project Manager
San Francisco District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
1455 Market Street, 16th Floor
San Francisco, California 94103-1398
P (415) 503-6798
F (415) 503-6690
andrea.j.meier@usace.army.mil

Response to comment from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (email, 3 pages)

Formal wetland delineations are pending the start of the permitting phase of this project and adequate access permission. At this time access has been restricted to more than 50 percent of parcels with suspected jurisdictional waters. Estimates of potential temporary and permanent impacts to jurisdictional waters were determined using historic data, some field survey work, and aerial photography.

1. Caltrans does concur that an individual permit under the Clean Water Act Section 401 is likely for the proposed project.

2. Permanent or temporary impacts to the freshwater wetland at Moro Cojo slough, due to removal of the soil wall, will be determined once formal wetland delineation surveys are done. Surveys are not completed at this time due to access limitations to private property. Results of formal surveys are pending the start of the permitting phase of this project and when adequate access permission is obtained. Once formal wetland surveys are completed, location options for reconstructing the soil wall will be considered.

   The National Wetland Inventory and existing survey data from the Elkhorn Slough Foundation concur that the wetland north of the soil wall is brackish saltwater marsh and the freshwater seasonal pond is south of the soil wall.

3. All projects involving a federal action (funding, permit, or land) must comply with Executive Order 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations,* signed by President Bill Clinton on February 11, 1994. Caltrans uses the *Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Guidance Under NEPA* directing agencies to use demographic data from the Bureau of the Census to identify the composition of an affected population in order to determine if there are disproportionately high and adverse effects of federal projects on the health or environment of minority and low-income populations. Household incomes at or below the Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines under *FHWA order 6640.23, Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, December 2, 1998* are defined as low-income populations. Caltrans utilizes FHWA order 6640.23 to identify low-income populations within the project area.

4. There is no record of past impacts to jurisdictional seasonal wetlands within or near the biological study area so these past projects cannot be included in the cumulative impact analysis for this resource. However this project, in addition to future projects within and adjacent to the biological study area, will contribute negligibly to cumulative impacts because all impacts will be fully mitigated (see Past and Proposed Projects table, page 59).

5. Completed projects within or near the project area have impacted central maritime chaparral. These past projects include commercial and residential development as well as agricultural and transportation projects (see Completed Projects and Proposed Projects tables, page 59). Historic central maritime chaparral acreage has been lost due to past projects within the project area. This project, in addition to future projects within and adjacent to the biological study area, will contribute negligibly to cumulative impacts because all impacts will be fully mitigated, mostly onsite.

   Completed projects within or near the project area have modified or degraded California red-legged frog habitat (water channels with riparian cover and California tiger salamander habitat, but have not caused a significant net loss. Some projects may have resulted in a net increase in breeding habitat through creation of retention and stock ponds in pastures and on agricultural land. This project in addition to future projects within and adjacent to the biological study area will not contribute to cumulative effects because all impacts will be fully mitigated resulting in no net loss of California red-legged frog habitat (see Past and Proposed Projects table, page 59).

Completed Projects

Description and Location	Impacts	Net effect	Cumulative Effect/impacts
Farms: approximately 10 parcels under cultivation	Central Maritime Chaparral, Coast Live Oak Woodland, Riparian, Waters of the U.S., Seasonal Wetlands, California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, Santa Cruz long-toed salamander, Southwestern pond turtle	Net loss Coast Live Oak Woodland; no net loss Waters of the U.S.; degradation Riparian; no net loss Southwestern pond turtle and California red-legged frog; possible net increase California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, Santa Cruz long-toed salamander aquatic habitat due to creation of retention and stock ponds	Significant
Transportation: U.S. Route 101, public and private access roads	Central Maritime Chaparral, Coast Live Oak Woodland, Riparian, Waters of the U.S., Seasonal Wetlands, California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, Santa Cruz long-toed salamander, Southwestern pond turtle	Net loss of Coast Live Oak Woodland; modification, degradation Waters of the U.S, Riparian; net loss Southwestern pond turtle, California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, Santa Cruz long-toed salamander due to habitat fragmentation, modification of breeding habitat	Significant
Infrastructure: Overhead, underground utilities, surface water features	Waters of the U.S., Riparian, California red-legged frog, Southwestern pond turtle	Negligible net loss for all impacts	Negligible

Proposed Projects

Description and Location	Impacts	Net effect	Cumulative Effect/impacts
Prunedale Improvement Project: Construct interchanges and operational improvements along U.S. Route 101	Central Maritime Chaparral, Coast Live Oak Woodland, Riparian, Waters of the U.S., Seasonal Wetlands, California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, Santa Cruz long-toed salamander, Southwestern pond turtle	Loss of 2.97 acres of Central Maritime Chaparral, loss of 9.50 acres of Coast Live Oak Woodland, loss of 0.484 acres of Waters of the U.S., loss of 1.058 acres of seasonal wetlands, loss of 1.116 acres of California red-legged frog habitat and a loss of 0.484 acres of Southwestern pond turtle habitat. All impacts will be fully mitigated within the same watershed, therefore no net cumulative effect for these impacts.	Mitigated
Prunedale Ops B Project: Construct freeway within biological study area along U.S.Route 101	Central Maritime Chaparral, Coast Live Oak Woodland, Riparian, Waters of the U.S., Seasonal Wetlands, California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, Santa Cruz long-toed salamander, Southwestern pond turtle	Net loss of Coast Live Oak Woodland; modification, degradation Waters of the U.S, Riparian, Seasonal Wetlands; net loss Southwestern pond turtle, California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander due to habitat fragmentation, modification of breeding habitat. All impacts will be fully mitigated within the same watershed, therefore no net cumulative effect for these impacts.	Mitigated
Heritage Oaks: 35 residential units near San Juan Road and U.S.Route 101, 3.5 miles north of biological study area, along U.S.Route 101	Waters of the U.S., Riparian, California red-legged frog, Southwestern pond turtle	Small net loss of Coast Live Oak Woodland	Negligible

Comment from the U.S. Geological Survey (email, 2 pages)

Trais
Norris/D06/Caltrans/CAGov
08/13/2009 01:21 PM

To Brenda J Johnson <bjjohnso@usgs.gov>
cc Lloyd H Woosley <lwoosley@usgs.gov>, Kay Goshgarian/D06/Caltrans/CAGov@DOT
bcc
Subject Re: California Department of Transportation for reconstruct the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange-California

Ms. Johnson.

The California Department of Transportation appreciates the U. S. Geological Survey's review of the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment for the SR 156 West Corridor project. Your response of "has no comments" is so noted. Again, Thank you for your time and input on the project. Should you have any questions regarding the project, please contact me at any of the phone numbers below or via email.
~^

G. William "Trais" Norris, III
Senior Environmental Planner
Sierra Pacific Environmental Analysis Branch
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726-5428
Fresno: 559.243.8178
San Luis Obispo: 805.542.4711
Fax: 559.243.8215
Mobile: 559.246.8601
Brenda J Johnson <bjjohnso@usgs.gov>

'Brenda J Johnson
<bjjohnso@usgs.gov>
08/13/2009 12:11 PM

To trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
cc Lloyd H Woosley <lwoosley@usgs.gov>
Subject California Department of Transportation for reconstruct the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange-California

G. William Trais Norris, III
California Department of Transportation
2015 East Shields Avenue Suite 100
Fresno, California 93726

Mr. Norris:

The U. S. Geological Survey has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment for the California Department of Transportation
Widen State Route 156 between U.S. Route 101 and West of Castroville Boulevard in Monterey County, CA , and has no comments.

Thanks

Brenda

****
Brenda Johnson
Administrative Operations Assistant
Office of Environmental Affairs Program
U.S. Geological Survey Mail Stop 423
12201 Sunrise Valley Dr.
Reston, VA 20192
Tele (703) 648-6832
Fax (703) 648-5644
bjjohnso@usgs.gov
****

Response to comment from the U.S. Geological Survey (email, 2 pages)

Thank you for reviewing the Route 156 West Corridor project draft environmental document.

Comment from the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District (letter, 2 pages)

MONTEREY BAY
Unified Air Pollution Control District
serving Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties

Air Pollution Control Officer
Richard Stedman

24580 Silver Cloud Court • Monterey, California 93940 • 831/647-9411 • FAX 831/647-8501

August 17, 2009

Sent Electronically to:
trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Original Sent by First Class Mail

Mr. G. William "Trais" Norris III, Branch Chief
Sierra Pacific Environmental Analysis Branch
California Department of Transportation
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726

SUBJECT: DEIR FOR STATE ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR

Dear Mr. Norris:

Consistency with the 2005 Metropolitan Transportation Plan
The "SR 156 – West Corridor Project" is included in the Monterey County Constrained Project List, so the project is consistent with the 2005 Metropolitan Transportation Plan and assumptions in the Association of Monterey Bay Area Government's regional emissions analysis. 1

Construction Impacts. Page 114.
The Draft EIR specifies that, "Based on preliminary project plans, the maximum area that the project would disturb is 390 acres or an approximate average daily grading of 2.3 acres, which would yield 11.8 pounds per day of particulate matter, PM_{10}, from surface-disturbing activities (Table 2.23). This is well within the 82 pounds of PM_{10} per day threshold of the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District." 2

> Please note that the Air District threshold for PM_{10} is a daily threshold of 82 pounds, it is not an *approximate average daily* amount.
> The threshold is associated with 8.1 acres per day of grading. If Caltrans proposes to grade more than 8.1 acres per day, it should calculate the emissions and apply mitigation to reduce impacts to within 82 pounds/day.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures. Pages 115-116.
Trucks hauling loose dirt, sand or loose materials should be covered and should also maintain at least 2.0 feet of freeboard (Please see page 8-2 of the District's CEQA Air Quality Guidelines (February 2008)). Covering trucks is standard procedure; Caltrans should document why this measure would not be feasible for this project. 3

Anti-Idling Regulation
Please see Title 13, California Code of Regulations, Section 2485 (c) (1) regarding idling of commercial vehicles, which follows:

California Code of Regulations
Title 13. § 2485. Airborne Toxic Control Measure to Limit Diesel-Fueled Commercial Motor Vehicle Idling (a) Purpose. The purpose of this airborne toxic control measure is to reduce public exposure to diesel particulate matter and other air contaminants by limiting the idling of diesel-fueled commercial motor vehicles. (b) Applicability. This section applies to diesel-fueled commercial motor vehicles that operate in the State of California with gross vehicular weight ratings of greater than 10,000 pounds that are or must be licensed for operation on highways. This specifically includes: (1) California-based vehicles; and (2) Non-California-based vehicles. (c) Requirements. On or after February 1, 2005, the driver of any vehicle subject to this section: (1) shall not idle the vehicle's primary diesel engine for greater than 5.0 minutes at any location, except as noted in Subsection (d); and (2) shall not operate a diesel-fueled auxiliary power system (APS) to power a heater, air conditioner, or any ancillary equipment on that vehicle during sleeping or resting in a sleeper berth for greater than 5.0 minutes at any location when within 100 feet of a restricted area, except as noted in Subsection (d).

4

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Draft EIR.

Sincerely,

Jean Getchell
Supervising Planner
Planning and Air Monitoring Division

cc: Randy Deshazo, AMBAG

Response to comment from the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District (letter, 2 pages)

1. According to the Code of Federal Regulations, 23 CFR part 450 only projects included in the federally approved TIP will be eligible for federal funds administered by the FHWA. In metropolitan planning areas, transportation projects requiring funds administered by FHWA shall be included in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the federal TIP (MTIP). The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) responsible for the development of the MTP and federal TIP for the proposed project is the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG). The 2012 STIP programmed the funding for the next phases of the project (Plans, Specification and Estimates and Right of Way).

   AMBAG took board action to amend the MTP/MTIP on October 12, 2012 to incorporate the revised schedule and funding as listed in the MTP's list of "Revenue Constrained" projects. Concurrently Transportation Agency of Monterey County (TAMC), the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) took board action to amend the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTP) on September 26, 2012. The amendments to the MTP/MTIP and the RTP, as described above, are consistent with the current State TIP, as approved by the California Transportation Commission in April 2012, which programmed the next phases of the project development including both, Right of Way and Plans, Specifications and Estimates.

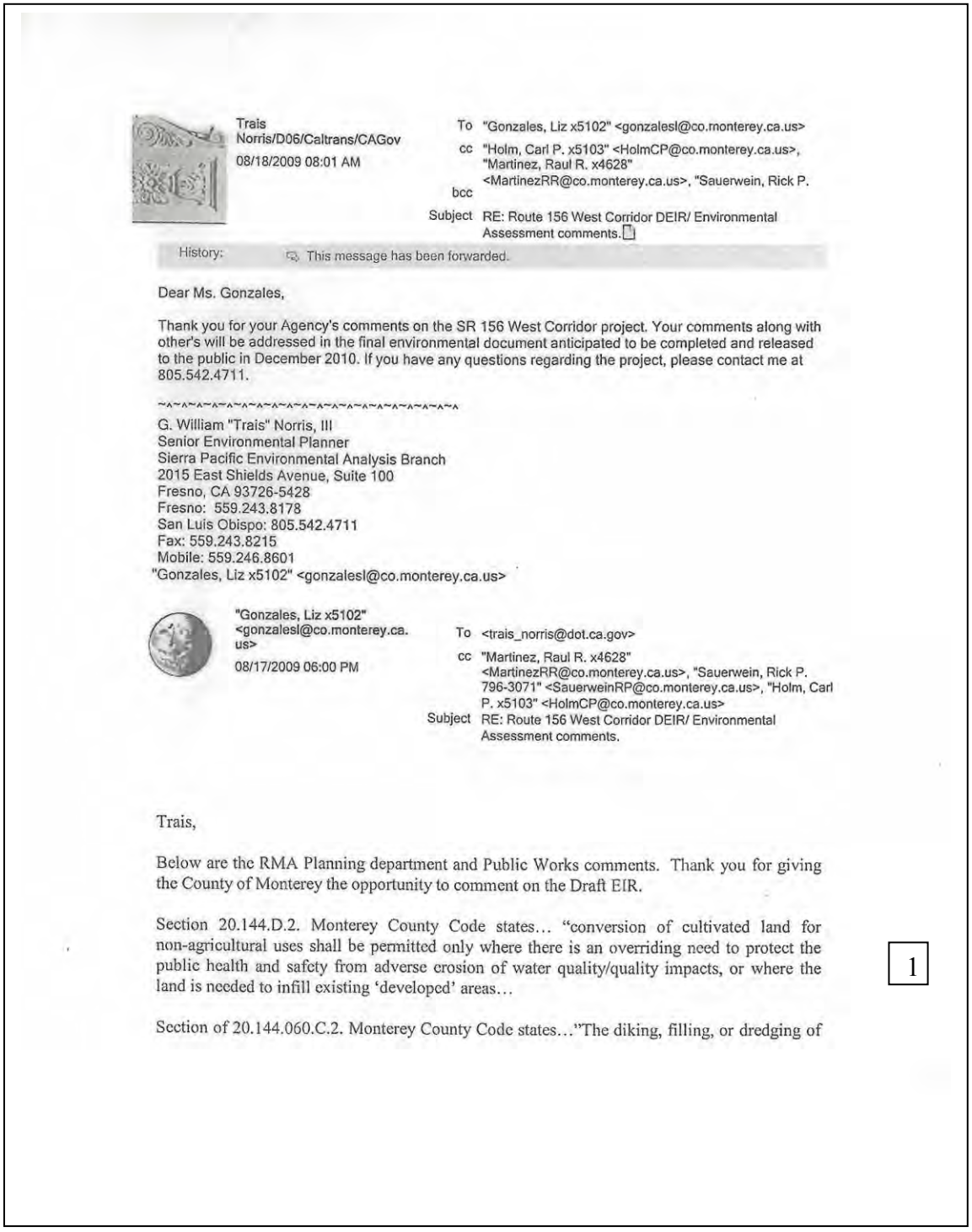
2. Thank you for clarifying the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District's daily PM10 threshold of 82 lbs/day. The draft environmental impact report does not state that this threshold is "*an approximate daily average*," rather the language stated in the Draft Environmental Impact Report was in regard to the project's estimated daily grading impacts. Based on the engineer's assumptions, the project is estimated to grade approximately 2.3 acres/day. The 2.3 acres graded per day is "an approximate daily average" based on the number of grading days estimated and the total number of acres to grade for the most conservative grading estimate.

3. Thank you for pointing out the distinction between the suggested mitigation measures as found in the District's CEQA Air Quality Guidelines (2008). The minimization measures in question outlined in that document are as follows:

   Feasible Mitigation Measures
   - Haul trucks shall maintain at least 2'0" of freeboard.
   - Cover all trucks hauling dirt, sand, or loose materials.

4. Every effort will be made to inform contractor's working on the project site through the resident engineers special instructions and contract special provisions to comply with the above referenced regulation with respect to the commercial fleet equipment 5-minute idling regulations. It is up to the individual contractor(s) working on the project to comply with this regulation. Fines levied by the California Air Resources Board enforcement division go directly to the contractor, not Caltrans. It does not appear that typical on-site or off-road construction equipment are subject to this regulation.

Comment from the Monterey County Resource Management Agency, Planning Department and Public Works Transportation Section (email, 4 pages)



Trais
Norris/D06/Caltrans/CAGov
08/18/2009 08:01 AM

To "Gonzales, Liz x5102" <gonzalesl@co.monterey.ca.us>
cc "Holm, Carl P. x5103" <HolmCP@co.monterey.ca.us>, "Martinez, Raul R. x4628" <MartinezRR@co.monterey.ca.us>, "Sauerwein, Rick P.
bcc
Subject RE: Route 156 West Corridor DEIR/ Environmental Assessment comments.

History: This message has been forwarded.

Dear Ms. Gonzales,

Thank you for your Agency's comments on the SR 156 West Corridor project. Your comments along with other's will be addressed in the final environmental document anticipated to be completed and released to the public in December 2010. If you have any questions regarding the project, please contact me at 805.542.4711.

~^

G. William "Trais" Norris, III
Senior Environmental Planner
Sierra Pacific Environmental Analysis Branch
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726-5428
Fresno: 559.243.8178
San Luis Obispo: 805.542.4711
Fax: 559.243.8215
Mobile: 559.246.8601
"Gonzales, Liz x5102" <gonzalesl@co.monterey.ca.us>

"Gonzales, Liz x5102" <gonzalesl@co.monterey.ca.us>
08/17/2009 06:00 PM

To <trais_norris@dot.ca.gov>
cc "Martinez, Raul R. x4628" <MartinezRR@co.monterey.ca.us>, "Sauerwein, Rick P. 796-3071" <SauerweinRP@co.monterey.ca.us>, "Holm, Carl P. x5103" <HolmCP@co.monterey.ca.us>
Subject RE: Route 156 West Corridor DEIR/ Environmental Assessment comments.

Trais,

Below are the RMA Planning department and Public Works comments. Thank you for giving the County of Monterey the opportunity to comment on the Draft EIR.

Section 20.144.D.2. Monterey County Code states… "conversion of cultivated land for non-agricultural uses shall be permitted only where there is an overriding need to protect the public health and safety from adverse erosion of water quality/quality impacts, or where the land is needed to infill existing 'developed' areas…

1

Section of 20.144.060.C.2. Monterey County Code states…"The diking, filling, or dredging of

coastal wetlands or estuaries shall be limited to restorative measures…and appropriate facilities associated with access, research, education,…If no wetland management plan has been approved for the area, appropriate facilities shall be limited to those consistent with Section 30233(a) of the Coastal Act, as follows:…e. incidental public service purposes, including but not limited to, burying cables and pipes or inspection of piers and maintenance of existing intake and outfall lines"

Therefore, Alternative 12 is less invasive to agricultural lands and wetlands. Monterey County agrees that Alternative 11 would require an Amendment to the North County Coastal Land Use Plan. The final approving body is the California Coastal Commission.

As part of the amendment, mitigation measures may include, but are not limited to: preservation of existing or potentially productive croplands that under existing land division patterns could otherwise be converted to non-agricultural development; stabilization of urban-rural boundaries; restoration or enhancement of unproductive or degraded agricultural lands; and community garden or educational programs that support coastal agriculture. The permit for any such conversion shall be conditioned to require that the mitigation measures remain in place for the life of the project.

Elizabeth Gonzales, Associate Planner

gonzalesl@co.monterey.ca.us

Resource Management Agency

Planning Department

168 W. Alisal Street/2nd Floor

Salinas, CA 93901

(831) 755-5102 ph.

(831) 757-9516 fax

Subject: RE: Route 156 West Corridor DEIR/ Environmental Assessment comments.

Liz in addition to Raul's comments please add the following comments on the EIR.

1) Section 1.3.1 (p.9-11) BUILD ALTERNATIVES should be expanded to describe the number of through and turning lanes that will be constructed at each ramp and intersection as well as the San Miguel Canyon extion from 101 south to Berta Cyn. 2

2) Section 2.1.6 (p. 61) TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION/ PEDESTRIAN AND BIKE FACILITIES. No pedestrian or bike facilities are listed in the design features on p.9-11. If there are none remove reference to these type of facilities from the section title. If ped/bike facilities are planned, then include the locations in the COMMON DESIGN FEATURES section on p.9-10. 3

3) Section 2.1.6 (p. 64&65) TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION/ PEDESTRIAN AND BIKE FACILITIES. Add "without any improvements" to the end of the 1st sentence on p.64 and to the end of the 1st sentence on p.65 4

4) Table 2.25 Noise Impact Analysis…. Under the "Reasonable and Feasible" Column for REciever #1 and #7. Replace NA with "Not desired by neighbors" 5

Regards,

Rick

(831)796-3071 (W)

(805)766-4352 (M)

-----Original Message-----
From: Martinez, Raul R. x4628
Sent: Monday, August 17, 2009 4:15 PM
To: Sauerwein, Rick P. 796-3071
Subject: Route 156 West Corridor DEIR/ Environmental Assessment comments.

Good afternoon Liz Gonzales,

After reviewing the Traffic Operational Analysis for the Draft Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Assessment for Route 156 West Corridor project we offer the following comments:

- Any mitigation measures proposed by the project should conform to the regional planning documents, such as the Monterey County General Plan and TAMC's Regional Transportation Plan. 6

- There is a Type-o on diagrams #17a, 17b on pages. 68, 72 and 73 should read "Berta Canyon Road" not "Beta Canyon Road".

- There is a Type-o on diagrams #14 and #15 on pages 29, 33, 46, 47, 50 and 51 should read "San Miguel Canyon Road" not "San Miguel Road".

- In diagram #15 page 29 indicates a Southbound left turn moment currently there is no such movement at Private Drive/ San Miguel Canyon Road please revise. 7

- The Private Drive is also known as the Burger King entrance please edit.

If you have any question or comment please feel free to contact me.

Raul.

Raul Martinez

Assistant Engineer

County of Monterey Public Works Transportation Section

168 W. Alisal St. 2nd Floor, Salinas, CA 93901

Direct: (831) 755-4628; Fax: (831) 755-4958

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Response to comment from the Monterey County Resource Management Agency, Planning Department and Public Works Transportation Section (email, 4 pages)

1. A preferred alternative was selected, and the application process for the Coastal Development permit will be initiated. Specific mitigation measures for farmland and wetlands will be implemented. A technical working group comprised of staff from the County of Monterey, Transportation Agency of Monterey County, and the California Department of Transportation is gathering information to address the need for an amendment to the Monterey County Local Coastal Program for the Route 156 West Corridor project.

2. The number of through lanes and turning lanes for each ramp is not a final item until the Plans, Specifications and Estimates stage is complete. The number of through lanes and turning lanes for each ramp will be addressed during that stage.

3. Pedestrian (sidewalks) facilities will be considered for this project. Consideration of pedestrian walkways (sidewalks) is proposed on the local facilities (undercrossings/overcrossings) and at interchange locations. These were discussed in Chapter 2.1.6 Traffic and Transportation/Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities under Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures in the final environmental impact report/environmental assessment. Locations are to be finalized at the Plans, Specifications and Estimates stage.

4. Section 2.1.6 Traffic and Transportation was edited per comments. See page 73 and page 74 in the final environmental document.

5. The noise impact table was edited per your comment. Please see table 2.25, page 145 in the final environmental document.

6. Section 2.1.1.2, Consistency with State, Regional, and Local Plans and the Summary Table of Major Potential Impacts from Alternatives discussed consistency of the project with the Monterey County General Plan and TAMC's Regional Transportation Plan. This would include mitigation measures. These include, but are not limited to biological resources under the Monterey County General Plan:

    - Goal OS-5 minimize, mitigate biological resources and policies

- OS-5.4c avoid, minimize, mitigate impacts to listed species,
- OS-5.6 landscape with native, compatible species,
- OS-5.18 obtain needed State, Federal permits,
- OS-5.3 oak woodland mitigation,
- OS-5.5 migratory bird protection and consistent with wetland protection as stated in policy OS-4.3. Storage facilities are proposed for the park and ride lot within the project area and this is consistent with General Plan goal for Transportation facilities, policy C-2.6 to encourage bike storage facilities.

The Route 156 West Corridor project is included in the 2010 Monterey County Regional Transportation Plan, which was approved by the Transportation Agency of Monterey County on June 2010. The segment of State Route 156 between Castroville and U.S. Route 101 has been identified as a Focus Route by Caltrans. On September 26, 2012, the Transportation Agency of Monterey County Board of Directors adopted an amendment to the 2010 Monterey County Regional Transportation Plan to incorporate Phase 1 of Alternative 11 for the Route 156 West Corridor project. The project is now listed on the Constrained Revenue List.

7. Diagrams 17a and 17b have been changed to read Berta Canyon Road. Diagrams 14 and 15 have been changed to read San Miguel Canyon Road. Southbound turn movement has been removed at Private Drive/San Miguel Canyon Road Private Drive has been changed to Burger King entrance.

Comment from Ag Land Trust (letter)

Ag Land Trust

[illegible]

July 30, 2009

G. William "Trais" Norris
Senior Environmental Planner, Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, Ca 93726

Re: Route 156 in Monterey County

Dear Mr. Norris:

Thank you for your efforts to provide the public with information related to the widening of Highway 156.

The Ag Land Trust, a non-profit agricultural land conservation organization, would like to offer you our services in regards to the project. The Ag Land Trust is responsible for the conservation of nearly seventy parcels of ag land in fee and through conservation easement, preserving over 20,000 acres over 25 years in and around Monterey County. We are currently in the process of conserving an additional 9 parcels. Our easements have been completed in cooperation with the Coastal Commission, Coastal Conservancy, the Department of Conservation, Department of Defense, and city and county governments. The Ag Land Trust has been recognized by UC Davis as a leading agricultural land trust in California, and has been written up nationally by the Wall Street Journal.

We are aware that if you choose project alternative 11 or 12, there will be a need for farmland mitigation.

The Ag Land Trust has been involved in the establishment of agricultural conservation easements in the coastal zone in the past, and would be please to assist you with your farmland mitigation program. Our recommendations are as follow:

- A one-to-one mitigation for farmland that will be replaced by the creation of new farmland;
- For mitigation done by preserving farmland through agricultural conservation easement, we recommend a three-to-one replacement ratio.

Should Caltrans choose to replace farmland, the Ag Land Trust has property available for this purpose. Additionally, because it helps fulfill our mission to preserve agricultural land in Monterey County, the Ag Land Trust would also be willing to work with Caltrans to acquire and hold conservation easements in perpetuity.

If the Ag Land Trust can assist Caltrans with this project or if you have any questions, please call the office at 831.422.5868.

Sincerely,

Virginia Jameson
Associate Director
Ag Land Trust
cc: Coastal Commission

Response to comment from Ag Land Trust (letter)

Alternative 11 has been selected as the Preferred Alternative. The application process for the Coastal Development permit would now be initiated and specific mitigation measures for farmland would be considered and evaluated. The permit would require an amendment with new provision for the Route 156 West Corridor project.

Thank you for providing the California Department of Transportation information about the Ag Land Trust's farmland mitigation program.

Comment from LandWatch Monterey County (letter, 3 pages)

LandWatch
monterey county
Post Office Box 1876
Salinas, CA 93902-1876
Salinas Phone: 831-422-9390
Monterey Phone: 831-375-3752
Website: www.landwatch.org
Email: landwatch@mclw.org
Fax: 831-422-9391

August 17, 2009

G. William "Trais" Norris, III, Branch Chief
Sierra Pacific Environmental Analysis Branch
California Department of Transportation
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726

E-Mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov

Subject: DEIR for Route 156 West Corridor

Dear Mr. Norris:

LandWatch Monterey County has reviewed the DEIR for a project to widen State Route 156 between U.S. Route 101 and west of Castroville Blvd. and rebuild the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange in Monterey County. We have the following comments:

1. Page 7. Existing LOS northbound on U.S. Route 101 is LOS C and D on Friday and Sunday evening, respectively. Projected LOS of northbound U.S. Route 101 is LOS D on Friday evenings and LOS E on Sunday evenings. Please explain how one of the purposes of the project (e.g., relief of existing congestion) is met when the proposed project simply funnels recreational traffic more quickly into a congested roadway. 1

2. Page 14. Alternative 12 is identified as the environmentally superior alternative even though it would impact wetlands, natural communities, threatened and endangered species, farmland, water quality, existing oak trees and stormwater runoff. CEQA requires identification of an alternative that addresses significant impacts even though it might not meet all of the project objectives. 2

3. Page 14. Alternatives Considered but Eliminated. All alternatives include major roadway construction. Given the estimated costs of $291 to $339 million for Alternatives 11 and 12, respectively, why wasn't an alternative using bus rapid transit with connections in Gilroy or some other form of public transit been considered? While Alternatives 11 and 12 relieve congestion for local traffic, are there other alternatives available to address local congestion relief that have fewer impacts and reduced costs? 3

4. Page 26. Development Trends. The analysis does not reflect current market conditions and related delays and/or project cancellations. Additionally, this section should be updated after the State Water Resources Control Board 4

(SWRCB) Cease and Desist Order is finalized later in 2009. The Draft Order recommends a moratorium on new hookups until new water supplies are developed for the Monterey Peninsula which could limit development until 2016 and beyond.

5. Page 29. Castroville Community Plan. This plan will be revised based on Coastal Commission review and comments. The description in the DEIR is no longer applicable. 5

6. Page 94. Best Management Practices. The DEIR states the project would minimize increases in storm water discharge by using best management practices (BMPs). It concludes the project would not violate water quality standards or create runoff exceeding the capacity of receiving waters or storm water channels. BMPs are not identified nor is any evidence provided to support the impact conclusion. 6

7. Page 107 – Mobile Source Air Toxics. The discussion addresses U.S. EPA research and conclusions. It should be revised to also address the California Air Resource Board's findings regarding impacts of operational and construction diesel exhaust emissions. At a minimum, the impact of construction diesel exhaust emissions can be determined using the protocol in Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District (MBUAPCD)'s CEQA Air Quality Guidelines. The proposed mitigation measure of using on-road diesel fuel approved by CARB may be insufficient to mitigation impacts of diesel exhaust particulates and acrolein during construction. Additionally, while the DEIR states Caltrans requires contractors to comply with MBUAPCD regulations, the District does regulate construction diesel exhaust emissions. 7

8. Page 114. Ozone Precursor Emission During Construction. The DEIR states the MBUAPCD includes construction emissions of ozone precursors in the AQMP. Only those emissions from typical construction equipment are included. MBUAPCD should be contacted to determine if construction emissions are in fact accommodated. 8

9. Page 145. Coast Oak Woodlands. Vague references are made to the loss of coast live oak woodlands, but the DEIR fails to identify the number of trees that would be affected. The document should identify the number of trees as well as their impact on sequestration of CO_2. 9

10. Page 179. Climate Change. Table 3.1 provides estimates of project related CO_2. However, the table fails to identify if these are daily or annual tons. If they are annual tons, the project would emit close to 30,000 tons per year of CO_2 in contrast to the no-build alternative of about 18,000 tons per year. These estimates do not include other green house gases. The analysis should be revised to include an estimate of GHG emissions. 10

2

The DEIR does not evaluate the feasibility of off-site mitigation measures as described by the California Attorney General in his memorandum on "The California Environmental Quality Act and Addressing Global Warming Impacts at the Local Level".

The following is an excerpt from the Attorney General's list of feasible mitigation measures:

> If, after analyzing and requiring all reasonable and feasible on-site mitigation measures for avoiding or reducing greenhouse gas-related impacts, the lead agency determines that additional mitigation is required, the agency may consider additional off-site mitigation. The project proponent could, for example, fund off-site mitigation projects (*e.g.*, alternative energy projects, or energy or water audits for existing projects) that will reduce carbon emissions, conduct an audit of its other existing operations and agree to retrofit, or purchase carbon "credits" from another entity that will undertake mitigation. The topic of offsets can be complicated, and a full discussion is outside the scope of this summary Document. Issues that the lead agency should consider include:
>
> - The location of the off-site mitigation. (If the off-site mitigation is far from the project, any additional, non-climate related benefits of the mitigation will be lost to the local community.)
> - Whether the emissions reductions from off-site mitigation can be quantified and verified.
> - Whether the mitigation ratio should be greater than 1:1 to reflect any uncertainty about the effectiveness of the offset.
>
> To comply with CEQA, the FEIR must evaluate potential mitigation measures for their feasibility including off-site measures.

11. Finally, because project funding is problematic and project implementation unlikely during the next five years, the FEIR should identify when it will be updated to reflect current environmental information.

11

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the DEIR.

Sincerely,

Amy L. White, Interim Executive Director
LandWatch Monterey County

3

Response to comment from LandWatch Monterey County

1. One of the purposes of this project is to reduce existing congestion of the Route 156 West Corridor and U.S. Route 101. Unfortunately, not all of U.S. Route 101 problems can be fixed with just this one project. Other proposed projects along U.S. Route 101 such as the Harris Road Interchange, San Juan Interchange and Prunedale Improvement project are being worked on to further help this congested roadway.

2. Both Alternative 11 and Alternative 12 affect wetlands, natural communities, threatened and endangered species, farmland, water quality, existing oak trees and storm water runoff. Over 80 percent of the project area is in the coastal zone. For the following reasons, Alternative 12 was selected as the superior alignment: it affects less farmland, has fewer paved areas that affect visual resources, and has less impervious surface area to contribute to storm water runoff. Alternative 12 is included in Monterey County's local coastal program. However, based on modifications to the design as a result of comments received during circulation of the draft environmental document, Alternative 11 was selected as the Preferred Alternative. The separate frontage road system using State Route 156 would allow better circulation for local traffic, pedestrians and bicyclists. This would not be available under Alternative 12. Monterey County is in the process of updating their local coastal program to include Alternative 11. The design modifications to Alternative 11 resulted in fewer permanent impacts to Coast live oak woodland and Riparian habitat, seasonal jurisdiction wetlands, and fewer impacts to California tiger salamander, Santa Cruz long-toed salamander and California red-legged frog aquatic and upland habitat.

3. Many alternatives were considered for this project. Alternatives 11 and 12 were the more logical choices to solve current and future recreational, agricultural and local traffic problems in the area. Another alternative with fewer impacts and cost will be the "no build" alternative. By doing nothing, the traffic problems will worsen as time goes on. Presently, there is no bus rapid transit service in the area. There is no future bus rapid transit service planned for the area. The Transportation Agency for Monterey County plans to extend rail service south to Salinas as discussed in the 2010 Regional Transportation Plan. The extension includes three new station stops: Pajaro/Watsonville, Castroville and Salinas. Even though rail is being planned in the area, it is many years away from being up and running. Even when it is in place, the schedule will be a limiting factor to

affecting the design/need for this improvement. Rail extension will not alleviate the congestion on State Route 156.

The Ridership Validation Report (Parsons, January 2009) that was completed as part of the Commuter Rail Extension Project found that the projected (2035) ridership would be approximately 800 people a day. Compared to the projected Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) of 40,200 on State Route 156, there would only be a 2 percent improvement realized by the improved rail service. This small improvement is insufficient to mitigate the existing and future traffic volumes on State Route 156. Therefore, adding additional lanes onto State Route 156 is necessary with or without improvements to the rail system. The Ridership Validation Report is found online at http://tamcmonterey.org/programs/rail/pdf/Ridership_Validation_Final_Report.pdf).

4. Caltrans is aware of the existing Cease and Desist Order issued to the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District by the State Water Resources Control Board. Resource constraints (adequate water source, land availability) and economics influence where development will occur. Land use patterns and development are determined by land use policies set by local governments.

5. The environmental document has been edited to state that the Castroville Community Plan will be revised based on Coastal Commission review and comments.

6. This project proposes to include Design Pollution, Construction Site and Permanent Storm Water Treatment Prevention Best Management Practices (BMPs) as follows. See Section 2.2.2, Water Quality and Stormwater Runoff for mitigation measures.

   This project proposes to include permanent storm water treatment BMPs for 100 percent of the new facility. Permanent storm water treatment BMPs will be incorporated to the maximum extent practicable in compliance with the Caltrans Storm Water Management Plan and the Caltrans Storm Water Quality Manual, the Project Planning and Design Guide. It is anticipated that the incorporation of permanent treatment BMPs will result in an improvement in water quality due to the reduced pollutant loading to receiving water bodies for this project. Preliminary permanent treatment BMP selection has identified bio-filtration strips, bio-filtration swales, detention basins for incorporation into this project.

Specific permanent treatment BMP design will be completed during the Plans Specifications and Estimates Phase of this project.

7. Mobile Source Air Toxic analysis is primarily used in evaluation with respect to the movement of goods and services on State highways, and the potential to impact sensitive air receptors with frequent long-term exposure in close proximity to heavily trafficked corridors on major transportation systems. Correctly stated in your comment, the mobile source air toxic regulations are not meant to address short-term construction related emissions, and the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District does not regulate short-term construction emissions with respect to mobile source air toxics. Even so, contractors are required to adhere to any and all regulations set forth by the California Air Resources Board. The Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District is the local regulatory agency enforcing these regulations set forth by the California Air Resources Board. In addition to using California Air Resource Board approved low-sulfur content diesel fuels, contractor's commercial fleet equipment working on the project are required to follow the new diesel equipment idling regulations:

   California Code of Regulations Title 13 Section 2485 is the Airborne Toxic Control Measure to Limit Diesel-Fueled Commercial Motor Vehicle Idling: (a) Purpose: The purpose of this airborne toxic control measure is to reduce public exposure to diesel particulate matter and other air contaminants by limiting the idling of diesel-fueled commercial motor vehicles. (b) Applicability: This section applies to diesel-fueled commercial motor vehicles that operate in the State of California with gross vehicular weight ratings of greater than 10,000 pounds that are or must be licensed for operations on highways. This specifically includes (1) California-based vehicles and (2) Non-California-based vehicles.
   (c) Requirements: On or after February 1, 2005, the driver of any vehicle subject to this section (1) shall not idle the vehicle’s primary diesel engine for greater than 5.0 minutes at any location, except as noted in Subsection (d); and (2) shall not operate a diesel-fueled auxiliary power system (APS) to power a heater, air conditioner, or any ancillary equipment in that vehicle during sleeping or resting in a sleeper berth for greater than 5.0 minutes at any location when within 100 feet of a restricted area, except as noted in Subsection (d).

   With the inclusion of this regulation and the use of low sulfur content diesel fuels, it is anticipated that short-term construction related diesel air toxic emissions will be less than significant, as reported in the environmental document.

8. Thank you for your comment. The Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District has commented on the Air Quality section of the draft environmental document. Only those emissions from typical construction equipment are included. Additionally, the North Central Coast Air Basin is in attainment for all federal air quality criteria pollutants.

9. According to Environmental Protection Agency documents, carbon sequestration is the process through which carbon dioxide from the atmosphere is absorbed by trees, plants through photosynthesis and stored as carbon in biomass and soils. Carbon sequestration rates vary by tree species, soil type, regional climate and topography. At this time, Caltrans uses a qualitative approach for determining the affects of vegetation removal on climate change.

   For mitigation purposes, Caltrans measures the acres of impact to habitat (in uniformly dense habitat) for determining mitigation measures when consulting with regulatory agencies. Tree counts and size, plant counts and species affected are considered when determining mitigation ratios. Additionally, numbers, types and size of trees for replacement planting are finalized during the Plans, Specification and Estimate phase of the project prior to construction. At this time, landscape architects draft and finalize plans and plant lists. Plant restoration would be planned to improve habitat as well as replace vegetation lost to construction. Restoration of coast live oak, central maritime chaparral and riparian habitat, can be beneficial in contributing to carbon sequestration.

10. The document has been modified to clarify that modeled emissions are expressed in annual tons. Due to funding constraints, the construction year has been changed to 2018 and the project design year to 2041. In February 2012, District 5 Traffic Operations branch reviewed the July 2008 Traffic Operational Analysis completed for this project and determined the traffic numbers in the 2008 report are still valid. Traffic information used for emissions information for year 2016 and year 2036 are the same for emissions information for year 2018 and year 2041.

    Under the No-Build scenario from baseline (2006) to No-Build construction year (2016), the CO_2 increase is 3.2 tons/year. From baseline (2006) to project design year (2036) No-Build scenario is 3.82 tons/year increase. While the modeling does show an increase in CO_2 emissions over existing conditions, it is important

to note that even in the No-Build condition, CO_2 emission increases are anticipated.

Table 3.1 indicates that implementation of the proposed project when compared to the No-Build condition would result in increased CO_2 emissions of 18.74 metric tons per year in 2016 and 34.24 metric tons per year in 2036.

Carbon dioxide emissions are commonly used as the basis for climate change analyses since the dominant component of transportation greenhouse gasses is carbon dioxide which makes up more than 80 percent of the transportation-related emissions. CT-EMFAC version 2.5 is able to model CO_2 emissions but is not able to model all greenhouse gas emissions (GHG); however, it is currently the best available model for transportation emissions. At the federal level, neither U.S. Environmental Protection Agency nor Federal Highways Administration has promulgated explicit guidance or methodology to conduct project-level greenhouse gas analysis. The four strategies set forth by FHWA to lessen climate change impacts do correlate with efforts that the State has undertaken and is undertaking to deal with transportation and climate change; the strategies include improved transportation system efficiency, cleaner fuels, cleaner vehicles, and reduction in the growth of vehicle hours travelled.

The Attorney General's letter states "if the CEQA lead agency determines that additional mitigation is required, the agency may consider off-site mitigation'. The Department as CEQA lead agency has already incorporated a set of measures designed to reduce CO_2 emissions. Please also note that in assessing the extent to which any project level increase in CO_2 emissions represents a net global increase, reduction, or no change, there are no models approved by regulatory agencies that operate at the global or even statewide scale.

Caltrans and its parent agency, the Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency, have taken an active role in addressing GHG emission reduction and climate change. Recognizing that 98 percent of California's GHG emissions are from the burning of fossil fuels and 40 percent of all human made GHG emissions are from transportation (see Climate Action Program at Caltrans, December 2006), Caltrans has created and is implementing the Climate Action Program at Caltrans that was published in December 2006. This document can be found at: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/ogm/key_reports_files/State_Wide_Strategy/Caltrans_Climate_Action_Program.pdf

11. When there are changes to the environmental scope, settings, regulations, and/or mitigation measures and if major steps to advance the project have not occurred after the approval of the final environmental document, the final environmental impact report will be evaluated. A determination will be made as to whether the original documentation remains valid, an addendum needs to be prepared, a supplemental document needs to be prepared or major revisions are necessary and a subsequent final environmental impact report will be prepared.

    The Route 156 West Corridor project would be built in two phases due to funding shortfalls. Phase 1 will start just west of Castroville Boulevard (PM R 1.8) and tie back into existing State Route 156 at Prunedale North Road (PM T4.81), funding is available for Phase 1. Phase 2 will be constructed at a later date when funds become available; this work includes the U.S. Route 101 and State Route 156 interchange and work along U.S. Route 101 from Pesante Road to just north of Messick Road. The environmental document will be reevaluated when funding becomes available for Phase 2.

Comment from Anonymous

20 July 2009

G. William "Trais" Norris, III
Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726

Subj: Highway 156: Prunedale-Castroville

Mr. Norris:

Here is a brief description of what I encountered on Saturday, 18 June 2009.

I dropped my wife off at the San Jose Airport in the morning and then headed back to Marina, CA via highway 101 (San Jose to Prunedale) and highway 156 (Prunedale to Castroville). I stopped in Gilroy for a Sonic Burger around 1245 PM. Then continued down 101, leaving Gilroy around 1:15 PM.

About a mile or two south of the state highway 25 and 101 intersection, I encountered traffic that had come to a stop on highway. After coming to a stop, then the traffic began to move at an imperceptible speed. I assumed that there may have been a traffic accident, perhaps where the climbing lane merged back into two lanes a couple of miles down the road. When I finally reached that point, there was no accident, but the traffic was still creeping along at between 0 and 12 to 15 miles per hour. (you may go to the last two paragraphs to bypass the details).

So, I assumed that

1. there might have been an accident where highway 156 from San Juan Bautista merges from the right into highway 101 heading south. When I got to that point, there was no accident. Traffic continued to creep. Then I assumed that

2. there might be an accident at the cross road just down the hill in the Eucalyptus trees. When I got to that point, there was no accident. Traffic continued to creep. Then I assumed that

3. there might be an accident where the road has an S-curve heading toward the Red Barn area. When I got to that point, there was no accident. Traffic continued to creep. Then I assumed that

4. there was most likely an accident in the vicinity of the Red Barn, or at the intersection near the gas station. When I got to that point, there was no accident. I looked up the southbound incline over the summit into Prunedale, but traffic continued to creep. Then I assumed that

5. perhaps there had been an accident just after the summit where there are a number of dangerous at-grade crossings from side roads. As I headed down the hill toward Prunedale, there had been no accidents, but traffic continued to creep. Then I assumed that

6. since the possibilities for an accident location was running out, then there must have been an accident where the road from Prunedale merges into southbound 101. When I got to that point, there was no accident. Traffic continued to creep. I assumed that the accident was south of the exit from 101 to 156. However, as I inched toward the 156 exit, I could see that southbound traffic from that point was moving normal. Then I looked at the exit lane for 156 that I was in; excruciatingly slow around the curve on probably on to Castroville. So I exited and went through Salinas to Marina.

I probably spent approximately one and a half hours in dead slow traffic between Gilroy and the 156 exit at Prunedale. As far as I know, there never was an accident, including the 156 link between Prunedale and Castroville.

I have a Civil Engineering degree, and studied Highway and traffic engineering. I ended up in another career field. But never would I have conceived that the backup on the Prunedale to Castroville highway would have caused a backup in traffic all the way back to Gilroy. Absurd.

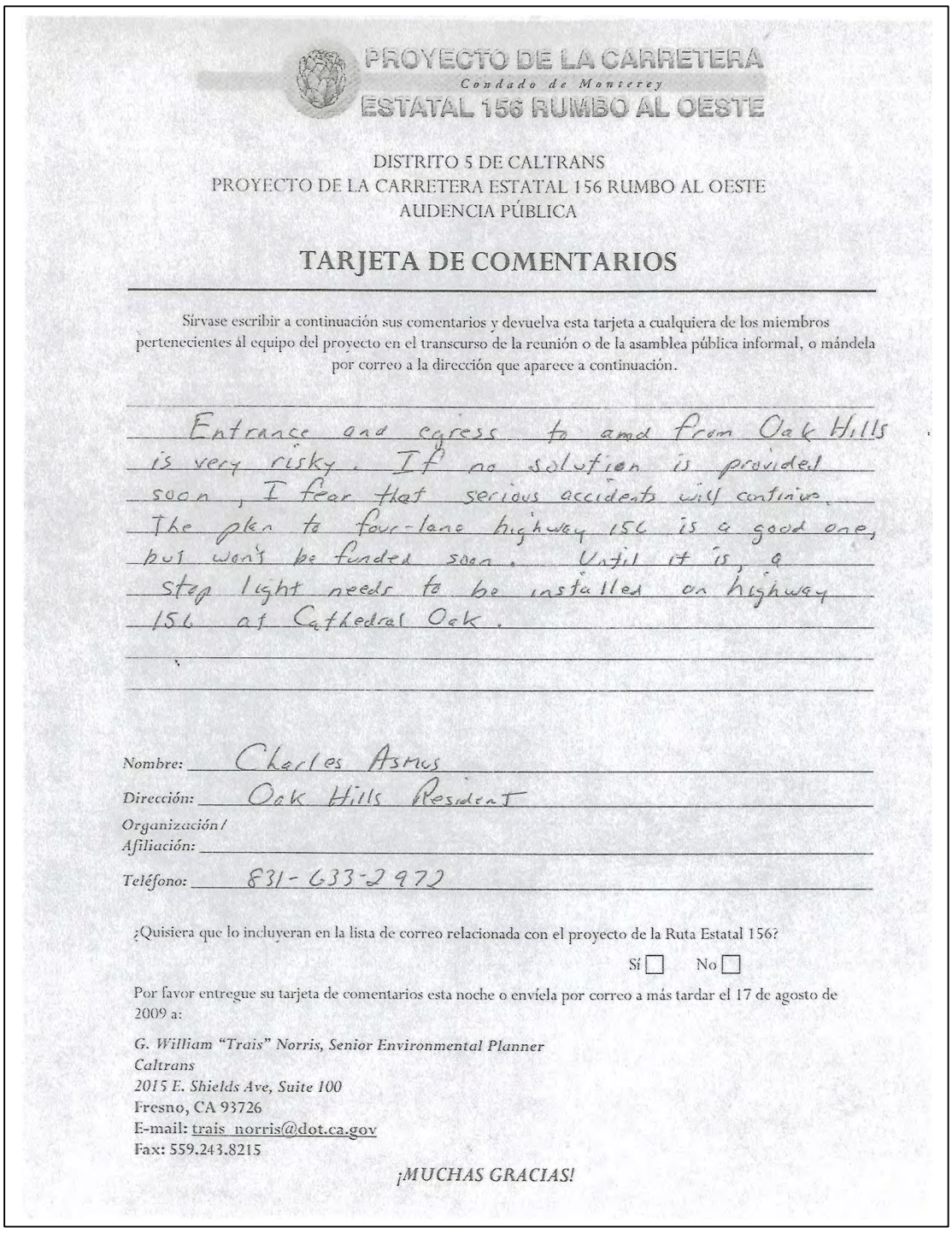
Response to comment from Anonymous

Traffic has been known to backup for the length of the project and onto U.S. Route 101 during peak traffic periods on weekends and holidays. Local traffic from the numerous local road intersections currently experience substantial delays during peak traffic periods.

This section of State Route 156 allows travelers direct access to the Monterey Peninsula from U.S. Route 101 and is heavily used by tourists during the summer and on weekends throughout the year. Existing State Route 156 begins as a freeway at the State Route 1/State Route 156 separation. Just east of Castroville, however, State Route 156 turns into a two-lane conventional highway as it continues east toward the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 separation and the community of Prunedale.

Local, commuter, recreational and agricultural traffic use this stretch of highway. This segment is a two-lane conventional highway with left-turn lanes at major cross streets. Interregional recreational traffic going to the Monterey Peninsula has been on the rise along this section of State Route 156 in recent years. The proposed project would add four lanes south of the existing State Route 156. The proposed widening and the new interchanges would improve access to the nearby communities and improve interregional traffic flow, thereby creating an uninterrupted segment of State Route 156 within the project limits.

Comment from Charles Asmus



PROYECTO DE LA CARRETERA
Condado de Monterey
ESTATAL 156 RUMBO AL OESTE

DISTRITO 5 DE CALTRANS
PROYECTO DE LA CARRETERA ESTATAL 156 RUMBO AL OESTE
AUDENCIA PÚBLICA

TARJETA DE COMENTARIOS

Sírvase escribir a continuación sus comentarios y devuelva esta tarjeta a cualquiera de los miembros pertenecientes al equipo del proyecto en el transcurso de la reunión o de la asamblea pública informal, o mándela por correo a la dirección que aparece a continuación.

Entrance and egress to and from Oak Hills is very risky. If no solution is provided soon, I fear that serious accidents will continue. The plan to four-lane highway 156 is a good one, but won't be funded soon. Until it is, a stop light needs to be installed on highway 156 at Cathedral Oak.

Nombre: Charles Asmus
Dirección: Oak Hills Resident
Organización / Afiliación:
Teléfono: 831-633-2972

¿Quisiera que lo incluyeran en la lista de correo relacionada con el proyecto de la Ruta Estatal 156?

Sí ☐ No ☐

Por favor entregue su tarjeta de comentarios esta noche o envíela por correo a más tardar el 17 de agosto de 2009 a:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

¡MUCHAS GRACIAS!

Response to comment from Charles Asmus

Caltrans investigated access alternatives for the Oak Hills community in 2009. This included at-grade signals at Cathedral Oaks and State Route 156. A safety analysis at the Cathedral Oaks intersection was conducted by Caltrans for the three-year period from July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2006 using the most current data available. Results showed that the actual total collision rate at this location is similar to the statewide average for similar locations. Based on existing traffic volumes, intersection analyses were performed comparing the average delay between the existing stop-controlled intersection to the proposed half-traffic-signal alternatives. The delay to the traveling public would increase 18 percent during the morning peak and 280 percent in the evening peak travel times. Based on the best information and analysis to date, Caltrans staff determined that a signal at Cathedral Oaks and State Route 156 would not be an acceptable solution.

The proposed Route 156 West Corridor project would add four lanes south of the existing State Route 156. Construction of this new alignment would divert interregional traffic away from the residential communities next to State Route 156 and U.S. Route 101. Caltrans, the Transportation Agency of Monterey County, and Monterey County Public Works have been working on a phased approach to delivering this project. The first phase is focused on building a new interchange at Castroville Boulevard and solving the Oak Hills access problem.

Comment from Ute Battig

ROUTE 156 WEST
Monterey County
CORRIDOR PROJECT

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
PUBLIC HEARING

COMMENT CARD

Please write your comments below and return this card to any of the project team members during the meeting/open house or send it to the address below.

Coming from Marina towards 156 you have 2 lanes why does the traffic has to merge into 1 lane and then back into 2 lanes for the left turn into Castroville Blvd. ~~If~~ leave the 2 lanes and make the left lane left turn only. It would easy traffic on weekends and lessen my stress and everyone else.

Name: UTE BATTIG

Address: 13400 AGUA CALIENTE CASTROVILLE CA 95012

Organization/
Affiliation:

Phone:

Would you like to be added to the State Route 156 project mailing list? Yes ☒ No ☐

Please hand in your comment card tonight or send it no later than August 17, 2009 to:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

THANK YOU!

Response to comment from Ute Battig

The traffic on eastbound State Route 156 merges into one lane to provide for a dedicated left turn at Castroville Boulevard. Merging to one lane allows eastbound traffic on State Route 156 to have access to Castroville Boulevard. The proposed project would realign Castroville Boulevard and build a compact-diamond interchange as an overcrossing to replace the existing intersection with signals at State Route 156. New ramps are proposed with 12-foot-wide travel lanes, 4-foot-wide inside shoulders and 8-foot-wide outside shoulders.

The proposed project would add four lanes south of the existing State Route 156. Construction of this new alignment would divert interregional traffic away from the residential communities next to State Route 156 and U.S. Route 101. Residents and communities next to State Route 156 and U.S. Route 101 would be provided a more direct travel route via the frontage road (existing State Route 156) to shopping, services and jobs in Prunedale and Castroville.

Comment from Gene Bentle

PROYECTO DE LA CARRETERA
Condado de Monterey
ESTATAL 156 RUMBO AL OESTE

DISTRITO 5 DE CALTRANS
PROYECTO DE LA CARRETERA ESTATAL 156 RUMBO AL OESTE
AUDENCIA PÚBLICA

TARJETA DE COMENTARIOS

Sírvase escribir a continuación sus comentarios y devuelva esta tarjeta a cualquiera de los miembros pertenecientes al equipo del proyecto en el transcurso de la reunión o de la asamblea pública informal, o mándela por correo a la dirección que aparece a continuación.

would like copies of info boards on what is being done & where we stand at this time

Nombre: Gene Bentle

Dirección: 13626 Monte del Sol - Castroville 95012

Organización/ Afiliación:

Teléfono:

¿Quisiera que lo incluyeran en la lista de correo relacionada con el proyecto de la Ruta Estatal 156?

Sí ☐ No ☐

Por favor entregue su tarjeta de comentarios esta noche o envíela por correo a más tardar el 17 de agosto de 2009 a:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

¡MUCHAS GRACIAS!

Response to comment from Gene Bentle

Thank you for your interest in the Route 156 West Corridor project. Copies of the public hearing display boards are on the Caltrans website at http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist05/projects/mon_156w/index.htm.

Comment from R. Boese

ROUTE 156 WEST
Monterey County
CORRIDOR PROJECT

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
PUBLIC HEARING

COMMENT CARD

Please write your comments below and return this card to any of the project team members during the meeting/open house or send it to the address below.

Alternative 1 would agree with research done in 1968. This also would not interfere as drastically with traffic during the construction phase. 1

I am hard of hearing - the lady next to me just pointed out 35 businesses to be relocated. It is sad we cannot do the bypass + an alternative highway that goes 101 → Marina Industrial + airport East Harrison + behind or through Ft Ord to Peninsula 2

Name: R Boese
Address: 9515 S Century Oak Rd
Organization/ Affiliation: Ranchos Bolsa Nueva Homeowners Oak Hills resident
Phone: 633-3012

Would you like to be added to the State Route 156 project mailing list? Yes ☐ No ☐

Please hand in your comment card tonight or send it no later than August 17, 2009 to:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

THANK YOU!

Response to comment from R. Boese

1. Thank you for this acknowledgment. Alternative 11 was selected as the preferred alternative.

2. At this time, the number of businesses affected by the project is only an estimate for purposes of producing the environmental document and project report. Based on the final relocation impact report prepared by Caltrans, McDonald's, Country Restaurant and Valero would be full acquisitions. Small businesses that would require full acquisition and reestablishment include a rock and landscaping service, an auto repair and sales center, a used tire retailer, a pre-fabricated structure with show lot and sales facility, and a multiple-unit storage facility. More in-depth design work in the next phase may result in fewer businesses being affected. Until our design details are finalized, we cannot say exactly who will be affected at this time. The environmental document stated that 35 businesses could be affected. This sum also includes a number of storage units, which are each counted by right-of-way as individual businesses. Some of these same businesses (including storage units) may also be affected by the Prunedale Improvement Project.

Comment from P.R. Burger

PROYECTO DE LA CARRETERA
Condado de Monterey
ESTATAL 156 RUMBO AL OESTE

DISTRITO 5 DE CALTRANS
PROYECTO DE LA CARRETERA ESTATAL 156 RUMBO AL OESTE
AUDENCIA PÚBLICA

TARJETA DE COMENTARIOS

Sírvase escribir a continuación sus comentarios y devuelva esta tarjeta a cualquiera de los miembros pertenecientes al equipo del proyecto en el transcurso de la reunión o de la asamblea pública informal, o mándela por correo a la dirección que aparece a continuación.

1. Alternatives 11 & 12 returns traces
o costs less
o provides easier entrance/exit
for Oak Hills
Why are we looking at Alternative 12?

2. Where are the comment sheets in English? 2

Nombre: P. R. Burger
Dirección: 15685 Chester Oak Blvd, Salinas 93907
Organización/
Afiliación:
Teléfono:

¿Quisiera que lo incluyeran en la lista de correo relacionada con el proyecto de la Ruta Estatal 156?

Sí ☐ No ☐

Por favor entregue su tarjeta de comentarios esta noche o envíela por correo a más tardar el 17 de agosto de 2009 a:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

¡MUCHAS GRACIAS!

Response to comment from P.R. Burger

1. Caltrans receives state and federal funds for transportation projects. Caltrans must, therefore, comply with federal (National Environmental Policy Act) and state (California Environmental Quality Act) laws when analyzing impacts to the environment. The identification, consideration and analysis of project alternatives are required under the National Environmental Policy Act. The National Environmental Policy Act mandates agencies to consider environmental consequences of their proposals, document the analysis and make this information available to the public for comment before implementation. The California Environmental Quality Act requires consideration and discussion of alternatives to the proposed project. An environmental impact report must describe a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that would foster informed decision-making and public participation. The lead agency (Caltrans) is responsible for selecting a range of project alternatives for examination and must publicly disclose its reasoning for selecting the preferred alternative.

2. Comment cards in Spanish were used because Caltrans ran out of the English comment cards during the July 20, 2009 public hearing held in Castroville.

Comment from Scott Clark

PROYECTO DE LA CARRETERA
Condado de Monterey
ESTATAL 156 RUMBO AL OESTE

DISTRITO 5 DE CALTRANS
PROYECTO DE LA CARRETERA ESTATAL 156 RUMBO AL OESTE
AUDENCIA PÚBLICA

TARJETA DE COMENTARIOS

Sírvase escribir a continuación sus comentarios y devuelva esta tarjeta a cualquiera de los miembros pertenecientes al equipo del proyecto en el transcurso de la reunión o de la asamblea pública informal, o mándela por correo a la dirección que aparece a continuación.

First comment is how many times are me & My family going to learn a new language. As a native Californian (Mission Indian) We have had to learn Spanish, Russian & English. Lets pick a language & run with it please! 1

156 comment - We own a Ranch that we have preserved for more than 100 years. your option 1 will take away as much as 50 acres, greatly impacting our income. We did not create this traffic issue nor did we ask the people of Oak Hills & Bertha canyon to move there. So please consider us in your choice of routes. 2

Nombre: Scott Clark

Dirección: 57025 Tolon road King City CA 93930

Organización / Afiliación: Rouse Ridge Ranch

Teléfono: 831 385 5539

¿Quisiera que lo incluyeran en la lista de correo relacionada con el proyecto de la Ruta Estatal 156?

Sí ☐ No ☐

Por favor entregue su tarjeta de comentarios esta noche o envíela por correo a más tardar el 17 de agosto de 2009 a:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

¡MUCHAS GRACIAS!

Response to comment from Scott Clark

1. Comment cards in Spanish were used because Caltrans ran out of the English comment cards during the July 20, 2009 public hearing held in Castroville.

2. At this time, the agricultural acreage affected by the project is only an estimate for purposes of producing the environmental document and project report. Caltrans considered measures to convert fewer acres of farmland. The creation of remnant farmland parcels was avoided as much as possible by acquiring right-of-way in linear strips. Caltrans also understands your concern about acquiring the least amount of agricultural land. Therefore, new ideas for Alternative 11 are being considered to reduce the amount of agricultural land acquired for the project. During construction, provisions for adequate access would ensure that agricultural operations would not be impaired. When possible, Caltrans would allow farmland to stay in production (after purchase) until needed for construction.

Comment from Bruce Elliot

ROUTE 156 WEST
Monterey County
CORRIDOR PROJECT

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
PUBLIC HEARING

COMMENT CARD 7/22/09

Please write your comments below and return this card to any of the project team members during the meeting/open house or send it to the address below.

This regards mitigation for impacts on the freshwater wetland pond southward from the entrance to the tavern just east of Monte Del Lago Mobile Home Park. Per the CALTRANS displays, this wetland would be impacted by some form of bridged crossing by either Alternatives 11 or 12. During our conversation at the 20 July public hearing at North County High School, I understood you to indicate that the precise form of mitigation had yet to be determined, but that there was already some purchase of land by the State for certain aspects of the project, or that mitigation must be developed by the Elkhorn Slough Foundation.

In a telephone conversation this date with Terry Palmisano, my successor as California Fish and Game Supervisor for the Central Coast District, Ms. Palmisano and I concurred that two points are significant: (1) The mitigation should be for fresh-water wetland, which is the habitat of the pond (Elkhorn Slough is brackish Tidal water), and (2) the mitigation should be proximate to the affected wetland. We both assume that the prior acquisition that you referred to is not the wetland north of existing Highway 156; that is already a

Name: Cal. Fish and Game property, the Moro Cojo Ecological Reserve.

Address: Bruce Elliott, Retired CDFG, District Supervisor, Region 3, Sou
~~Organization~~/ 9825 Clover Trail, Oak Hills, Salinas, CA 93907-1057
~~Affiliation~~:

Phone: (831) 633-3850

Thank you and your associates for your presentation last Monday Eve.

Would you like to be added to the State Route 156 project mailing list? Yes ☒ No ☐

Please hand in your comment card tonight or send it no later than August 17, 2009 to:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

THANK YOU!

P.S.: Just a thought. Would it be possible to run just the East-bound lane of Alternative 11 South of the tree? They would keep the headlights of on-coming cars in both directions out of the vegetative material's vision.

1

2

Response to comment from Bruce Elliot

1. Mitigation at this time would be for freshwater seasonal wetland. Caltrans' goal to mitigate in-kind and on-site, or adjacent to, whenever possible. If no such mitigation is available near the existing wetlands, then mitigation would be acquired as close and as similar in kind as possible. The Moro Cojo Slough is part of the Elkhorn Slough watershed. For this reason, Elkhorn Slough Foundation lands have been identified as potential mitigation opportunities for impacts related to this project.

2. The proposed project (preferred Alternative 11) would convert U.S. Route 101 from a four-lane expressway to a four-lane freeway with 12-foot-wide lanes, 10-foot-wide outside shoulders and 5-foot-wide inside shoulders within the project limits. The median just south of the northbound connector would be 32.5 feet wide. The median width would transition to 15.8 feet wide just north of the connector. Construction of the median barrier should reduce the effects of the headlights of oncoming traffic.

Comment from A.J. Farrar

ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
PUBLIC HEARING

COMMENT CARD

Please write your comments below and return this card to any of the project team members during the meeting/open house or send it to the address below.

EXCELLENT PRESENTATION! 1
THANK YOU.
PLEASE EXPEDITE ALTERNATIVE II. 2
ASK WASHINGTON, D.C. TO FUND
THIS UNDER THE ECONOMIC STIMULUS
FUNDING "PACKAGE FOR SHOVEL-READY
PROJECTS. (FTA; DEPT. OF AG; DEPT. OF COMMERCE, ETC.
DON'T WAIT FOR ANOTHER FATAL ACCIDENT!

Name: A.J. FARRAR
Address: 9674 SANDBAR PLACE, SALINAS, CA 93907
Organization/ Affiliation: D (AJF & ASSOCIATES)
Phone: 831-632-2176
E-MAIL: AJ.FARRAR@ATT.NET
Would you like to be added to the State Route 156 project mailing list? Yes ☑ No ☐

Please hand in your comment card tonight or send it no later than August 17, 2009 to:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

THANK YOU!

Response to comment from A.J. Farrar

1. Thank you for this acknowledgement.

2. Many funding avenues are being considered for this project. Caltrans, and the Transportation Agency of Monterey County have developed a phased approach to delivering this project. Due to funding constraints, the project will be constructed in two phases. Phase 1 will start just west of Castroville Boulevard (PM R1.8) and tie back into existing State Route 156 at Prunedale North Road (PM T4.81). Phase 2 will be constructed at a later date when funds become available. The first phase would convert the existing State Route 156 from a two-lane highway to a four-lane freeway on a new alignment with a 46-foot-wide median. At the east end of the project, the proposed four lanes would transition back to the existing (U.S. Route 101/State Route 156) separation; to the west, they would transition back to the existing alignment. The existing State Route 156 into a frontage road. At the west end, the frontage road would tie into the proposed realigned Castroville Boulevard, and at the east end, it would connect to the existing Prunedale North Road. An interchange would be built at Castroville Boulevard and State Route 156 at the new alignment. A bridge would be built at Moro Coho Slough. Construction includes drainage improvements, utility relocation, soundwall installation and landscape planting. The current total escalated cost, for alternative 11, is $176,602,000, which includes the current right of way cost of $60,221,000. The escalated cost of the project is found by determining the present value of a project and then applying an inflation factor that will determine the project cost at the time the actual expenditures are estimated to occur.

Comment from Gerald (Jerry) Gifford

PROYECTO DE LA CARRETERA
Condado de Monterey
ESTATAL 156 RUMBO AL OESTE

DISTRITO 5 DE CALTRANS
PROYECTO DE LA CARRETERA ESTATAL 156 RUMBO AL OESTE
AUDENCIA PÚBLICA

TARJETA DE COMENTARIOS

Sírvase escribir a continuación sus comentarios y devuelva esta tarjeta a cualquiera de los miembros pertenecientes al equipo del proyecto en el transcurso de la reunión o de la asamblea pública informal, o mándela por correo a la dirección que aparece a continuación.

I am a bit concerned about the noise evaluation that was done. Timing is an issue. March is not busy season.

Nombre: Gerald (Jerry) Gifford
Dirección: 9936 Timothy Path
Organización / Afiliación: OHHOA
Teléfono: 637-0401

¿Quisiera que lo incluyeran en la lista de correo relacionada con el proyecto de la Ruta Estatal 156?

Sí ☒ No ☐

Por favor entregue su tarjeta de comentarios esta noche o envíela por correo a más tardar el 17 de agosto de 2009 a:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

¡MUCHAS GRACIAS!

Response to comment from Gerald (Jerry) Gifford

The outdoor noise evaluation conducted in March 2012 included weekday and weekend noise readings. Based on measurements taken in your area, existing noise levels are 65 decibels. Predicted noise levels after the project is constructed are estimated to be 54 decibels. Noise levels are anticipated to be less because the proposed project will move traffic lanes away from the residential areas.

Comment from Ken Goebel

ROUTE 156 WEST
MONTEREY COUNTY
CORRIDOR PROJECT

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
PUBLIC HEARING

COMMENT CARD

Please write your comments below and return this card to any of the project team members during the meeting/open house or send it to the address below.

- Great Job! Good presentation
- I like option 11
- not sure about Rail or light at cathedral. would look to ya experts. 1
- Get Money Faster — Start Sooner 2

Name: Ken Goebel
Address: 9520 South Century Oak
Organization / Affiliation:
Phone: 831-633-5141

Would you like to be added to the State Route 156 project mailing list? Yes ☐ No ☐
My wife signed up for that

Please hand in your comment card tonight or send it no later than August 17, 2009 to:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

THANK YOU!

Response to comment from Ken Goebel

1. Thank you for this acknowledgment. Caltrans investigated access alternatives for the Oak Hills community in 2009, including grade signals at Cathedral Oaks and State Route 156. A safety analysis at the Cathedral Oaks intersection was conducted by Caltrans for the three-year period from July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2006 using the most current data available. Results showed that the actual total collision rate at this location is similar to the statewide average for similar locations. Based on existing traffic volumes, intersection analyses were performed comparing the average delay between the existing stop-controlled intersection to the proposed half-traffic-signal alternatives. The delay to the traveling public would increase 18 percent during the morning peak and 280 percent in the evening peak travel times. Based on the best information and analysis to date, Caltrans staff has determined that a traffic signal at Cathedral Oaks and State Route 156 would not be an acceptable solution.

2. Many funding avenues are being considered for this project. Caltrans, and the Transportation Agency of Monterey County have developed a phased approach to delivering this project. Due to funding constraints, the project will be constructed in two phases. Phase 1 will start just west of Castroville Boulevard (PM R1.8) and tie back into existing State Route 156 at Prunedale North Road (PM T4.81). Phase 2 will be constructed at a later date when funds become available. The first phase would convert the existing State Route 156 from a two-lane highway to a four-lane freeway on a new alignment with a 46-foot-wide median. At the east end of the project, the proposed four lanes would transition back to the existing (U.S. Route 101/State Route 156) separation; to the west, they would transition back to the existing alignment. The existing State Route 156 into a frontage road. At the west end, the frontage road would tie into the proposed realigned Castroville Boulevard, and at the east end, it would connect to the existing Prunedale North Road. An interchange would be built at Castroville Boulevard and State Route 156 at the new alignment. A bridge would be built at Moro Coho Slough. Construction includes drainage improvements, utility relocation, soundwall installation and landscape planting. The current total escalated cost, for alternative 11, is $176,602,000, which includes the current right of way cost of $60,221,000. The escalated cost of a project is found by determining the present value of a project and then applying an inflation factor that will determine the project cost at the time the actual expenditures are estimated to occur.

Comment from Jean and Ken Goebel

ROUTE 156 WEST
MONTEREY COUNTY
CORRIDOR PROJECT

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
PUBLIC HEARING

COMMENT CARD

Please write your comments below and return this card to any of the project team members during the meeting/open house or send it to the address below.

We like alternative 11 → more safety for local residents, please a better access to local service

Name: Jean & Ken Goebel
Address: 9570 S. Century Oak Road, Salinas, CA 93907
Organization/ Affiliation:
Phone: (831) 633-5141

Would you like to be added to the State Route 156 project mailing list? Yes ☑ No ☐

Please hand in your comment card tonight or send it no later than August 17, 2009 to:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

THANK YOU!

Response to comment from Jean and Ken Goebel

Thank you for this acknowledgement.

Comment from Robert Gowers

ROUTE 156 WEST
Monterey County
CORRIDOR PROJECT

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
PUBLIC HEARING

COMMENT CARD

Please write your comments below and return this card to any of the project team members during the meeting/open house or send it to the address below.

Includ a ~~bycy~~ bicycle path alongside either alternative. 1

Picks #12 or the least expensive Alternative 2

Name: Robert Gowers
Address: P.O. Box 1622 Castroville CA 95012
Organization/ Affiliation: Member Board of Directors OAK HILLS HOMEOWNERS Association
Phone: 831-633-6255

Would you like to be added to the State Route 156 project mailing list? Yes ☒ No ☐

Please hand in your comment card tonight or send it no later than August 17, 2009 to:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

THANK YOU!

Response to comment from Robert Gowers

1. Pedestrian facilities (sidewalks and bike lanes) are considered during the design stage of the project. During this time, locations of pedestrian facilities are finalized. Potential bike lanes could be considered on the proposed frontage road (existing State Route 156).

2. Thank you for your comment. Alternative 11 was selected as the preferred alternative. Many funding avenues are being considered for this project. Caltrans, and the Transportation Agency of Monterey County have developed a phased approach to delivering this project. Due to funding constraints, the project will be constructed in two phases. Phase 1 will start just west of Castroville Boulevard (PM R1.8) and tie back into existing State Route 156 at Prunedale North Road (PM T4.81). Phase 2 will be constructed at a later date when funds become available. The first phase would convert the existing State Route 156 from a two-lane highway to a four-lane freeway on a new alignment with a 46-foot-wide median. At the east end of the project, the proposed four lanes would transition back to the existing (U.S. Route 101/State Route 156) separation; to the west, they would transition back to the existing alignment. The existing State Route 156 into a frontage road. At the west end, the frontage road would tie into the proposed realigned Castroville Boulevard, and at the east end, it would connect to the existing Prunedale North Road. An interchange would be built at Castroville Boulevard and State Route 156 at the new alignment. A bridge would be built at Moro Coho Slough. Construction includes drainage improvements, utility relocation, soundwall installation and landscape planting.

   Alternative 11 is the least expensive alternative (total cost $291,000,000) as reported in the draft environmental document. Modifications to the design based on comments received during circulation of the draft environmental document further reduced the cost. The escalated cost, for alternative 11, is $176,602,000, which includes the current right of way cost of $60,221,000. The escalated cost of the project is found by determining the present value of a project and then applying an inflation factor that will determine the project cost at the time actual expenditures area estimated to occur.

Comment from Linda Grier (2 pages)

Trais
Norris/D06/Caltrans/CAGov
08/03/2009 04:59 PM

To "Linda Ausonio Grier" <linda@ausonio.com>
cc Kay Goshgarian/D06/Caltrans/CAGov@DOT
bcc
Subject Re: Caltrans District 5 - Route 156 West Corridor Project

Dear Ms. Grier,

Thank you for your interest in the Route 156 West Corridor project. There is always the possibility that new laws or regulations will happen after this EIR is completed. If this should happen then a Supplemental EIR would be prepared and circulated identifying those changes. To answer your question on costs: Yes, the $437 million dollar cost does include acquisition of land, business's and residences along with relocation assistance for both residences and business's.

We appreciate your attendance and comments for the project. If you have additional comments, please contact me at the information below.

G. William "Trais" Norris, III
Senior Environmental Planner
Sierra Pacific Environmental Analysis Branch
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726-5428
Fresno: 559.243.8178
San Luis Obispo: 805.542.4711
Fax: 559.243.8215
Mobile: 559.246.8601
"Linda Ausonio Grier" <linda@ausonio.com>

"Linda Ausonio Grier"
<linda@ausonio.com>
07/22/2009 08:53 AM

To <trais_norris@dot.ca.gov>
cc
Subject Caltrans District 5 - Route 156 West Corridor Project

EIR public comment process

When this EIR is complete, if the state or federal EIR requirements change, does this EIR have to be revised or resubmitted? 1

Does the $437 million budget include the acquisition/relocation of land, businesses and homes as discussed in the meeting July 20, 2009? 2

I found the information presented to be very informative.
Thank you.

Linda A. Grier
Ausonio Affiliates
11420 A Commercial Parkway
Castroville, CA 95012
831-633-3371


831-970-5344
831-633-3389 fax
linda@ausonio.com

Response to comment from Linda A. Grier

1. Changes and/or additions to project design, mitigation requirements and state environmental laws and regulations not addressed in the previous environmental impact report may require preparation of a supplement or addendum to the environmental impact report, under the California Environmental Quality Act. Likewise, changes in project engineering/design, federal environmental laws and regulations, and environmental commitments not addressed in the previous environmental document may require a reevaluation under the National Environmental Policy Act.

2. The $437 million cost includes the acquisition/relocation of land, businesses and homes, and relocation assistance.

   Modifications to the design based on comments received during circulation of the draft environmental document reduced the cost. The escalated cost, for alternative 11, is $176,602,000, which includes the current right of way cost of $60,221,000. The escalated cost of the project is found by determining the present value of a project and then applying an inflation factor that will determine the project cost at the time actual expenditures area estimated to occur.

Comment from Jeanette Haas (2 pages)

ROUTE 156 WEST
MONTEREY COUNTY
CORRIDOR PROJECT

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
PUBLIC HEARING

COMMENT CARD

Please write your comments below and return this card to any of the project team members during the meeting/open house or send it to the address below.

We own a business located at 8965 S. Prunedale Rd. where we own the property.
We are in the construction zone, because of that we would have difficulty selling our business, however Rollin Haas, the contractor is 63 yrs old. We need an exit strategy to move into retirement within 3-5 yrs. What do we need to do now to prepare for that event - and work with you to transfer the property? Can you relocate us so that we are on property that we could sell our business? 1
We support the need for redesign of the 156/101 hwys. - it is dangerous and difficult for residents at best. 2

OVER →

Name: Jeanette Haas
Address: 21168 Old Ranch Ct. Salinas CA 93908
Organization/ Affiliation: Rollin Haas, Master Landscapers Inc.
Phone: (831) 970-6119

Would you like to be added to the State Route 156 project mailing list? Yes ☒ No ☐

Please hand in your comment card tonight or send it no later than August 17, 2009 to:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

THANK YOU!

Can a business be purchased on a hardship advanced acquisition?

3

Response to comment from Jeanette Haas

1. It is estimated that property appraisals would begin in Spring 2013. Caltrans would provide relocation advisory assistance to any person, business, farm, or non-profit organization displaced as a result of Caltrans' acquisition of real property for public use. All displacees would be offered relocation advisory assistance for the purpose of locating a replacement property. All reasonable attempts would be made to assist a business in finding replacement property within the community.

2. Caltrans has the responsibility to appraise the fair market value of your property (real estate), negotiate a purchase of the property, and provide relocation assistance. Caltrans does not acquire the business value itself, but you would have the opportunity to file a claim for loss of business goodwill if you so desire. If you have further questions or concerns, please contact Nick Dumas, Assistant Central Region Chief, Right of Way (telephone: 559.445.6195; email: Nick_Dumas@dot.ca.gov; U.S. mail: 855 M Street, Suite 200, Fresno, CA 93721).

3. As the current project schedule would have us begin appraisals in spring 2013, Caltrans is not accepting hardship applications at this time. Caltrans, however, would be able to label your property as one of the first to be appraised so the acquisition and relocation process can begin.

Comment from Roger Huff

July 22, 2009

Mr. G. William "Trais" Norris
California Department of Transportation
2015 E. Shields Ave., Suite 100
Fresno, California 93726

Dear Mr. Norris:

I appreciate this opportunity to formally comment on the Route 156 West Corridor Project, and look forward to reading the responses to these and other's inputs as promised by the CALTRANS Project Manager, Mr. David Silberberger. Although preparation of a draft environmental document may be an important milestone in a bureaucratic process, it regrettably contributes little to reaching the much more urgent and fundamental goal of improving public safety on Route 156. Spending more to finalize a document that will be "shelved indefinitely" because an overly ambitious project has become unaffordable... wastes precious taxpayer money.

As a former Project/Program Manager for the Government, I fully appreciate Mr. Silberberger's point about having environmental documentation ready, but while it is "waiting in the wings" for funds that may never come, people are still getting injured or killed along Route 156. All that those of us who risk our lives daily on this dangerous stretch of highway ever needed was a simple on-demand traffic signal at the intersection of Route 156 and Cathedral Oak Road; but it became apparent that CALTRANS preferred to focus upon much grander, much more expensive, and much less affordable, alternatives. It's time for a reality check. 1

Signs of often-fatal "requirements creep" began to appear as early as February 2007. The estimated cost for the basic on-demand traffic signal got inflated to $18M, because a traffic model run (based upon very questionable assumptions) indicated that enormous buffer lanes might be necessary in both directions. The estimate costs have now ballooned to over $400M and include projects that have very little, if anything, to do with improving public safety in the Route 156 corridor. 2

Replace wasteful spending with common sense, and apply the money saved to where it will do more good. Compile public inputs on your draft Document, and be positioned to finalize it quickly when/if funds ever becomes available. In the meantime, re-direct the saved money to install the urgently needed on-demand traffic signal at the intersection of Route 156 and Cathedral Oak Road now.

Sincerely,

Roger Huff

Response to comment from Roger Huff

1. Caltrans investigated access alternatives for the Oak Hills community in 2009, including traffic signals at Cathedral Oaks and State Route 156. A safety analysis at the Cathedral Oaks intersection was conducted by Caltrans for the three-year period from July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2006 using the most current data available. Results showed that the actual total collision rate at this location is similar to the statewide average for similar locations. Based on existing traffic volumes, intersection analyses were performed comparing the average delay between the existing stop-controlled intersection to the proposed half-traffic-signal alternatives. The delay to the traveling public would increase 18 percent during the morning peak and 28 percent in the evening peak travel times, contributing to the existing congestion on State Route 156. Based on the best information and analysis to date, Caltrans staff has determined that a traffic signal at Cathedral Oaks and State Route 156 would not be an acceptable solution.

   Under Alternative 11, the existing roadway would be maintained as a frontage road to provide local access to the new freeway. Local residents along State Route 156 could use the frontage road for access to shopping and business centers on U.S. Route 101 without competing with recreational and interregional traffic. Construction of a new alignment for State Route 156 would allow uninterrupted traffic flow for recreational travelers to the Monterey Peninsula.

2. Many funding avenues are being considered for this project. Caltrans, and the Transportation Agency of Monterey County have developed a phased approach to delivering this project. Due to funding constraints, the project will be constructed in two phases. Phase 1 will start just west of Castroville Boulevard (PM R1.8) and tie back into existing State Route 156 at Prunedale North Road (PM T4.81). Phase 2 will be constructed at a later date when funds become available. The first phase would convert the existing State Route 156 from a two-lane highway to a four-lane freeway on a new alignment with a 46-foot-wide median. At the east end of the project, the proposed four lanes would transition back to the existing (U.S. Route 101/State Route 156) separation; to the west, they would transition back to the existing alignment. The existing State Route 156 into a frontage road. At the west end, the frontage road would tie into the proposed realigned Castroville Boulevard, and at the east end, it would connect to the existing Prunedale North Road. An interchange would be built at Castroville Boulevard and State Route 156 at the new alignment. A bridge would be built at Moro Coho Slough. Construction includes drainage improvements, utility relocation, soundwall

installation and landscape planting. The escalated cost, for alternative 11, is $176,602,000, which includes the current right of way cost of $60,221,000. The escalated cost of the project is found by determining the present value of a project and then applying an inflation factor that will determine the project cost at the time the actual expenditures area estimated to occur.

Comment from Barbara Hughes

ROUTE 156 WEST
Monterey County
CORRIDOR PROJECT

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
PUBLIC HEARING

COMMENT CARD

Please write your comments below and return this card to any of the project team members during the meeting/open house or send it to the address below.

(1) Our area of Oak Hills is very much in favor of Alternative 11. It provides an extra 2 lanes for traffic and costs $50 million less.

Will we get a chance to vote on these alternatives?

Name: Barbara Hughes
Address: 9734 Bluestem Path Salinas 93907
Organization/ Affiliation: Oak Hills
Phone: 831 633-6240

Would you like to be added to the State Route 156 project mailing list? Yes ☐ No ☐

Please hand in your comment card tonight or send it no later than August 17, 2009 to:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

THANK YOU!

Response to comment from Barbara Hughes

Thank you for your input. Alternative 11 was selected as the preferred alternative. The Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment was circulated to the public from June 30, 2009 to August 17, 2009. Comments were received from the public, Federal, State and local agencies during and after the circulation period. These comments were reviewed and their content considered by the Project Development team in making the selection of the Alternative 11 as the preferred Alternative.

Comment from Sharon Joyce

ROUTE 156 WEST
Monterey County
CORRIDOR PROJECT

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
PUBLIC HEARING

COMMENT CARD

Please write your comments below and return this card to any of the project team members during the meeting/open house or send it to the address below.

I live off Berta Canyon Rd. I appreciate that efforts were made to reduce footprint of 101/156 interchange. I got 4 children through high school & driver's ed – Now, to make local access better, my local neighborhood (within ½ mile of 101) is being urbanized & I get to look at the EB 156 traffic – goal is to move faster on weekends – when they & I go N. on 101 they will still create traffic.. – You didn't do the Prunedale Bypass –

Name: Sharon Joyce
Address: 8722 Lilac Ct. PD CA 93907
Organization/ Affiliation: Manzanita Estates Homeowners Association
Phone: 831-663-6900

Would you like to be added to the State Route 156 project mailing list? ~~Yes~~ ☒ No ☐

Please hand in your comment card tonight or send it no later than August 17, 2009 to:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

THANK YOU!

Response to comment from Sharon Joyce

Caltrans and many agencies from Monterey County studied the feasibility of providing a bypass for U.S. Route 101 around Prunedale. The conclusion of this ongoing study found that it was too expensive and environmental impacts too great. Using available funding, Caltrans and the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) developed the Prunedale Improvement Project (PIP), which addresses safety and operational improvements along U.S. Route 101. The Prunedale Improvement Project is being built and should be completed in 2015.

Comment from Bill and Tosca Lewis

ROUTE 156 WEST
Monterey County
CORRIDOR PROJECT

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
PUBLIC HEARING

COMMENT CARD

Please write your comments below and return this card to any of the project team members during the meeting/open house or send it to the address below. 7/22/2009

We are in favor of alternative #11. As homeowners in Oak Hills we are concerned about safety, preservation of our community, and our property values. For these reasons it appears that of the two alternatives presented #11 is the better choice. Thank you for the opportunity to submit a comment. Sincerely,
Tosca Lewis

Name: Bill & Tosca Lewis
Address: 9571 Stone Oak Ct. Salinas, CA 93907
Organization/ Affiliation: Resident
Phone: 831 633-6488

Would you like to be added to the State Route 156 project mailing list? Yes ☒ No ☐

Please hand in your comment card tonight or send it no later than August 17, 2009 to:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

THANK YOU!

Response to comment from Bill and Tosca Lewis

Thank you for your comment. Alternative 11 was selected as the preferred alternative.

Comment from Edward P. and Caroline L. Lyman

ROUTE 156 WEST
Monterey County
CORRIDOR PROJECT

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
PUBLIC HEARING

COMMENT CARD

Please write your comments below and return this card to any of the project team members during the meeting/open house or send it to the address below.

We feel it is not in the best interest of our community to eliminate 35 businesses in Prunedale. We have been residents of Prunedale for the past 47 yr. We are interested in our community. We have raised our children & some grandchildren here. We wanted years to have shopping center here. It is unfair to destroy peoples lives by closing their businesses. The main reason for widening Hwy. 156 is greater access to the Monterey Peninsula for the tourists. We are happy with the present interchange. Send the tourists down Espinosa Rd. 1 2

Name: Edward P. & Caroline L. LYMAN
Address: 17049 Mc Guffie Rd., Prunedale, CA 93907
Organization/ Affiliation: Prunedale Property Owner & self
Phone: 831-663-3241

Would you like to be added to the State Route 156 project mailing list? Yes ☒ No ☐

Please hand in your comment card tonight or send it no later than August 17, 2009 to:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

THANK YOU!

Response to comment from Edward P. and Caroline L. Lyman

1. At this time, the number of businesses affected by the project is only an estimate for purposes of producing the environmental document and project report. Based on the final relocation impact report prepared by Caltrans, the McDonald's, Country Restaurant and Valero would be full acquisitions. Due to funding constraints, the project will be constructed in two phases. Phase 1 will start just west of Castroville Boulevard (PM R1.8) and tie back into existing State Route 156 at Prunedale North Road (PM T4.81). Phase 2 will be constructed at a later date when funds become available and will include the McDonald's, Country Restaurant, Valero and other businesses. Small businesses that would require full acquisition and reestablishment include a rock and landscaping service, an automobile repair and sales center, a used tire retailer, a prefabricated structure with show lot and sales facility, and a multiple-unit storage facility. If a business property is subject to relocation, Caltrans would provide relocation advisory assistance to any person, business, farm, or non-profit organization displaced as a result of Caltrans' acquisition of real property for public use. More in-depth design work in the next phase could eliminate certain businesses from being affected. The environmental document states 35 businesses could be affected by the project. This sum also includes a number of storage units, which are each counted by right-of-way as individual businesses. Some of these same businesses (including storage units) may also be affected by the Prunedale Improvement Project.

   Most of the businesses that would potentially be affected are in the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange area. The project team is working on splitting the bigger project into smaller, more fundable phases. The current strategy calls for the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange to be the last stage. So, it is unclear when any of the businesses would be affected.

2. Major improvements would be needed for Espinosa Road to handle tourist traffic. Improvements would remove a large area of prime agricultural land from production and cost two to three times more than any proposed alternative for State Route 156.

   The proposed Route 156 West Corridor project would add four lanes south of existing State Route 156. Construction of this new alignment would divert interregional traffic away from the residential communities next to State Route 156 and U.S. Route 101. Residents and communities next to State Route 156 and

U.S. Route 101 would be provided a more direct travel route via the frontage road (existing State Route 156) to shopping, services and jobs in Prunedale and Castroville.

Comment from Rod Karg

ROUTE 156 WEST
CORRIDOR PROJECT

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
PUBLIC HEARING

COMMENT CARD

Please write your comments below and return this card to any of the project team members during the meeting/open house or send it to the address below.

I prefer Alternative 11. This alternative is cheaper. Alt. 11 will result in less highway noise in Oak Hills. I feel that the frontage road will be a much safer route for Oak Hills residents. The frontage road will also reduce traffic on 156.

Name: Rod Karg
Address: 9908 Cocklebur Ct. Salinas, CA 93907
Organization/ Affiliation: Oak Hills
Phone: 831-633-5785

Would you like to be added to the State Route 156 project mailing list? Yes ☐ No ☑

Please hand in your comment card tonight or send it no later than August 17, 2009 to:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

THANK YOU!

Response to comment from Rod Karg

Thank you for your comment. Alternative 11 was selected as the preferred alternative.

Comment from Sig Matt (3 pages, email)

Trais
Norris/D06/Caltrans/CAGov
08/17/2009 08:19 AM

To Sig Matt <sigmatt@sbcglobal.net>
cc Kay Goshgarian/D06/Caltrans/CAGov@DOT
bcc
Subject Re: Route 156 West Corridor Project

History: This message has been forwarded.

Dear Mr. Matt,

Thank you for comment on the SR 156 West Corridor project. Your comment along with other's will be addressed in the final environmental document anticipated to be completed and released to the public in December 2010. If you have any questions regarding the project, please contact me at 805.542.4711.

~^

G. William "Trais" Norris, III
Senior Environmental Planner
Sierra Pacific Environmental Analysis Branch
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726-5428
Fresno: 559.243.8178
San Luis Obispo: 805.542.4711
Fax: 559.243.8215
Mobile: 559.246.8601
Sig Matt <sigmatt@sbcglobal.net>

Sig Matt
<sigmatt@sbcglobal.net>
08/16/2009 10:07 PM

To Norris Caltrans Trais <Trais_Norris@dot.ca.gov>
cc
Subject Route 156 West Corridor Project

August 15, 2009

STATE ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT

G. William Trais Norris, Senior Environmental Planner

Dear Sir:

As a 45 year taxpaying resident of this area I feel obligated to comment on the proposed project.

1) I recommend Alt. 11
It retains the existing Highway 156 between Castroville and Prunedale as a local frontage road. Local traffic and Freeway
through-traffic do not mix well. Prunedale needs more frontage roads, not less.

1

2a) We are always led to believe that Environmental rules call for the study of alternatives.
I see no such study for an alternate location for the 101 -156 Interchange. 2
While the Engineering Design Group did a commendable job of sorting out the conflicting traffic mix in this area.
The result however is a further massive division of a small community by numerous additional traffic lanes, ramps and bridge structures. The Draft EIR states that sidewalk space across the structures are being considered. (It should properly state "are being provided"), and it is obvious, of course, that there are no pedestrian or bicycle connections between the 2 parts of Prunedale. The library is on the West side and the Post office was on the East side of town. If you live on the wrong side of town you most use a powered vehicle to get to the other side. That really bolsters the sincerity for the "walkable communities" aspect.

b) The presently proposed project divides this small settlement even further. In the area south of the Vierra Canyon Rd. Rd. junction there are 14 or more traffic lanes running more or less parallel. (The web page, even enlarged, does not show the detail clearly to get an accurate count of the number of lanes.) 3
The necessary 4 additional traffic lites on the 101 to San Miguel connector will severally impact an already congested traffic flow on San Miguel Canyon Road. The residents, living on the north side of San Miguel Cnyn. Rd., who must turn left onto San Miguel already have difficulty making that turn during rush hours as the backed-up traffic already extends to Castroville Blvd. much of the time. Increasing the number of traffic lites on this route will decrease the traffic flow further to were a left turn becomes impossible.
The size of this project is simply too large to put into center of this small settlement of Prunedale.)

c) Additionally there is the issue of 35 businesses being displaced. There is no hint of where they might go nor an estimate of how many would likely leave the area altogether, leaving the residents to travel afar for the missing services. 4

d) The most recent upgrade to the 101 - 156 transition connection has only been in operation 3 or 4 years.
At that time of that construction the local residents were told in no uncertain terms that these 4 overpass structures would be incorporated in any future improvements. 5
Well, under the present proposed plan they will be demolished. This really undermines the credibility of the organization promoting the project.

3) One alternate location for the 101 - 156 interchange could be the planned overpass at the 101 - Reese Circle location that is in the pipeline now. That area is much less densely developed, much fewer businesses and residences to relocate. The existing layout in the current 101 - 156 junction could stay in place as is to serve the local community. 6

Thank you for your attention to these issues that are so vital to this small community.

Sincerely,

Sig Matt
sigmatt@sbcglobal.net

Response to comment from Sig Matt

1. Thank you for your comment. Alternative 11 was selected as the preferred alternative.

2. Numerous U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange configurations were studied during the course of years of environmental study. The main focus of the design team, after receiving early public input, was to keep the footprint of the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange as small as possible. The resulting design as shown in the draft environmental document was the best design that could feasibly be built while maintaining the smallest footprint.

   Adding sidewalks and bike lanes on Prunedale Road would be considered during the design stage of the project. The current design does supply enough space under the structures to add sidewalks and bike lanes.

3. This project proposes to construct a new east-side four-lane frontage road system to connect West San Miguel Road to the east side of Prunedale through the Vierra Canyon intersection and onto a new full interchange. Instead of further dividing the community, this project would help tie one side of Prunedale to the other via the new frontage road system that allows local residents to pass from one side of U.S. Route 101 to the other without having to use the highway itself. Also, congestion on San Miguel Road that backs up to Castroville Boulevard should be eliminated by the new frontage road system since there would be four lanes of capacity (two lanes in each direction) instead of two going over U.S. Route 101. Synchronized signals that coordinate with traffic volumes during the day should further relieve congestion.

4. At this time, the number of businesses affected by the project is only an estimate for purposes of producing the environmental document and project report. Based on the final relocation impact report prepared by Caltrans, the McDonald's, Country Restaurant and Valero would be full acquisitions. Small businesses that would require full acquisition and reestablishment include a rock and landscaping service, an auto repair and sales center, a used tire retailer, a pre-fabricated structure with show lot and sales facility, and a multiple-unit storage facility. If a business property is subject to relocation, Caltrans would provide relocation advisory assistance to any person, business, farm, or non-profit organization displaced as a result of Caltrans' acquisition of real property for public use. More in-depth design work in the next phase could eliminate certain businesses from

being affected. The environmental document stated 35 businesses could be affected by the project. This number also may include a number of individual storage units, with each unit representing a single business, and some of the same businesses that were affected by the Prunedale Improvement Project.

Most of the businesses that would potentially be affected are in the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange area. Due to funding constraints, the project will be constructed in two phases. Phase 1 will start just west of Castroville Boulevard (PM R1.8) and tie back into existing State Route 156 at Prunedale North Road (PM T4.81). Phase 2 will be constructed at a later date when funds become available and will include the McDonald's, Country Restaurant, Valero and other businesses.

5. Project alternatives for the Route 156 West Corridor project were not developed at the time the upgrades were made to the U. S. Route 101/State Route 156 transition. It was unknown at the time that demolition of structures would occur. Once the alternative analysis was underway, the main focus on the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange was to keep the footprint as small as possible and to transition with the additional lanes for State Route 156. After studying numerous U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange configurations, the resulting design for the Route 156 West Corridor project was the best design that could feasibly be built while maintaining the smallest footprint.

6. In regard to moving the interchange farther south, this would require a more extensive realignment of State Route 156. This would also have greater impacts to residences on the east side of U.S. Route 101, involve a vast amount of earthwork and could potentially cost more than the currently selected design.

Comment from Marilyn D. McLoughlin

ROUTE 156 WEST
MONTEREY COUNTY
CORRIDOR PROJECT

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
PUBLIC HEARING

COMMENT CARD

Please write your comments below and return this card to any of the project team members during the meeting/open house or send it to the address below.

I support alternative #11 because it gives a safe road for everyone coming & going to/from Oak Hills. Also it would be safe for young children driving to the High School and School buses going to Oak Hills, and Monte Del Lago. "Safer" access for young people. 1

In the meantime - we need a light @ Chualar del Oak - Oak Hills 2

Name: Marilyn D. McLoughlin
Address: 9540 So. Century Oak Rd
Organization/ Affiliation: Oak Hills
Phone: 831-633-4185

Would you like to be added to the State Route 156 project mailing list? Yes ☐ No ☐

Please hand in your comment card tonight or send it no later than August 17, 2009 to:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

THANK YOU!

Response to comment from Marilyn D. McLoughlin

1. Thank you for your comment. Alternative 11 was selected as the preferred alternative.

2. In 2009, Caltrans studied access alternatives for the Oak Hills community that included at-grade signals at Cathedral Oaks and State Route 156. A safety analysis at the Cathedral Oaks intersection was conducted by Caltrans for the three-year period from July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2006 using the most current data available. Results showed that the actual total collision rate at this location is similar to the statewide average for similar locations. Based on existing traffic volumes, intersection analyses were performed comparing the average delay between the existing stop-controlled intersection to the proposed half-traffic-signal alternatives. The delay to the traveling public would increase 18 percent during the morning peak and 280 percent in the evening peak travel times. Based on the best information and analysis to date, Caltrans staff determined a signal at Cathedral Oaks and State Route 156 would not be an acceptable solution.

Comment from Jan Mitchell

PROYECTO DE LA CARRETERA
Condado de Monterey
ESTATAL 156 RUMBO AL OESTE

DISTRITO 5 DE CALTRANS
PROYECTO DE LA CARRETERA ESTATAL 156 RUMBO AL OESTE
AUDENCIA PÚBLICA

TARJETA DE COMENTARIOS

Sírvase escribir a continuación sus comentarios y devuelva esta tarjeta a cualquiera de los miembros pertenecientes al equipo del proyecto en el transcurso de la reunión o de la asamblea pública informal, o mándela por correo a la dirección que aparece a continuación.

Our Prunedale Neighbors Group is greatly disturbed that the Hwy 101/156 Interchange in Prunedale is to be "de-constructed" — our hard earned tax dollars at work! People are out of work, lost their homes to foreclosure, & we're throwing away interchanges ... utterly outrageous!!! 1

We are also greatly disturbed over the loss of businesses in our established community - the loss of mobile homes for those who cannot afford re-location - Is this simply all about farmers & tourism — what about the residents? 2

Nombre: Jan Mitchell, Rep-
Dirección: 10 Carlsen Rd. Prunedale, Ca. 93907-1309
Organización/ Afiliación: Prunedale Neighbors Group
Teléfono: 831-663-3021

¿Quisiera que lo incluyeran en la lista de correo relacionada con el proyecto de la Ruta Estatal 156?

Sí ☐ No ☐

Por favor entregue su tarjeta de comentarios esta noche o envíela por correo a más tardar el 17 de agosto de 2009 a:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

¡MUCHAS GRACIAS!

Response to comment from Jan Mitchell

1. Once the alternative analysis was underway for the Route 156 West Corridor project, the main focus on the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange was to keep the footprint as small as possible and to transition with the additional lanes for State Route 156. After studying numerous U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange configurations, the resulting design for the Route 156 West Corridor project was the best design that could feasibly be built while maintaining the smallest footprint. A separate estimate for costs associated with demolishing the existing U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange has not been developed. This cost estimate would be made at the final design phase before preparing the project for contract advertising.

2. At this time, the number of businesses affected by the project is only an estimate for purposes of producing the environmental document and project report. Based on the final relocation impact report prepared by Caltrans, the McDonald's, Country Restaurant and Valero would be full acquisitions. Small businesses that would require full acquisition and reestablishment include a rock and landscaping service, an auto repair and sales center, a used tire retailer, a pre-fabricated structure with show lot and sales facility, and a multiple-unit storage facility. More in-depth design work in the next phase could eliminate certain businesses from being affected. This number also may include a number of individual storage units, with each unit representing a single business, and some of the same businesses that were affected by the Prunedale Improvement Project.

   Most of the businesses that would potentially be affected are in the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange area (Phase 2). Due to funding constraints, the project will be constructed in two phases. Phase 1 will start just west of Castroville Boulevard (PM R1.8) and tie back into existing State Route 156 at Prunedale North Road (PM T4.81). Phase 2 will be constructed at a later date when funds become available and will include the McDonald's, Country Restaurant, Valero and other businesses. Phase 2 will be constructed at a later date when funds become available.

   Any qualified owner of both the land and the mobile home for more than 180 days before the initiation of negotiations for the acquisition of property and the mobile home unit may be entitled to a Replacement Housing Payment, in addition to the fair market value of your property.

If the mobile home is not acquired by Caltrans, the owner of a mobile home is eligible for a payment to move the mobile home to a replacement piece of land based on an actual cost basis. This includes the cost to dissemble, move and reassemble any porches, decks, skirting and/or awnings. For details on mobile home relocation benefits, please access the following English language website: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/row/pubs/mobile_eng.pdf

Comment from Jan Mitchell (5 pages, email)

To: "NORRIS, G. Wm/Trais/CalTrans" <trais_norris@dot.ca.gov>
Cc: Silberberger Dave - CALTRANS <david_silberberger@dot.ca.gov>, Calcagno Lou - Sup <district2@co.monterey.ca.us>
Subject: Fwd: ROUTE #156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT

Dear Mr. Norris: Rather than bother you by phone, I thought I might take a moment to again submit our request for information. Please note, this is my SECOND request. I've not received any response from your "referral" either (?)

Please be kind enough to advise whether or not I need to submit a FORMAL, written PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST to secure the information which our membership is seeking. I will be happy to do whatever is necessary, because we would like to have printed documentation to photocopy and share with our membership. 1

I appreciate that you must be quite busy; however since it has been better than two weeks now since we requested this information, we felt we should therefore follow-up to determine if something more is needed on our part.

Our membership just met this past Tuesday evening, with much discussion concerning the serious impacts of this proposal, not only to our established business community in Prunedale, but also to the Oak Hills subdivision. It is critical that we receive all of the facts. Our neighbors cannot SUPPORT any proposal absent all the facts.

Thank you AGAIN, in advance for providing the information which we previously requested.
Happy trails,
Jan Mitchell, Rep
PRUNEDALE NEIGHBORS GROUP
PRUNEDALE PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

Subject: Re: ROUTE #156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT

THANK YOU, Mr. Norris for responding to my request concerning our additional questions relative to the proposed Route 156 West Corridor project.

We have since printed additional Fact Sheets and continue to circulate copies as we meet with other groups who also voice similar concerns. No need for additional expense to copy and mail by CALTRANS, nonetheless, we appreciate your offer to do so.

With regard to my inquiry into the names and locations of the businesses planned for removal, perhaps you could list ALL of them---both those planned for Alternative 11 and Alternative 12. It is certainly important that our community is aware (in dollars) of the devastation we are forced to absorb, and only fair and equitable that this information be available to circulate to every single resident. This impact will affect ALL businesses, their employees, shoppers, visitors, landlords, and everyone who has come to rely on these sales 2

and services for the convenience of our neighborhoods. It goes without saying that many locals purchased their rural homes here with the number-one advantage being the convenience of shopping nearby.

While, as Mr. Silberberger stated at the recent CALTRANS meeting that all were pleased that the design footprint was modified and downsized from the "initial spaghetti interchange" plan, has anyone seriously considered the "economic" impacts to Monterey County (not to mention the "established community of Prunedale") when 35 (more or less) businesses are removed? This does not take into consideration any residents and/or families losses. 3

Yes, I would appreciate your deferring my question about the COST to dismantle the current Hwy 101/156 Interchange in Prunedale to Mr. Silberberger, or to anyone else who can supply me with the answers that I seek. 4

Thanks very much for providing your phone number. We will be contacting you to discuss this further very soon.
Happy trails,
Jan Mitchell, Rep
PRUNEDALE NEIGHBORS GROUP
PRUNEDALE PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

On Aug 3, 2009, at 2:34 PM, Trais Norris wrote:

> Hello Ms. Mitchell,
>
> Thank you for your interest in the Route 156 West Corridor project. If you
> need more copies of the Project Fact Sheet I can provide them to you. Please provide me the number of copies needed and also an address to mail
> them too. As far as identifying business/property owners impacted by the project, it is still preliminary and until our design details are finalized and a preferred alternative is selected we cannot say exactly who is being impacted at this time. The number of business identified in the draft environmental document stated 35, that would also include a number of individual storage units and some of the same business's that are impacted
> by the Prunedale Improvement Project. The actual number of impacted business's will be less than 35, but until we have a final design we will not know the exact number. I will be defer your question about the throw-away cost at the 101/156 Interchange to Design and the Project

Manager.

If you have any questions, please let me know. I can be reached at 805.542.4711.

G. William "Trais" Norris, III
Senior Environmental Planner
Sierra Pacific Environmental Analysis Branch
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726-5428
Fresno: 559.243.8178
San Luis Obispo: 805.542.4711
Fax: 559.243.8215
Mobile: 559.246.8601

----- Forwarded by David Silberberger/D05/Caltrans/CAGov on 07/23/2009 06:13 PM -----

Jan Mitchell <janmitchell77@hughes.net>
07/23/2009 06:06 PM

To: Silberberger Dave - CALTRANS <david_silberberger@dot.ca.gov>
cc: "Gowin , Henry/Dist 2 Asst." <GowinHM@co.monterey.ca.us>
Subject: ROUTE #156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT

Hello Mr. Silberberger:

As the official representative for two grass-roots community groups

here in north county, I have been requested by members who were unable to attend the singular meeting held at North County High School on July 20, 2009, to provide them with a full report.

In addition, I have (at my personal expense) paid to have copies duplicated of the single sheet handout which was distributed on that occasion, since I was advised that I received the last copy (printed in English). Our members are anxious to receive copies to share with their neighbors throughout our various impacted communities.

In addition, I have been asked to supply a listing of the 35 businesses which will be LOST as the result of "takings" required to accommodate this project. Further, I have also been questioned about the location of the 10 mobile homes, and other residences which will also be taken. I would appreciate your office providing these statistics for our review. 5

While we are mindful of lives lost in this treacherous corridor, as well as recent safety and operations (we live here), it also goes without saying that the economic destruction to our "established business community" of Prunedale will be TREMENDOUS, not to mention
the impacts from jobs and public services lost during extremely difficult economic times. 6

To be perfectly candid, our membership majority are "enthused" that funding is NOT presently available to move this project forward, since we are NOT anxious that tourism on the Peninsula will ENJOY even MORE
profit at the expense of our small community Mom & Pop shops attempting to serve the needs of we north county neighbors. 7

You are no doubt aware that considerable "disappointment" had been repeatedly expressed regarding the "throw-away" Hwy 156/101 interchange in Prunedale. Whereas CALTRANS appears delighted that the footprint has been downsized from the "spaghetti interchange" previously recommended, folks are nonetheless disappointed how our "tax dollars at work" will be sacrificed to "de-struct" this interchange--- not to mention the planted mature trees and other vegetation, the sprinkler systems, etc. which will also no doubt be discarded.. 8

Could you also kindly advise us of the LOST COST OF THIS THROW-AWAY
INTERCHANGE, the cost of the accompanying amenities LOST, as well as

the cost to dismantle this structure.

Please direct this "request for information" to the appropriate party, if you are not the appropriate party, since you are the only e-mail address that I currently have in my address book.

Thank you in advance for your assistance and attention to this request.
Happy trails,

Jan Mitchell, Representative
PRUNEDALE NEIGHBORS GROUP
PRUNEDALE PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

Response to comment (email) from Jan Mitchell

1. Hard copies of the draft environmental document for the Route 156 West Corridor project were sent August 10, 2009.

2. The number of businesses affected by the project is only an estimate for purposes of producing the environmental document and project report. Based on the final relocation impact report prepared by Caltrans, the McDonald's, Country Restaurant and Valero would be full acquisitions. Due to funding constraints, the project will be constructed in two phases. Phase 1 will start just west of Castroville Boulevard (PM R1.8) and tie back into existing State Route 156 at Prunedale North Road (PM T4.81). Phase 2 will be constructed at a later date when funds become available and will include the McDonald's, Country Restaurant, Valero and other businesses. Small businesses that would require full acquisition and re-establishment include a rock and landscaping service, an auto repair and sales center, a used tire retailer, a pre-fabricated structure construction center with show lot and sales facility, and a multiple-unit storage facility. If a business property is subject to relocation, Caltrans would provide relocation advisory assistance to any person, business, farm, or non-profit organization displaced as a result of Caltrans' acquisition of real property for public use. This number also may include a number of individual storage units and some of the same businesses that were affected by the Prunedale Improvement Project.

   More in-depth design work in the next phase could eliminate certain businesses from being affected.

   Most of the businesses that would potentially be affected are in the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange area. The project team is working on splitting the bigger project into smaller, more fundable phases. The current strategy calls for the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange to be in the last stage. So, it is unclear when any of the businesses would be affected.

3. A separate estimate for costs associated with demolishing the existing U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange has not been developed. This cost estimate would be made at the final design phase before preparing the project for contract advertising.

4. Please see response number 2.

5. The number of businesses affected by the project is only an estimate for purposes of producing the environmental document and project report. Based on the final relocation impact report prepared by Caltrans, the McDonald's, Country Restaurant and Valero would be full acquisitions. Small businesses that would require full acquisition and re-establishment include a rock and landscaping service, an auto repair and sales center, a used tire retailer, a pre-fabricated structure construction center with show lot and sales facility, and a multiple-unit storage facility. If a business property is subject to relocation, Caltrans would provide relocation advisory assistance to any person, business, farm, or non-profit organization displaced as a result of Caltrans' acquisition of real property for public use. This number also may include a number of individual storage units and some of the same businesses that were affected by the Prunedale Improvement Project.

   More in-depth design work in the next phase could eliminate certain businesses from being affected.

   It is unclear when the Route 156 West Corridor project would be built. At this time, there is no funding available to move into the next stage of design and purchasing of right-of-way for the project.

   Most of the businesses that would potentially be affected are in the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange area. The project team is working on splitting the bigger project into smaller, more fundable phases. The current strategy calls for the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange to be in the last stage. So, it is unclear when any of the businesses would be affected.

6. The proposed Route 156 West Corridor project would add four lanes south of the existing State Route 156. Construction of this new alignment would divert interregional traffic away from the residential communities next to State Route 156 and U.S. Route 101. Residents and communities next to State Route 156 and U.S. Route 101 would be provided a more direct travel route via the frontage road (the existing State Route 156) to shopping, services and jobs in Prunedale and Castroville.

7. Once the alternative analysis was underway for the Route 156 West Corridor project, the main focus on the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange was to keep the footprint as small as possible and to transition with the additional lanes for State Route 156. Prior to this analysis, demolition of the interchange was unknown. After studying numerous U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange configurations, the resulting design for the Route 156 West Corridor project was the best design that could feasibly be built while maintaining the smallest footprint. A separate estimate for costs associated with demolishing the existing U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange has not been developed. This cost estimate would be made at the final design phase before preparing the project for contract advertising.

8. A separate estimate for costs associated with demolishing the existing U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange has not been developed. This cost estimate would be made at the final design phase before preparing the project for contract advertising. In relation to building the new interchange, the cost of demolishing the old one is relatively small.

Comment from Gloria Morton (2 pages)

August 10, 2009

Gloria J. Morton
17663 Vierra Canyon Road
Salinas, CA 93907-3369

G. William "Trais" Norris, III
Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726

RE: Route 156 West Corridor Project

Dear Mr. Norris:

I am writing on behalf of all my neighbors on the Morton property near the interchange of route 156 and US 101.

We believe the creation of new interchange will destroy our quality of life by taking away what little buffer zone we currently have and increasing the traffic noise levels in our dwellings. There is also the matter of the added stress level on the horses being kept on the property. 1

In light of these items, we ask that you look at every other viable alternative before implementing either alternative 11 or alternative 12 as shown at the public hearing on Monday July 20, 2009. 2

Signed below by all the neighbors on the Morton property affected by this project.

Sincerely,

17663 Vierra Canyon Road

17663 Vierra Canyon Road, Space 1

17663 Vierra Canyon Road, Space 2

17661 Vierra Canyon Road

17661 Vierra Canyon Road, Space 1

17659 Vierra Canyon Road

17657 Vierra Canyon Road

17655 Vierra Canyon Road

17655 Vierra Canyon Road, Space 1

17653 Vierra Canyon Road

17653 Vierra Canyon Road, Space 1

addendum to my letter of
concerns to you dated Aug 10/09
Property is in 6 contiguous parcels, serving
11 families.
Operate as a 7 Space Mobile Home Park,
with additional 4 Homes.
Also I am a breeder and Race
Thoroughbred Horses for many years.
and derive my income from these
businesses.
I would very much appreciate a
property exchange & keep my prop 13
value of my property - if & when
part or all is taken for necessary
traffic improvements in the future.
As you know I was in
Eminent Domain several years ago
and that is not pleasant.

Respectfully

Gloria Merton

3

Response to comment from Gloria Morton

1. A noise analysis was done for the project and included noise modeling for each of the current project alternatives (11 and 12). Based on the noise analysis, the future noise levels with the proposed project area predicted to be the same as the existing conditions of 63 decibels. In accordance with Caltrans Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol for New Highway Construction and Reconstruction Projects, August 2006, a noise impact occurs when the future noise level with the project results in a substantial increase in noise level (defined as a 12-decibel or more increase) or when the future noise level with the project approaches or exceeds the federal noise abatement criteria. Neither of these two conditions was met based on the noise study that was done for the project.

2. Throughout the project development process, over many years of planning, multiple alternatives have been studied and dropped for various reasons. Alternative 11 was selected as the preferred alternative. The separate frontage road system using State Route 156 would allow better circulation for local traffic, pedestrians and bicyclists. There would be fewer permanent impacts to Coast live oak woodland and Riparian habitat, seasonal jurisdiction wetlands, California tiger salamander, Santa Cruz long-toed salamander, California red-legged frog aquatic and upland habitat

3. By law, Caltrans is authorized to acquire only real estate that is necessary for the construction of highway projects. Caltrans' responsibility is to appraise the fair market value of the effected property (real estate), negotiate a purchase of the property, and provide relocation assistance. The Monterey County Assessor's office may be able to provide you with information regarding your Proposition 13 property value.

Comment from Kevin Olson (2 pages)

Kevin Olson
17650 Olson Place
Prunedale Cal

The Interchange
And the Relinement
Of Prunedale Road
South effects my
Property. your going
to take a piece off
a 2 1/2 acre lot.
And you Wont pay
me for the Full
lot price!

1

Kevin Olson
17650 Olson Acc
Prunedale

Alternative 11 2
is a poor excuse,
when you are going
to Divide up a Farm
to save trees its
wrong. Put the road
in the Right of way
You already own.

Response to comment from Kevin Olson

1. When only a part of a property is needed for a project, every reasonable effort is made to ensure that the property owners do not suffer damages to the remainder of the property. The total payment by Caltrans would be for the property Caltrans actually purchases and for any loss in market value to the remaining property. The determination of any loss in market value is an appraisal issue involving many variables. When this occurs, the Right of Way Agent would explain the effect of a partial acquisition on the property owner's remaining property.

2. Under Alternative 11, four lanes would be built south of the existing alignment. Existing State Route 156 would become a frontage road to provide local access to the new freeway. Local residents along State Route 156 could use the frontage road for access to shopping and business centers on U.S. Route 101without competing with interregional and recreational traffic. During the project development phases, Caltrans would incorporate design features that minimize impacts to farmland.

Comment from Patty Olson

We live on Olson Place. We are concerned with the Highway coming to close to our home. We live in a gated community called Pine Cone Estate. We wish that the Highway plans where a further from our property.

Thanks.

Patty Olson.

643-3003.

Response to comment from Patty Olson

Numerous U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange configurations were studied during the course of years of environmental study. The main focus of the design team, after receiving early public input, was to keep the footprint of the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange as small as possible. The resulting design as shown in the draft environmental document was the best design that could feasibly be built while maintaining the smallest footprint.

Comment from Martha A. Rau

ROUTE 156 WEST
Monterey County
CORRIDOR PROJECT

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
PUBLIC HEARING

COMMENT CARD

Please write your comments below and return this card to any of the project team members during the meeting/open house or send it to the address below.

Congratulations! Caltrans finally got it right! Alternate #11 for 156 is the only plan that makes sense. Please stay on the right track and give the local residents the plan they want and need.

Name: Martha A. Rau

Address: 9350 Canyon Oak Rd. Salinas, Ca. 93907

Organization/
Affiliation: CSA #45 Advisory Comm. member Original member of 156 planning C

Phone: 831-633-4514

Would you like to be added to the State Route 156 project mailing list? Yes ☑ No ☐

Please hand in your comment card tonight or send it no later than August 17, 2009 to:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

THANK YOU!

Response to comment from Martha A. Rau

Thank you for your acknowledgement and support of the project.

Comment from Brad Rose

ROUTE 156 WEST
Monterey County
CORRIDOR PROJECT

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
PUBLIC HEARING

COMMENT CARD

Please write your comments below and return this card to any of the project team members during the meeting/open house or send it to the address below.

I have the Chevron station at 8695 Prunedale W.Rd. The 156 construction overpass, Does not have an exit to prunedale W.Rd for Traffic going west ~~S~~. which I am very dependant upon for my business. Also Traffic will be moved to the other side of 101 on a new frontage Rd. which will also decrease my traffic flow And effect ~~business~~ adversely. What are my options after the construction is completed And I find out that the construction project has caused my business not to be profitable.

Name: Brad Rose
Address: 8695 Prunedale North Rd Prunedale Ca 93907
Organization/ Affiliation: Prunedale Chevron D.B.A Brad Rose Inc
Phone: 831-663-3744

Would you like to be added to the State Route 156 project mailing list? Yes ☑ No ☐

Please hand in your comment card tonight or send it no later than August 17, 2009 to:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

THANK YOU!

Response to comment from Brad Rose

By law, Caltrans is authorized to acquire only real estate that is necessary for the construction of highway projects. Without an acquisition of real estate, we cannot offer compensation for loss of business goodwill. Because no portion of your property is expected to be acquired for the project, Caltrans would not be able to compensate you for loss of business income.

After construction of the project, if you feel that your property and business have suffered a loss in value as a result of the project's construction, you may wish to file a claim with the State for this damage. Claim information, along with a link to the claim form are available on line at this address:

http://www.vcgcb.ca.gov/claims/howtofile.aspx

If you do not have a computer available with access to the internet, please use the following contact information to obtain the claim form.

Mail:
California Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board
P.O. Box 3035
Sacramento, CA 95812-3035

Telephone: 1-800-955-0045

Comment from Dale I. Scoggin

ROUTE 156 WEST
Monterey County
CORRIDOR PROJECT

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
PUBLIC HEARING

COMMENT CARD

Please write your comments below and return this card to any of the project team members during the meeting/open house or send it to the address below.

I prefer alternative 11 for the following reasons:

(1) Maintains two entrances & exits from Oak Hills, this to me is very important safety consideration. Ambulance, Fire, Police
(2) Frontage Road offers easier exit from Oak Hills both going east or west.
(3) Very important Alternative 11 is ~$60 million Dollars less expensive than Alternative 12.
(4) Provides some sound mitigation over Alt 12.

Alt 11

Name: Dale I. Scoggin
Address: 9720 Trefoil Pl Salinas, CA. 93907
Organization/ Affiliation:
Phone: 831-633-4620

Would you like to be added to the State Route 156 project mailing list? Yes ☐ No ☐

Please hand in your comment card tonight or send it no later than August 17, 2009 to:

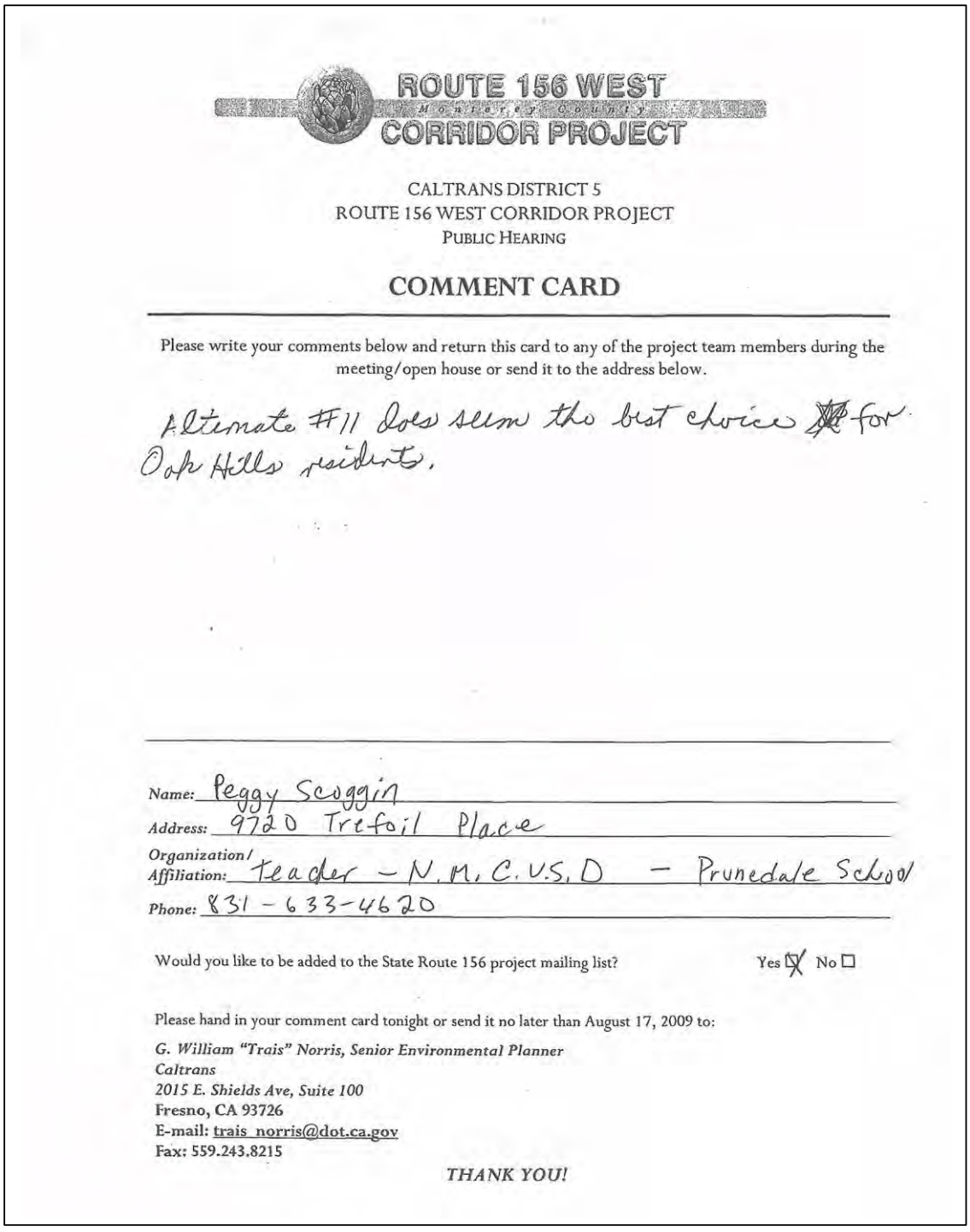
G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

THANK YOU!

Response to comment from Dale I. Scoggin

Thank you for your comment. Alternative 11 was selected as the preferred alternative.

Comment from Peggy Scoggin



ROUTE 156 WEST
MONTEREY COUNTY
CORRIDOR PROJECT

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
PUBLIC HEARING

COMMENT CARD

Please write your comments below and return this card to any of the project team members during the meeting/open house or send it to the address below.

Alternate #11 does seem the best choice ~~for~~ for Oak Hills residents.

Name: Peggy Scoggin
Address: 9720 Trefoil Place
Organization/ Affiliation: Teacher – N.M.C.U.S.D – Prunedale School
Phone: 831-633-4620

Would you like to be added to the State Route 156 project mailing list? Yes ☒ No ☐

Please hand in your comment card tonight or send it no later than August 17, 2009 to:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

THANK YOU!

Response to comment from Peggy Scoggin

Thank you for your comment. Alternative 11 was selected as the preferred alternative.

Comment from Helen and Ed Shaw

ROUTE 156 WEST
MONTEREY COUNTY
CORRIDOR PROJECT

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
PUBLIC HEARING

COMMENT CARD

Please write your comments below and return this card to any of the project team members during the meeting/open house or send it to the address below.

We bicycle from our home in Oak Hills to Monterey, Pacific Grove, Salinas, North County to shop and for recreation, and appts. Yes, it's scary!

Will Alternative 12 provide a designated shoulder for bicycles? If not, what provisions are being considered?

Name: Helen + Ed SHAW

Address: 9701 Trefoil Pl., Salinas (Oak Hills) CA 93907

Organization/ Affiliation:

Phone: 831.633.3589

Would you like to be added to the State Route 156 project mailing list? Yes ☒ No ☐

Please hand in your comment card tonight or send it no later than August 17, 2009 to:

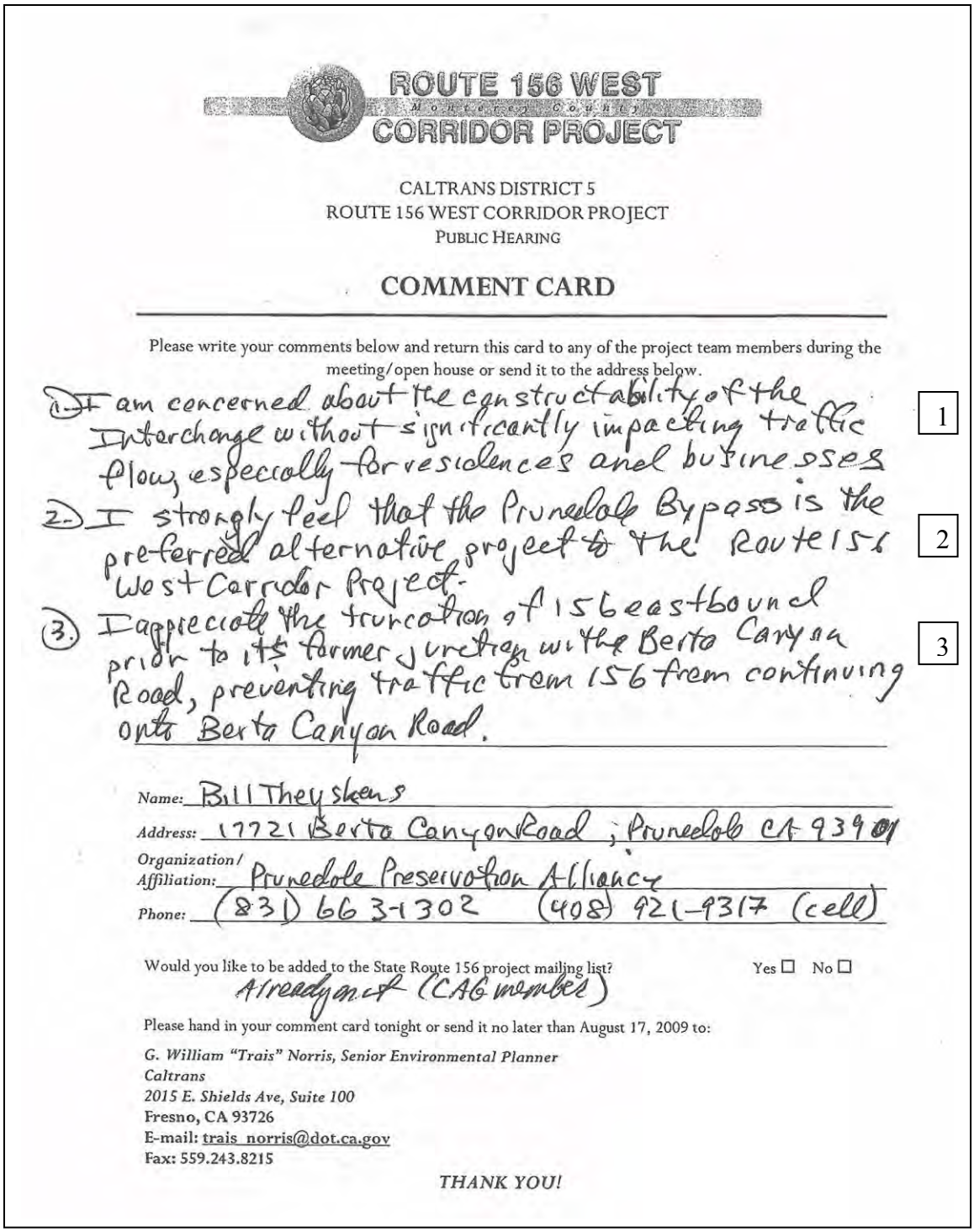
G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

THANK YOU!

Response to comment from Helen and Ed Shaw

Pedestrian facilities (sidewalks and bike lanes) within the proposed project limits will be considered during the design stage of the project. Consideration of pedestrian walkways (sidewalks) is proposed on the local facilities (undercrossings/overcrossings) and at interchange locations. Bike lanes would be considered for the proposed frontage road. Locations of these pedestrian facilities would be finalized during the design stage.

Comment from Bill Theyskens (comment card)



ROUTE 156 WEST
MONTEREY COUNTY
CORRIDOR PROJECT

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
PUBLIC HEARING

COMMENT CARD

Please write your comments below and return this card to any of the project team members during the meeting/open house or send it to the address below.

1. I am concerned about the constructability of the Interchange without significantly impacting traffic flow, especially for residences and businesses 1
2. I strongly feel that the Prunedale Bypass is the preferred alternative project to the Route 156 West Corridor Project. 2
3. I appreciate the truncation of 156 eastbound prior to its former junction with Berta Canyon Road, preventing traffic from 156 from continuing onto Berta Canyon Road. 3

Name: Bill Theyskens
Address: 17721 Berta Canyon Road ; Prunedale CA 93907
Organization/ Affiliation: Prunedale Preservation Alliance
Phone: (831) 663-1302 (408) 921-9317 (cell)

Would you like to be added to the State Route 156 project mailing list? Yes ☐ No ☐
Already on it (CAG member)

Please hand in your comment card tonight or send it no later than August 17, 2009 to:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

THANK YOU!

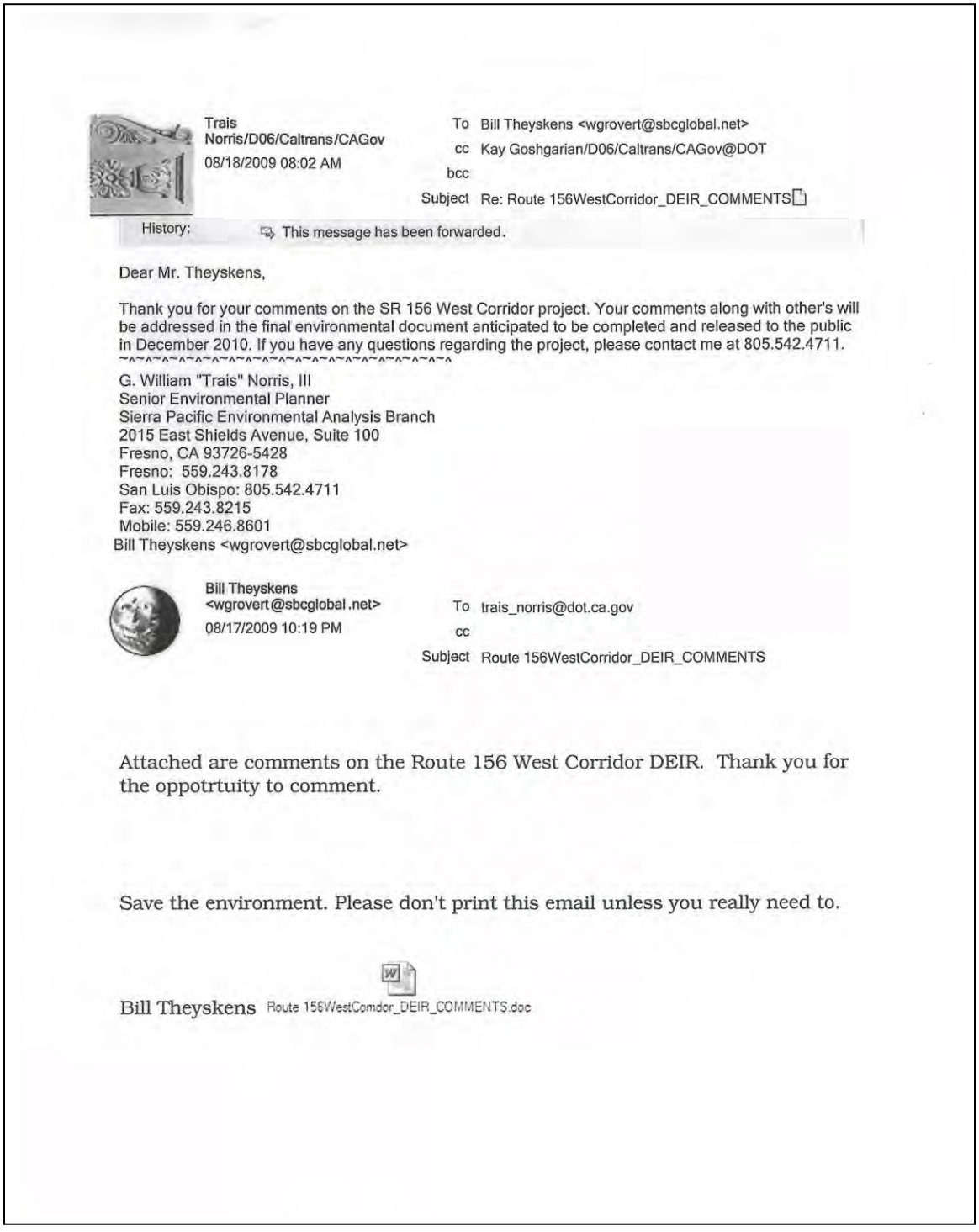
Response to comment from Bill Theyskens (comment card)

1. As the project moves forward to the design stage, the Caltrans design group will be putting together detailed Stage Construction plans. Additionally, the project team is currently working on splitting the bigger project into smaller, more fundable phases. The current strategy calls for the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange to be in the last stage. The first phase would be to construct the four lanes south of the existing State Route 156 alignment. The existing State Route 156 would remain open for traffic during the first phase.

2. The Route 156 West Corridor project would be needed with or without the construction of the Prunedale Bypass. The Prunedale Bypass would have provided only congestion and safety improvements for U.S. Route 101. At this time, there are no long-term plans to build the Prunedale Bypass.

3. Berta Canyon Road would no longer connect to U.S. Route 101 or to the proposed State Route 156. Berta Canyon Road would make a "T" intersection with the proposed Berta Canyon extension. Residents may access State Route 156 and U.S. Route 101 by using the new Berta Canyon Road extension that would tee into Vierra Canyon Road and connect to a new section of San Miguel Canyon Road. This new section of San Miguel Canyon Road would access State Route 156 and U.S. Route 101 to the north or the south of Vierra Canyon Road.

Comment from Bill Theyskens (email, 4 pages)



Trais
Norris/D06/Caltrans/CAGov
08/18/2009 08:02 AM

To Bill Theyskens <wgrovert@sbcglobal.net>
cc Kay Goshgarian/D06/Caltrans/CAGov@DOT
bcc
Subject Re: Route 156WestCorridor_DEIR_COMMENTS

History: This message has been forwarded.

Dear Mr. Theyskens,

Thank you for your comments on the SR 156 West Corridor project. Your comments along with other's will be addressed in the final environmental document anticipated to be completed and released to the public in December 2010. If you have any questions regarding the project, please contact me at 805.542.4711.
~^

G. William "Trais" Norris, III
Senior Environmental Planner
Sierra Pacific Environmental Analysis Branch
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726-5428
Fresno: 559.243.8178
San Luis Obispo: 805.542.4711
Fax: 559.243.8215
Mobile: 559.246.8601
Bill Theyskens <wgrovert@sbcglobal.net>

Bill Theyskens
<wgrovert@sbcglobal.net>
08/17/2009 10:19 PM

To trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
cc
Subject Route 156WestCorridor_DEIR_COMMENTS

Attached are comments on the Route 156 West Corridor DEIR. Thank you for the oppotrtuity to comment.

Save the environment. Please don't print this email unless you really need to.

Bill Theyskens Route 156WestComdor_DEIR_COMMENTS.doc

August 17, 2009

G. William "Trais" Norris, III, Branch Chief
Sierra Pacific Environmental Analysis Branch
California Department of Transportation
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA

Email: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov

SENT VIA EMAIL

SUBJECT: ROUTE 156 WEST CORRIDOR, DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT/ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Dear Mr. Norris:

The following comments are respectfully submitted on the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment for the Route 156 West Corridor project located in Monterey County, California.

1.3.1 Build Alternatives

Alternatives 11 and 12 are very similar, "parallel", in-the-box proposed solutions to local congestion on Route 156, but will do little, if anything, for the larger congestion problems in North Monterey County. The previously proposed and community-supported and selected version of the Prunedale Bypass should be considered as a third build alternative. This alternative was not favored by Caltrans and when it was selected over Caltrans' preferred alternative (widening the entire 101 through the area to 6 lanes), the entire Prunedale Bypass all of a sudden became much too expensive a project and it was dropped. The currently proposed widening of 156, re-location of a perfectly serviceable new interchange, and the myriad widenings, new ramps and retaining walls of the Prunedale Improvement Project (PIP), currently underway, coincidentally lay the groundwork for Caltrans to widen 101 to 6 lanes at some point in

1

the near future. And when completed it would closely resemble Caltrans' preferred alternative (6-lane Freeway through the heart of Prunedale) for the Prunedale Bypass. The is still the preferred project to handle traffic issues in North County and should be given due consideration. 2

With both build alternatives presented, two lanes of 156 eastbound traffic will still merge with two lanes of 101 Northbound traffic. These four lanes will merge back to two on 101 northbound just north of the 156/101 interchange. A lot of money spent, a lot of people losing their homes and businesses, and a lot of inconvenience to get people from Silicon Valley to Monterey to spend their money just a little bit faster.

2.1.6 Traffic and Transportation/Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities (pg. 72)

"The configuration of the interchange, along with the extension of San Miguel Canyon Road and Berta Canyon Road, would allow residents and drivers near San Miguel Canyon Road, Berta Canyon Road and Vierra Canyon Road to access US Route 101 and State Route 156 via Berta Canyon Road and San Miguel Canyon Road". 3

Please clarify/correct the above text as the modifications made and indicated during Community Advisory Group (CAG) meetings indicate that there will no longer be direct access to 156 and 101 via Berta Canyon Road, and in fact there will be a break (discontinuity) in the road between Berta Canyon Road and 156 eastbound.

2.2.2 Water Quality and Storm Water Runoff, Affected Environment, Groundwater (pg.92)

The DEIR does not adequately describe the hydrogeologic regime in the vicinity of a significant portion of the proposed project, most notably in the area of the 156/101 interchange. The "Groundwater" section provides a description of the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin, but does not address the hydrogeology in the project area (North County), which is described in detail in Fugro's 1995 report. This report details a significant amount of groundwater table drawdown in the immediate vicinity of the 156/101 interchange. The proposed project could have significant impacts on a nearby perched water table that is the sole of source of water for a significant amount of residences located just upslope/upgradient of the project. Between the proposed uses of water for construction, dust control, establishment of and maintenance of vegetation, the perched groundwater table could be drained and/or depleted. Further, the project has not yet been developed to the point 4

N:\EnvProj\05\05-31600\Generalist\254.00_Record_of_Hearing\Route 156WestCorridor_DEIR_COMMENTS.doc

that the degree of grading is known, presented and considered in this DEIR. The grading proposed in the area could potentially impact this perched water source, in turn affecting wetlands east of the project site.

Respectfully submitted,

William G. Theyskens, P.G., C.E.G., C.Hg.
17721 Berta Canyon Road
Prunedale, CA 93907
(831) 663-1302

N:\EnvProj\05\05-31600\Generalist\254.00_Record_of_Hearing\Route 156WestCorridor_DEIR_COMMENTS.doc

Response to comment from Bill Theyskens (email, 4 pages)

1. Alternatives 11 and 12 were the result of numerous U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange configurations that were evaluated during the course of years of environmental study. The main focus of the design team, after receiving early public input, was to keep the footprint of the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange as small as possible. The resulting design as shown in the draft environmental document was the best design that could feasibly be built while maintaining the smallest footprint.

   One of the benefits of the proposed interchange configuration is that interregional traffic would be separated from local traffic. Traffic going southbound on U.S. Route 101 and heading to the Monterey Peninsula on State Route 156 would use a large new sweeping off-ramp to head west. Traffic heading east along State Route 156 and desiring to go north on U.S. Route 101 would use a new flyover structure. This "south to west" and "east to north" traffic flow is the main path tourists would use going from the Bay Area to the Monterey Peninsula and back. Local traffic, on the other hand, would be able to use a new interchange for easy entry and exit of U.S. Route 101 in both the northbound and southbound directions. Interregional traffic would have separate lanes to quickly transition from U.S. Route 101 to State Route 156 or from State Route 156 to U.S. Route 101, while local traffic could use the separate interchange without mixing with the interregional traffic.

2. The Route 156 West Corridor project would be needed with or without construction of the Prunedale Bypass, which would have provided congestion and safety improvements only for U.S. Route 101. Further, for at least a decade, Caltrans and many agencies from Monterey County studied the feasibility of providing a bypass for U.S. Route 101 around Prunedale. The conclusion of that ongoing study found that it was too expensive and have greater environmental impacts. Using the funding that was available, Caltrans and the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) developed the Prunedale Improvement Project (PIP) to address safety and operational improvements along U.S. Route 101. The PIP is now under construction and is slated for completion by 2015. There are no long-term plans to build the Prunedale Bypass.

3. The wording has been changed in the final document to reflect the fact that Berta Canyon Road would not connect directly to the new interchange. Please see page 81 in the final environmental document.

4. A final Geotechnical Report would be completed before construction to identify areas of shallow groundwater. Planned grading for any cut and fill slopes should not be deep enough to encounter an established groundwater table/aquifer. Drawdown of the identified perched water table should not be significant based on the typical construction tasks. Also, native and drought-tolerant species would be planted to help reduce water needs from the project.

Comment from Donald Thomas and others (letter, 2 pages)

August 15,2009

Cal Trans Regional Office
William "Trais" Norris, III, Senior Environmental Planner
2015 East Shields Ave., Suite 100
Fresno, Ca. 93726

Re: Rte. 156 Between Rte. 101 and Castroville Blvd. and reconstruction of 101/156 Interchange in Monterey County (EIR 1st draft)

Dear Mr. Norris:

In regard to the 1st draft of this EIR on U S 156/101 State Rtes. we have some concerns and request that they be answered:

#1. Prunedale is a community of 12,000 people. We have every service needed to serve us (Doctors, grocery stores, veterinarian hospital, automobile services, a library, restaurants, etc. All of these businesses are very accessable to the community. 1

In regard to the approximately 30-35 businesses Prunedale will loose in this construction it would deal our community a very great loss. We will be loosing 3 restaurants(McDonalds, Normas and the Country Kitchen). This would leave us with a Burger King and one very small Mexican Restaurant (12 seats). We will also loose two very important meeting rooms where the Chamber, Lions Club and Rotary meet. If the Burger King is lost in the remodel of San Miguel Interchange it would leave us with no Restaurant other than the one with 12 seats.

Along with the above we are losing 1 Valero gas station and possibly the Standard Station would be put out of business. Approximately 70% of its business os off of 156/101 traveling customers. This is as of the owners conversation with David Silberberger at the public hearing. David agreed this station would not be quite as accessible as it is now for the highways traffic. When the last project was done at 156 a few years back his business was greatly impacted. This would leave Prunedale with 1 Valero station at San Miguel & Moro Rd. Cal Trans eleminated the other station at San Miguel when it did the existing overcrossing.

We will loose our only Veterinary Hospital at Berta Canyon and we will be watching to see that the Grange and school buildings are not removed on Lavender Lane/Moro Rd.

#2. Another big concern is to be sure we do not loose our large Safeway Store at Vierra Cyn. when you 4 lane San Miguel. It is imperative to keep its large volumne of customers. Approx. 20% of their customers come off of 101/156 as they travel to the area from other communities and for vacations and many large public events (races-Laguna Seca, concerts, viewing the great HP Acquarium,ocean fishing, theaters, tour fishing boats and the great Maring Lab at Moss Landing, etc. These customers must have easy access. 2

#3 What will Cal Trans do to relocate these businesses? It has been studied 2-3 time by committees on 101 Bypass etc. and there is no available land in Prunedale to relocate them. Locating them in Castroville or Nc. Salinas does not help us. 3

-2-

#4 We are urging you to choose Alternative #12. By building Alt. # 12 you already own enough property for the additional two lanes. This property was purchased when 156 was built. Is this property already owned by Cal Trans being taken into account in the costs you are presenting in this EIR? Also, with Alt.#12 this would eliminate the purchase of so much valuable agriculture land. The land you will need to acquire for Alt.#11 is quite valuable land which is needed to produce much needed food for U.S. You will also be removing a good share of the owners future income. Why is it that we seem to get the impression from some that this land is of LESSER VALUE than the land on Espinosa Rd., etc? This seems to be the impression given.

4

Why does Cal Trans value the Oak Trees more highly than peoples lives property and livelyhood? The community of Oak Hills want their own private road. These same people demanded that they did not want the second entrance & exit out of Oak Hills (because of too much traffic)that was originally planned for t[illegible]. If it would have been built as originally planned we would not have these problems now.

If you choose Alt #11 you will turn over existing 156 to Monterey County. Monterey County cannot maintain the roads that they have now. How does Mo. Co. expect to maintain this old 156 roadway? Even now when the county does pavement overlay and repairs on their roads it is done so sparsely that it does not last. It is very apparent now that they do not have the funds to keep the roads they have now in good condition and future funding is looking very bleak and this county has tried 3 or 4 times to pass bonds for roads and each time they have been defeated.
Thank you for your kind consideration in these matters.

Ronald K Nevins
9560 Primadale So.
Salinas Ca 93907

Larry D. Thomas
9860 Primedale South Road
Salinas Calif 93907
Mary Margaret Green 1060 Espinosa Rd. 93907

Response to comment from Donald Thomas and others (letter)

1. Based on the final relocation impact report prepared by Caltrans, the McDonald's, Country Restaurant and Valero would be full acquisitions. Small businesses that would require full acquisition and reestablishment include a rock and landscaping service, an auto repair and sales center, a used tire retailer, a pre-fabricated structure with show lot and sales facility, and a multiple-unit storage facility. More in-depth design work in the next phase could eliminate certain businesses from being affected. Until the design details are finalized, we cannot say exactly who would be affected at this time. The environmental document stated 35 businesses would be affected. This number also may include a number of individual storage units and some of the same businesses that were affected by the Prunedale Improvement Project.

   Regarding the Chevron Station, Caltrans is authorized to acquire only real estate that is necessary for the construction of highway projects. Without an acquisition of real estate, Caltrans cannot offer compensation for loss of business goodwill. Because no portion of the Chevron property at this time is expected to be acquired for the project, Caltrans would not be able to compensate for loss of business income.

2. Even though the smallest feasible footprint is being proposed, there are unavoidable impacts to both homes and businesses. It should likewise be noted that the continued increase in congestion on State Route 156 is also a threat to the well-being of local businesses. It is possible that customers avoid traveling to local businesses, particularly on weekends, to avoid the ever-increasing congestion. The task is to find the right balance between affecting homes and businesses and relieving congestion and improving safety.

   In terms of helping to relocate affected businesses, Caltrans has a standard procedure for the purchase of businesses. This includes relocation assistance. Also, the new frontage road that would be built between Berta Canyon Road and San Miguel Canyon Road should open up additional land and access that could be used to relocate businesses and allow for some new businesses.

   The parking area of the Safeway shopping center would be affected by construction of the project. The Safeway supermarket along with the other shops should be functional during construction and after construction is completed. At this time, no plans would affect the Safeway in such a way that would cause the

Safeway to be relocated. However, to construct the new frontage road from Berta Canyon Road to San Miguel Canyon Road, retaining wall structures would be necessary to save most of the shopping center, including the Safeway. Therefore, there would be impacts to businesses in that shopping center due to construction activities.

Alternatives 11 and 12 were the result of numerous U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange configurations that were studied during the course of years of environmental study. The main focus of the design team, after receiving early public input, was to keep the footprint of the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange as small as possible. The resulting design as shown in the draft environmental document was the best design that could feasibly be built while maintaining the smallest footprint.

3. If a business property is subject to relocation, Caltrans would provide relocation advisory assistance to any person, business, farm, or non-profit organization displaced as a result of Caltrans' acquisition of real property for public use. A displaced business, farm or non-profit organization is entitled to reimbursement for actual reasonable expenses incurred in searching for a replacement property. Displaced businesses, farms and non-profit organizations may be eligible for a payment for the actual direct loss of tangible personal property incurred as a result of the move or discontinuance of the operation. All displacees would be offered relocation advisory assistance for the purpose of finding a replacement property. The new frontage road that would be built between Berta Canyon Road and San Miguel Canyon Road could potentially open up additional land and access that could be used to relocate businesses and allow for some new businesses.

4. Property already owned by the state is being accounted for in the cost estimate mentioned in the draft environmental document. Only newly acquired right-of-way is included in the cost estimate. Caltrans understands your concern about acquiring the least amount of agricultural land; therefore, ideas for Alternative 11 (the preferred alternative) are being considered to reduce the amount of agricultural acquisition. Existing State Route 156 would be converted into a frontage road, and Monterey County would be responsible for maintenance on the road. Keep in mind, only residential traffic from the neighboring residential communities (local traffic) would be on this road. Therefore, the life expectancy of this road would increase greatly. Your comment that you prefer Alternative 12 has been noted for the record.

Comment from Vee Thomas

PROYECTO DE LA CARRETERA
Condado de Monterey
ESTATAL 156 RUMBO AL OESTE

DISTRITO 5 DE CALTRANS
PROYECTO DE LA CARRETERA ESTATAL 156 RUMBO AL OESTE
AUDENCIA PÚBLICA
comment card
~~TARJETA DE COMENTARIOS~~

Sírvase escribir a continuación sus comentarios y devuelva esta tarjeta a cualquiera de los miembros pertenecientes al equipo del proyecto en el transcurso de la reunión o de la asamblea pública informal, o mándela por correo a la dirección que aparece a continuación.

Please send me the name of the 35 Businesses being taken according to the "Draft E.I.R." (in English)
Thank you

Name / ~~Nombre:~~ Vee Thomas
Address / ~~Dirección:~~ 9560 Prunedale So. Rd., Salinas, Calif 93907
Organización / Afiliación: No Monterey Co. Mothers Club / 101 Bypass Comm.
Telephon / ~~Teléfono:~~ 831-663-2524

¿Quisiera que lo incluyeran en la lista de correo relacionada con el proyecto de la Ruta Estatal 156?

Sí ☐ No ☐

Por favor entregue su tarjeta de comentarios esta noche o envíela por correo a más tardar el 17 de agosto de 2009 a:

G. William "Trais" Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans
2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
E-mail: trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
Fax: 559.243.8215

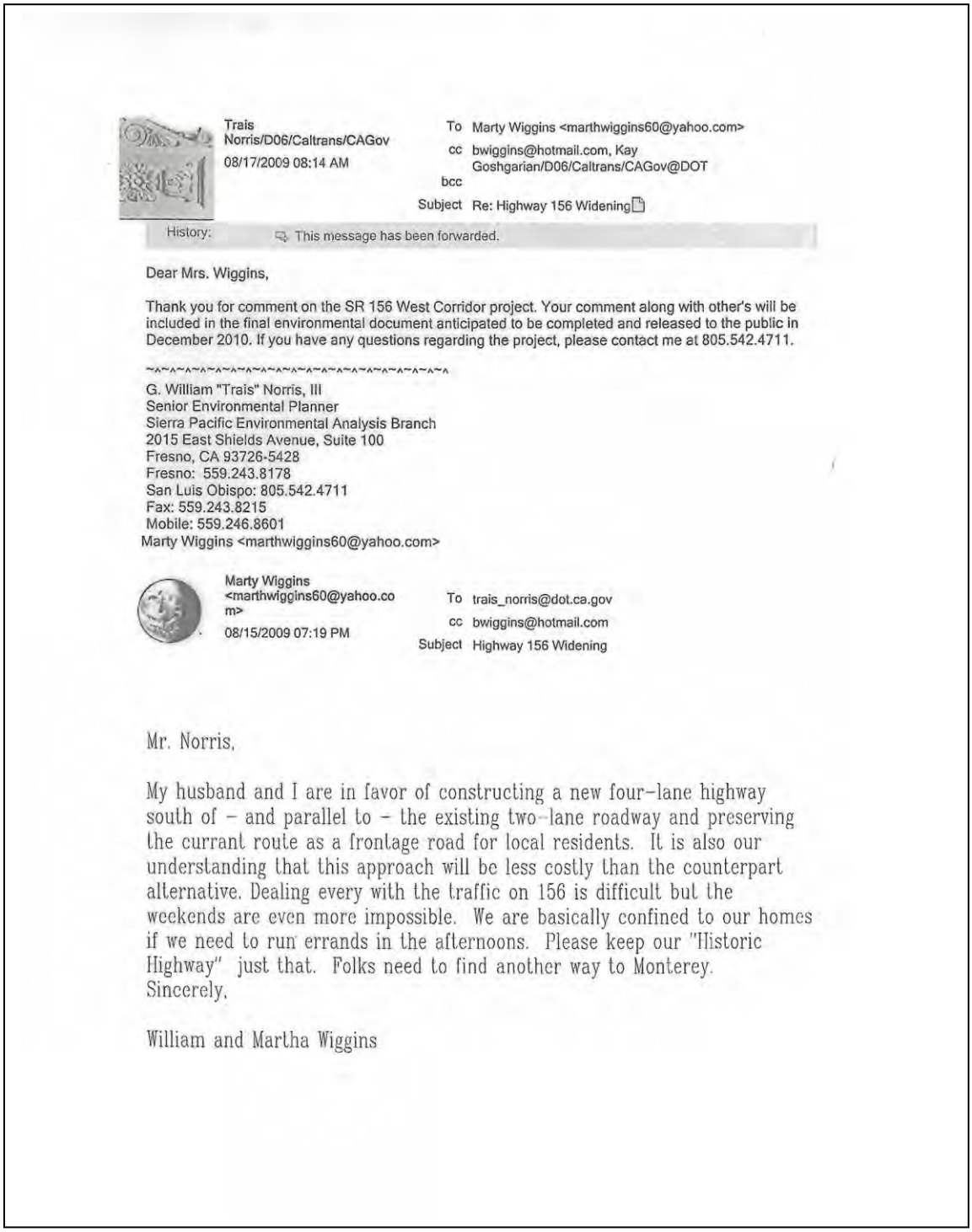
¡MUCHAS GRACIAS!

Response to comment from Vee Thomas

At this time, the number of businesses affected by the project is only an estimate for purposes of producing the environmental document and project report. Based on the final relocation impact report prepared by Caltrans, the McDonald's, Country Restaurant and Valero would be full acquisitions. Small businesses that would require full acquisition and reestablishment include a rock and landscaping service, an auto repair and sales center, a used tire retailer, a pre-fabricated structure with show lot and sales facility, and a multiple-unit storage facility. More in-depth design work in the next phase may result in fewer businesses being affected. Until the design details are finalized, we cannot say exactly who would be affected at this time. The environmental document stated 35 businesses could be affected. This sum also includes a number of storage units, which are each counted by right-of-way as individual businesses. Some of these same businesses (including storage units) may also be by the Prunedale Improvement Project.

More in-depth design work in the next phase could eliminate certain businesses from being affected

Comment from William and Martha Wiggins (email, 2 pages)



Trais
Norris/D06/Caltrans/CAGov
08/17/2009 08:14 AM

To Marty Wiggins <marthwiggins60@yahoo.com>
cc bwiggins@hotmail.com, Kay Goshgarian/D06/Caltrans/CAGov@DOT
bcc
Subject Re: Highway 156 Widening

History: This message has been forwarded.

Dear Mrs. Wiggins,

Thank you for comment on the SR 156 West Corridor project. Your comment along with other's will be included in the final environmental document anticipated to be completed and released to the public in December 2010. If you have any questions regarding the project, please contact me at 805.542.4711.

~^

G. William "Trais" Norris, III
Senior Environmental Planner
Sierra Pacific Environmental Analysis Branch
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726-5428
Fresno: 559.243.8178
San Luis Obispo: 805.542.4711
Fax: 559.243.8215
Mobile: 559.246.8601
Marty Wiggins <marthwiggins60@yahoo.com>

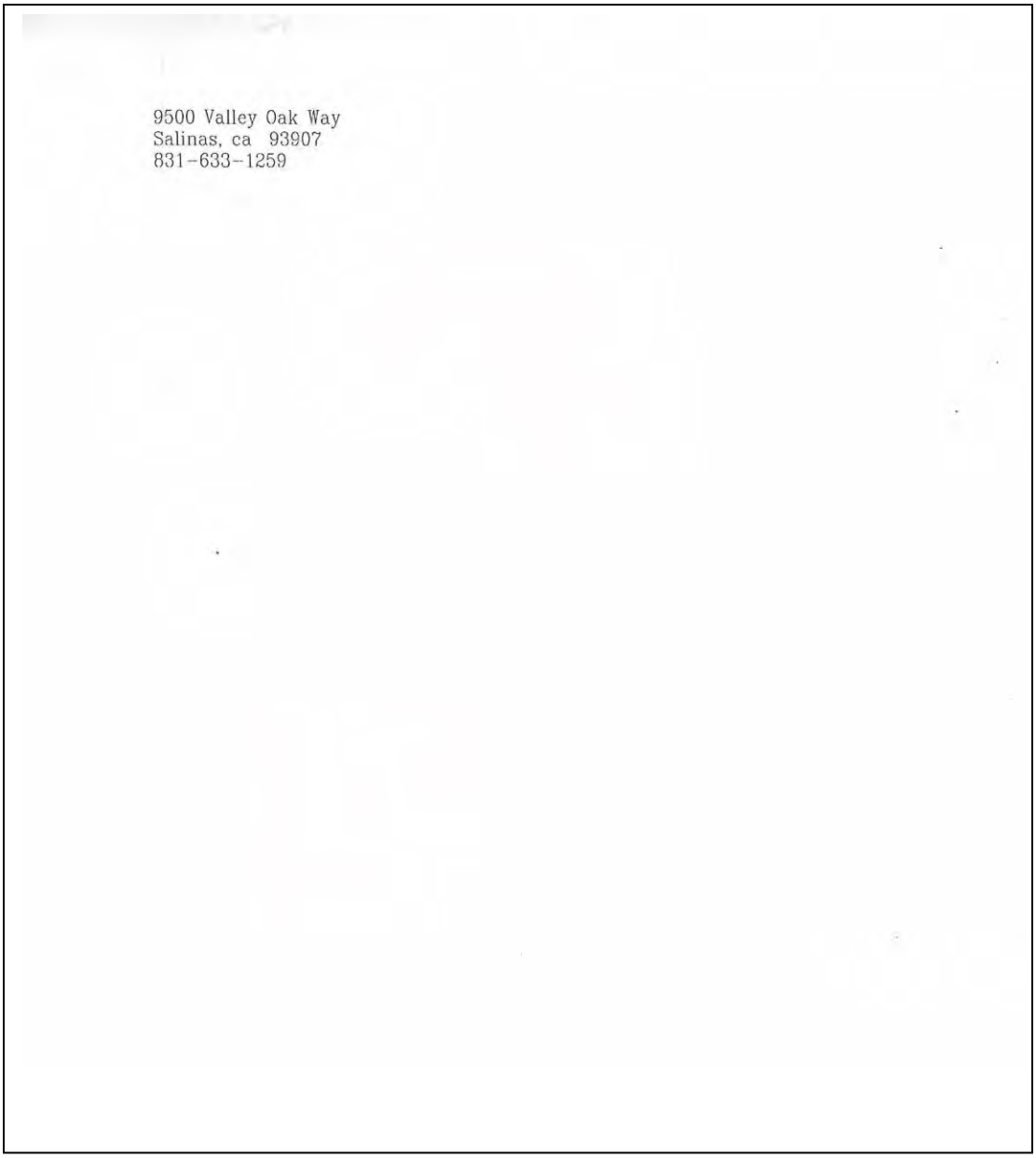
Marty Wiggins
<marthwiggins60@yahoo.com>
08/15/2009 07:19 PM

To trais_norris@dot.ca.gov
cc bwiggins@hotmail.com
Subject Highway 156 Widening

Mr. Norris,

My husband and I are in favor of constructing a new four-lane highway south of – and parallel to – the existing two-lane roadway and preserving the currant route as a frontage road for local residents. It is also our understanding that this approach will be less costly than the counterpart alternative. Dealing every with the traffic on 156 is difficult but the weekends are even more impossible. We are basically confined to our homes if we need to run errands in the afternoons. Please keep our "Historic Highway" just that. Folks need to find another way to Monterey.
Sincerely,

William and Martha Wiggins



Response to comment from William and Martha Wiggins

Thank you for your comment. Alternative 11 was selected as the preferred alternative.

Comment from Prunedale Property Owners and/or Citizens Affected by This Project (letter, 4 pages)

August 12, 2009

Caltrans , Regional Office
William "Trais" Norris, III, Senior Environmental Planner
2015 EastShields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726

Re: Widening of Route 156 between Route 101 and Castroville Blvd. and reconstruction
Of the 101/156 interchange in Monterey County.

Dear Mr. Norris:

Several families that have homes in the Prunedale area met this morning to review the Drawings for the above project. We have several concerns regarding the project and believe they should be addressed.

.01 Our businesses (35) that will be removed is a major concern. Which ones are they and will they be relocated in Prunedale? There is also concern regarding the inconvenient route we must travel in order to access the businesses that are left. The project will almost destroy what has taken so many years to accomplish. There are many senior citizens living in Prunedale and the removal of businesses and the inconvenient routes that will be necessary to access any of the businesses that are left will definitely be a hardship for them. 1

.02 On and Off Ramps as mapped are inadequate and quite confusing. The exchange at 156 and 101 seems to be over-kill. Why is this? It seems an expense that is not called for. 2

.03 Prime agricultural land will also be taken in order to construct a four lane highway rather than using the present highway as two of the necessary four lanes. Monterey County has always been known as the Salad Bowl of the Nation, it gets smaller with each project study in the area. Agriculture is the main source of industry in Monterey County. On summary page Potential Impact alternative 11 indicates no prime or unique farm land will be taken, however, it will take 165 acres of farm land, of which 85.5 acres are statewide or local importance (summary Route 156 West Corridor.) What does No prime or unique farmland affected mean? All agricultural land in this area is prime or unique. 3

.04 Of what value is the over pass at Messick Road? It seems Tustin Road would be a more logical placement. Messick Road goes to a few homes, Tustin Road takes one to Moro Road, San Miguel Canyon Road and also to Echo Canyon Road. Each of these roads provide a way for locals to avoid the 101 Highway traveling to several locations. 4

.05 A very big concern is, when the project is finished and there is expensive reconstruction to be done in the areas that are not in the project foot-print, will the State pay for this work? When the San Miguel fly-over was completed the work that was needed for areas that were destroyed had to be paid for by Monterey County. This is an area that needs to be dealt with when calculating the cost of the project for the State to be liable for all necessary repairs. 5

.06 Will the overpasses at Crazy Horse Canyon, Blackie Road, San Juan Road and Espinosa Road be completed prior to the start of the 156 project? If not what will the people living along Highway 101 do to get on and off the highway? 6

.07 The summary also states that it will not cause disproportionately high and adverse 7

effects on any minority or low-income populations. The relocation/removal of businesses will have an adverse effect on the entire Prunedale population.

.08 "Not expected to result in any disruption or isolation of the community," what does this mean? It seems just getting on the highway will be a disruption and some people will feel isolated when it is required they go into Salinas or Monterey for services they now have in Prunedale especially they must find someone to drive them there because they no longer drive.

8

Thank you for your time and attention in this most serious concern.

Sincerely,

Prunedale Property Owners and/or Concerned Citizens Affected by This Project

Signature Page Attached (2)

Cc: David Silberberger, Project Manager
Louis Calcagno, County Supervisor (No. Monterey County)
TAMC

SIGNATURES

Barbara Kinja } 18737 Victoria Lane
T. Dean Lewis } Prunedale, CA 93907
Christian Lewis
Barbara M Carmenta } 18710 Victoria Av.
Georgia Crouse } Salinas, Ca. 93907
9560 S. Prunedale Rd unit 2 Salinas 93907
John Olson 9530 Prunedale Rd So.
Karen Smith 18043 Lillian Lane Prunedale
Dell Matt 7130 Manzanita Ave. Salinas, Ca. 93907
Shelley Gonzales 7550 Roma Pl. Salinas 93907
Mary Ellen Hubbs 9580 Prunedale S Rd So, Ca 93907
Philip L. Nelson } 6570 Tustin Rd.
Lina Pauline Nelson } Salinas, CA 93907
C. Thomas 22240 Yuma Place Salinas CA 93908
Lila V (Vee) Thomas 9560 Prunedale So Salinas 93907
Edward P. Jones 17049 McGuire Rd Salinas CA 93907
Cecelia L. Jones 17049 McGuire Rd, Salinas CA 93907
Sylvia Vasquez 17289 McGuire Rd Salinas Ca 93907
Susan Stovall 9560 Prunedale So Rd #2 93907
Leonard Rede 900 El Camino Real N. Sal Ca. 93907
Frank Ruesz. 9560 So Prunedale Rd Salinas 93907
Dale Rodgers 17845 Costa Luz Rd Salinas 93907
Susan North 9560 Prunedale South Rd #2 Salinas 93907
Mr. + Mrs Charles Nelson 462 Paradise Cyn Salinas 93907

ROUSE RIDGE RANCH
16475 Blackie Road
APN: 133-012-005

Regarding: Highway 156 Concerns

Notice per the following signatures of acceptance of the letter from the Pruneldale Group regarding the expansion of Highway 156.

Helen Patricia Clark — 8-14-09
Helen Patricia Clark — Date

Mary Harriett Ryan — 8-14-09
Mary Harriett Ryan — Date

Scott J. Clark — 8/14/09
Scott J. Clark — Date

Emily L. Clark — Date

Mary R. Gregg — 81409
Mary R. Gregg — Date

Robert R. Ryan — 8-12-09
Robert R. Ryan — Date

Matthew P. Ryan — 8-12-09
Matthew P. Ryan — Date

Response to comment from Prunedale Property Owners and/or Concerned Citizens Affected by This Project (letter, 4 pages)

1. Based on the final relocation impact report prepared by Caltrans, the McDonald's, Country Restaurant and Valero would be full acquisitions. Small businesses that would require full acquisition and reestablishment include a rock and landscaping service, an auto repair and sales center, a used tire retailer, a pre-fabricated structure with show lot and sales facility, and a multiple-unit storage facility. More in-depth design work in the next phase could eliminate certain businesses from being affected. The environmental document stated 35 businesses would be affected. If a business property is subject to relocation, Caltrans would provide relocation advisory assistance to any person, business, farm, or non-profit organization displaced as a result of Caltrans' acquisition of real property for public use. This number also may include a number of individual storage units and some of the same businesses that were affected by the Prunedale Improvement Project.

   Replacement resources, except the McDonald's and Valero gas station, should be adequate for each business affected by the project. The McDonald's would be able to acquire land and rebuild but would not likely be within a shopping center like its current location. The Valero gas station would be able to relocate within the community but would not have the direct access to U.S. Route 101 and State Route 156 that it currently has.

   Even though the smallest feasible footprint is being proposed, there are unavoidable impacts to both homes and businesses. Note that the continued increase in congestion on State Route 156 is also a threat to the well-being of local businesses; customers could avoid traveling to local businesses, particularly on weekends, to avoid the ever-increasing congestion. The task is to find the right balance between affecting homes and businesses and relieving congestion and improving safety.

2. Alternatives 11 and 12 were the result of numerous U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange configurations that were studied during the course of years of environmental study. The main focus of the design team, after receiving early public input, was to keep the footprint of the U.S. Route 101/ State Route 156 interchange as small as possible. The resulting design as

shown in the draft environmental document was the best design that could feasibly be built while maintaining the smallest footprint.

One of the benefits of the proposed interchange configuration is that interregional traffic would be separated from local traffic. Traffic going southbound on U.S. Route 101 and heading to the Monterey Peninsula on State Route 156 would use a large new sweeping off-ramp to head west. Traffic heading east along State Route 156 and desiring to go north on U.S. Route 101 would use a new flyover structure. This "south to west" and "east to north" traffic flow is the main path tourists use going from the Bay Area to the Monterey Peninsula and back. Local traffic, on the other hand, would be able to use a new interchange to enter and exit U.S. Route 101 in both the northbound and southbound directions. In summary, interregional traffic would have separate lanes to quickly go from U.S. Route 101 to State Route 156 or from State Route 156 to U.S. Route 101, while local traffic could use the separate interchange without mixing with the interregional traffic.

3. To comply with the requirements of the Farmland Protection Policy Act, Caltrans submitted a Farmland Conversion Impact Rating form (AD-1006) to the local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in 2007 because farmland acreage next to State Route 156 would be converted to transportation use. The Natural Resources Conservation Service defines prime farmland as land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, fiber, forage, oilseed and other agricultural crops with minimum inputs of fuel, fertilizer, pesticides and labor and without intolerable soil erosion. Prime farmland is characterized as having dependable water supply, favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable soil acidity, soil alkalinity, sodium and salt content and few to no rocks. The Natural Resources Conservation Service defines unique farmland as land that is not classified as prime farmland. Unique farmland is used for production of high value food and fiber crops such as citrus, tree nuts, olives, fruits and vegetables. Statewide and local important farmland is determined by the state or county government agency and represents land used for production of food, feed, fiber, forage or oilseed crops. Based on the criteria mentioned, the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Salinas determined that no prime farmland is within the project limits for the Route 156 West Corridor project.

An important part of the agricultural industry in Monterey County is the ability to transport the produce harvested from the fields to market. When long-haul trucks carrying that produce get caught in severe congestion, the agricultural businesses that rely on the timely delivery of their products are adversely impacted. For this project, improved transportation of agricultural products is the benefit of impacts to the land.

4. The reason an overcrossing was proposed for Messick Road has to do with removing the existing at-grade Messick Road and U.S. Route 101 intersection. In general, it is preferable if there are no at-grade intersections close to the ending of a freeway or expressway on-ramp as is the case for the northbound on-ramp from the San Miguel Road Interchange. Traffic accelerating along the on-ramp to merge with northbound traffic would be concentrating on U.S. Route 101 traffic over their left shoulder. Traffic coming out of the Messick Road intersection, from the right, could potentially surprise the driver of an accelerating vehicle.

5. When developing large projects like the Route 156 West Corridor project, Caltrans staff works closely with Monterey County and the Transportation Agency for Monterey County to make sure the limited funding is spent in the wisest and most frugal manner. Even with large projects, due to limited funds, it is not possible to fix every transportation deficiency on either the state or county systems. This project does, however, provide significant improvements to local traffic circulation by providing a new county frontage road that would run parallel to the new State Route 156 lanes.

6. The new interchanges and overpasses at Crazy Horse Canyon Road, Blackie Road, San Juan Road and Espinosa Road will be completed prior to the start of this project.

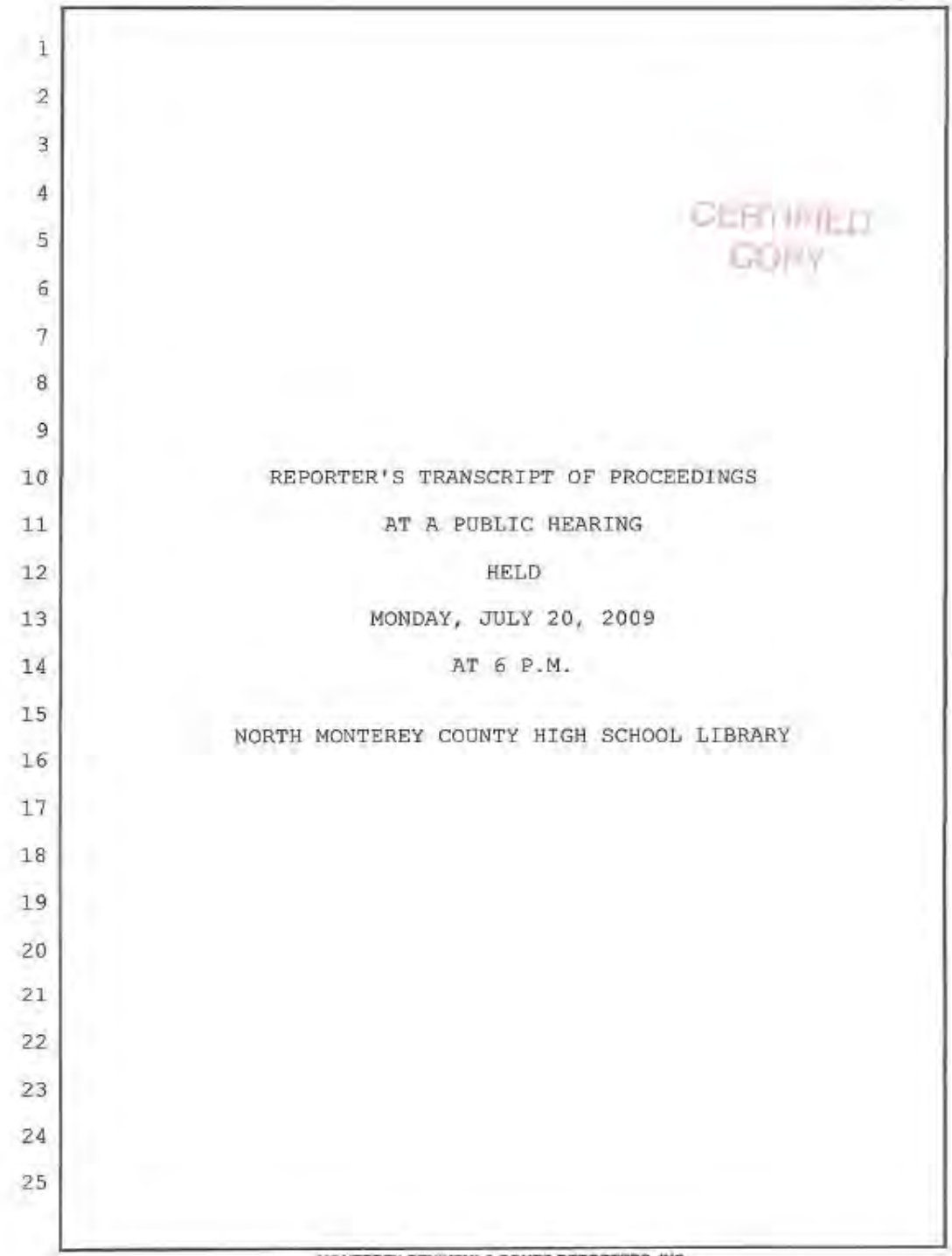
7. All projects involving a federal action (funding, permit, or land) must comply with Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, signed by then-President Bill Clinton on February 11, 1994. This order directs federal agencies to take the appropriate and necessary steps to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse effects of federal projects on the health or environment of minority and low-income populations to the greatest extent practicable and permitted by law. Caltrans researched the demographics of minority and low-income populations within the project area. The percentage

of minorities in any affected census block within the project area is so small that it is unlikely that a disproportionate impact would be made to any of these minority groups. Based on the level of impacts, no disproportionately high or adverse human health and environmental effects would result from the proposed project.

However, the relocation/removal of businesses would affect the community. If a business property is subject to relocation, Caltrans would provide relocation advisory assistance to any person, business, farm, or non-profit organization displaced as a result of Caltrans' acquisition of real property for public use. All displacees would be offered relocation advisory assistance for the purpose of locating a replacement property. All reasonable attempts would be made to assist these businesses in finding replacement property within the community. Note that more in-depth design work in the next phase could eliminate certain businesses from being affected. Until design details are finalized, we cannot say exactly who would be affected at this time.

8. The project would not divide the community. Under Alternative 11, the existing State Route 156 would become a frontage road connecting to the Prunedale North and Prunedale South roads. This would improve access for residents to local services and facilities on U.S. Route 101 and to employment centers in Salinas, Prunedale and Castroville. This would also improve travel to the Monterey Peninsula, without potentially dangerous at-grade crossings from residential properties on the north side of State Route 156. The proposed overcrossing at Messick Road would allow for access to residential properties on the south side U.S. Route 101. The proposed interchange at Castroville Boulevard would allow access to Salinas through the Blackie Road connection. Berta Canyon Road would make a "T" intersection with the proposed Berta Canyon Extension. These residents could access State Route 156 and U.S. Route 101 by using a new Berta Canyon road extension that tees into Vierra Canyon Road and connects to a new section of San Miguel Canyon Road. This new section of San Miguel Canyon Road would access State Route 156 and U.S. Route 101 to the north or the south of Vierra Canyon Road. By improving circulation, safety and access, these changes would be considered beneficial to residents next to State Route 156.

Court Reporter Transcript (50 pages)



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REPORTER'S TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

AT A PUBLIC HEARING

HELD

MONDAY, JULY 20, 2009

AT 6 P.M.

NORTH MONTEREY COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY

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NORTH COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL, CASTROVILLE, CA

MONDAY, JULY 20, 2009

Comments directly to the Court Reporter:

DOROTHY LAWSON: Dorothy Lawson, I own 9952 Pampas Path. And I realize that we cannot stop progress, but I think that your offer of Alternative 11 is excellent. It gives us a good access out of our community; it keeps the noise a little bit further away. 1

I think that someone has put some real thought into this, and that's an excellent for us. And according to your records and analysis, it's also the less expensive one. Thank you. I appreciate you guys making some effort to find a formula that works for all of us.

JOANNE REITER: My name is Joanne Reiter, R-E-I-T-E-R, 9931 Pampas Path. And I would like to see Alternative 11. It would be a great benefit to the homeowners of Oak Hills. It will continue to allow us access in and out of our community safely. And the price is palatable. And that's about it. 2

TOYOKO MAYER: My name is Toyoko, T-O-Y-O-K-O, Mayer, M-A-Y-E-R, 9946 Pampas Path. I live there 30 years. And I much rather have Alternative Plan 11 than the 12. I'm old and I don't want anymore congestion than what's existing 3

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right now with the change.

So I prefer Alternative 11. And that's the least costing. And also for us old people, it's easier to get in and out during the construction, too, because you will put entirely different highway on the other side of the existing 156. So, eleven a better.

JEANNE BENTLE: Jeanne Bentle, B-E-N-T-L-E, from Monte De Lago. And number 11 is definitely the cheaper alternative, it's less impact on the people that are living along 156, and is much safer than it would be on number 12. 4

JACK BENTLE: Number 11 versus Number 12, we would like Number 11. 5

HAZEL TOMPKINS: I'm Hazel Tompkins, and I live at Monte De Lago and I've been there 17 years. I just haven't decided which alternative I want, either 11 or 12. But I've come here to learn something tonight about what they want to do. So -- 6

But I was down in Santa Maria yesterday and traffic was bad there, but when I got off of 183 to get onto 156, I thought to myself, damn, why did I come this way? It was backed up clear to Pezzini's where the artichoke farm is. And it was like 6:00. So it's just been forever that we can't even get into our homes until after 7:30. It's been that way for years, so enough's enough.

But I wonder, why does something start out, like,

$50 million and then it goes up to $500 million before we can get off the pot! I don't know.

MARTHA RAU: I want to give you my heartfelt appreciation for Alternate 11. I sat on the original Citizen's Advisory Committee eight years ago when we planned this, and the thing we wanted most was the Espinoza Expressway, but we would have settled for a frontage road and we were told we couldn't have either. And so it's only you guys eight years and a lot of money and expense to finally come up with our solution. 7

So my name is Martha Rau, R-A-U, I've lived at 9350 Canyon Oak Road, Salinas, 93950 for nearly thirty years. And I also think I'm the only member of the committee still alive!

Caltrans Presentation and Public Comments:

MR. HEXTER: It is time to start our program, and I invite all of you attendees to the main part of the room.

SUPERVISOR CALCAGNO: Okay. Thank you all for coming. This is a Caltrans presentation. This presentation, of course, is all about something that is near and dear to everyone's heart, and that is the Highway 156 improvements that we've been waiting a long time for.

We understand that Caltrans put a lot of effort behind this presentation and behind the work to get the project in the present form.

Now, understanding that with the state's financial problems, that the State's issues, and particularly Caltrans projects, basically are in a holding pattern. I can say that, and I think we all understand that. The State's going through some financial problems and we're all aware of those also. We'll probably have to sit and wait until the State settles its financial problems and gets a stable budget. And then, of course, I'm sure all these projects will come back online, and we'll moving forward with them.

Highway 156 is a major corridor. It's a major corridor in Monterey County because it's the life blood of not only the North County area, but it's also the life blood for agriculture and it's the life blood for the tourist industry. Both of those industries are industries that keep

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the county green; keep the county not only physically green, but keeps the financial facilities of the county green in a way that we are probably most fortunate in this county; with the financial problems that are playing out throughout the country, with our stable tourist industry, and particularly our agriculture industry, which over the years, have survived the ups and downs the economy.

With that being said, I'll turn it over to Caltrans. They have put together a presentation for you. I thank you for coming here on the night of the 20th in the same facility where we'll be talking about water issues in North Monterey County, and that will be Salinas Valley and Pajaro Valley water issues. We'll have a complete staff there, and we expect to see some of you there -- if you're interested in the water issues of North County, we expect to see you here.

Thank you again for giving me this opportunity. And I thank you, Caltrans. And Lou, I'm handing it over to you.

MR. HEXTER: Supervisor Lou Calagno, we are very thankful you came to help kick this off. I'm Lou Hexter with MIG. We're assisting Caltrans and the project team, along with the Community Advisory Group, which has been in place for a couple of years now, on this phase of the project. We also helped to organize tonight's event.

It's great to see so many of you making the effort to attend this public hearing. We weren't sure, with this being the 40th anniversary of the moon landing, how many would attend, but it looks like the date was convenient for many of you. It's great you found time to be here.

I want to take a few minutes to explain how we are handle our meetings for a presentation. Tonight's public hearing is really about hearing from the public. Before I go any further, if any of you are in need of the services of a Spanish interpreter, our Interpreter has a quick announcement.

(Interpreter makes her presentation in Spanish.)

I know many of you were here early and had a chance to look around at the display boards. That was the purpose of the first hour, to provide you with background information on the current state of the Route 156 West Corridor Project. The point of the project now, you will be hearing more about from our Project Manager.

We have just released the draft environmental document, which is very important in the development of a project. It indicates that there's been an assessment of the environmental impact for the project. So hopefully you had a chance to learn a little bit about the project, where it stands today.

At this point, we're going to have a brief

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presentation, an overview of the project and the environmental document that has been released, and then we'll take some public comments. We invited you at the front table to pick up a speaker card if you wished to speak in front of the group tonight, and I have a couple of those cards filled out.

If you're feeling inspired by what you saw in the open house and you want to speak in front of the group tonight, raise your hand and we'll come around with a speaker card for you. If you want to speak, let us know.

If, during the public comment period, you get inspired, that's fine. Just let us know. We have about 40 minutes for the public comments here.

As far as the public comments period goes, the way that works is we'd like to hear your questions and comments about the project and your understanding of it. We don't -- it's not a dialog between the project team and the public. It's really your chance to say what you're concerned about, what you still have questions about. That's of interest to the project team because we take the information back and address all the comments and questions in the final EIR document. That's a requirement of the regulations, to respond to the comments and get to the final documents. So you will get a chance to see your questions and comments addressed in the final document.

So, in addition to the oral comments in front of the group tonight, you hopefully picked up -- everybody was given a comment card where you can submit your written comments. It's exactly the same thing. If you've written something down, those are part tonight's record as well, and we'll respond to each and every one of those.

We also have Joanne here, who is a court reporter, and she can take your direct comments as well. So there are many ways you can have your voice heard.

I also want to encourage you. As you leave tonight and you are somehow reminded of something that you forgot to say, please address it to the comment team. There's an address provided at the website that is hosted by TAMC, so you can avail yourself of that as well.

So again, we have many opportunities to provide comments. I'll be back at the end of the presentation to remind you of the ground rules for our public hearing portion. But before I introduce David Silberberger, our Project Manager, I wanted to acknowledge the participation and commitment that has been part of this project by representatives of your communities -- from the businesses, from the homeowners, from the towers of industry. They have been serving for the past 22 months on a Community Advisory Group that is held by us on the project team's concerns.

They've asked a lot of questions. They've

questioned environmental studies to assess the interests to the community here. I'd like to ask the folks who have been here serving on the Advisory Committee Group to stand and be acknowledged for your work. So thank you all for being willing to participate in that process. So tonight is good-bye to you. Okay.

So let me now introduce the Project Manager from Caltrans who is going to make an effort to study the Route 156 West Corridor Project, David Silberberger. He is going to walk us through a brief presentation of the status of the project as it exists today. So, David, take it away.

MR. SILBERBERGER: My name is David Silberberger, I'm Project Manager with the Route 156 Corridor Project. I'm here this evening to give you a brief overview of the project; where we've been and where we are now. Robert I'm going to go ahead and ask you to kind of move forward.

First I want to give you a little bit of project history. As you all know, the issue of the 156 and 101 interchange has been around for a long time. The interchange was originally constructed in 1970, and we began the environmental phase -- if you can believe this, on what we're here for tonight -- back in 1998. And that actually predates myself being on the project.

We worked on it for a while; then the project was suspended in 2001. So it was a lot of work for a while, then

it died. And then the 101/156 interchange was improved in '03. But those were really operational improvements. I'm sure most of you remember the construction of it. They made some improvements and it helped people get around, but it wasn't the ultimate fix.

Then in 2003, we started the environmental document again and have been progressing since then. We had a public open house meeting in 2006 -- that was actually here -- and then we're at a point now, in 2009, where we have released the draft environmental document to the public and we're holding our public hearing tonight to hear your comments. Next slide.

So what is it we're planning to do with this project? What's the point? Well, we broke it down -- our team broke it down into four main categories: To improve safety and operation. "Operation", that's kind of an internal word that we use. We means to just get traffic through more efficiently. There's a lot of things you can do for operation to make things work even with existing conditions. So that's what operations means.

We also wanted to improve local road access so that people can get around easier, for the locals, the people that live here.

We wanted to alleviate exist ing congestion that I'm sure you're aware of every Sunday, Saturday, Friday and

every day, especially during summertime.

Then we'd also like to provide capacity for the future. We don't want to build something that's obsolete the day we open it.

This gives you a general sense of where the project is. It may be difficult for some of you to see it from back there, but I've got a laser pointer here. Here's Castroville. Here's the 101/156 interchange. The project stretches between Castroville and 101, and then it also does some improvements along 101. Next slide, please.

In the beginning, when we go back about ten years, I'm sure some of you remember the Prunedale Freeway Project, or the bypass, and that discussion. There was a concept that was -- was floated to the public, and it was called -- and eventually the public adopted the term -- "spaghetti interchange", which was not a fond expression. Essentially the original proposal was to have a full freeway-to-freeway interchange, which meant that we would have a -- you can't see it very well, but essentially you'd have flyovers from every direction.

So people coming southbound on 101 going onto 156 would have a flyover, and people going northbound wanting to go onto 156 would have a fly over. I think the chief concern of the public at that point in time was that it was big; it was too big for the Prunedale community. So what happened

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is -- this thing was, like, three stories high. And we determined actually through public comments that this is not the direction we were going to go. So we axed it out. That was the starting point. The starting point was no spaghetti interchange. Next slide, please.

So here we are today. This is the concept -- and if you need to look at it more closely -- again, it's difficult to give you a really good slide. You can look at the maps after we're done with the presentation.

But essentially what we've done with this interchange concept is we've dropped it from being three stories high to just one story high. We dropped it from having four flyovers to just one flyover, and we've reduced the footprint. So it's a huge difference, where we were ten years ago and where we are today. And if you want, again, more information, you can talk specifically to the designers after the presentation. Essentially what we've done is we have lessened the footprint and lessened the height of the interchange. Next slide, please.

Additionally we're down to two alternatives: Alternative 11 and Alternative 12. Both of those alternatives have the same interchange configuration. So what's the difference? Well, the difference between eleven and twelve is this: Alternative 11 proposes to do a brand new freeway to the south of the existing 156. So here's 156

right here, and the plan is to do four new lanes to the south, and then the old 156 will become a frontage road.

On Alternative 12, the idea would be to take the current 156, and widen it and add two additional lanes, and so what you would have is four new lanes but on the current alignment. But to do this, you would probably have to put an interchange at Cathedral Oaks. Next slide, please. This just gives you a sense. This gives you a sense of the differences that you would see between the two alternatives. Alternative 11, you can see: Here's the existing 156, and then to the south, this is where we would put the new lanes.

One of the positives of Alternative 11 is that we would save the trees. I don't know if you're -- I'm sure most of you are aware of this. There's a lot of things in the transportation world that are ironic, and the trees on 156 are something that is very ironic. Well, Caltrans purchased that property a long time ago to widen it; therefore, we held onto the trees for decades, and it turns out they're the only trees left because we bought it to actually widen and take them out some day, and I think that's kind of ironic. But it's kind of the way things are. So Alternative 11 would leave the trees. Next slide, please.

Alternative 12, because it is widening next to the current lanes, would end up taking out the trees, so we would have to cut and take out the trees. And so I know that the

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trees have been an issue over time, so that was one of the areas of concern. So I just thought I would point that out so you can see the differences between the two. Eleven's new alignment to the south and Alternative 12 is to widen the existing lanes. Next slide, please.

So the draft environmental document is currently circulating. It is available in some of your local libraries; it's available online. If you have difficulty finding it, there's lots of staff that can help you get to it. We can write down the website. I believe we have one or two copies on CD. If we run out of CDs, give us your name and address and we'll get them to you. The environmental document basically looked at a lot of different areas. We looked at plants and animals; how they would be affected.

We looked at archeology and historical buildings, and things like that to see how they would be affected. We looked at visual and aesthetics issues; farmland impacts -- and there are quite a few more, but these are some of the main ones.

What we found is that there were no significant impacts under NEVA. And what NEVA is is the federal regulations for environmental work. And we found most of the impacts under CEQA except in the area of farmland impacts. So, what's that mean? I think some might misperceive this as saying, Well, are you saying that there's no impacts? That's

not what we're saying. What we're saying is, based on the law, they're not significant enough to where it drives us into doing further investigation in greater detail. But, yes, there are definitely impacts and that's what the environmental documents is there for, is to address what those impacts are and how we plan to deal with them. Next slide, please.

Funding, obviously you are all aware of how difficult it is to build projects in Monterey County. One of the things I thought I would say before I get into this funding part is that I just want you to know that there's some good things coming for Monterey County in terms of transportation. I don't know if you've been following what's going on with projects like the Salinas Road Interchange, but the Salinas Road Interchange is coming. It's fully funded. You're going to get an interchange in the next three years there. Airport Boulevard south of Salinas where people kind of get jammed up in the afternoons, we have a project that's actually in our headquarters actually being prepared to be advertised.

The Prunedale Improvement Project, $170 million project, which is actually funded. We're about 90 percent complete on right-of-way purchases and we have begun utility relocation. If you drive along 101, people have seen buildings that are sort of disappearing. You might even

start to see the utility poles being used. It's not the main construction, but that's the preliminary work. There's a lot of construction coming to Monterey County finally.

And my hat's off to TAMC for doing all this leg work they do to grab every available funding source. They go to Washington, they go to Sacramento, and where there's money available, they have been patching this funding together to get these projects put together. By the way, I forgot another important one that's fully funded, and that's the San Juan Road Interchange/Red Barn. It's going to come later, but it's fully funded.

So we're looking at four major projects that are coming to Monterey County within the next five to six years, actual construction. Boots on the ground, shovels in the dirt. That's an amazing thing. So that's the plus side.

As far as the 156 project goes, they don't currently have a funding source. However, a lot of the projects that we've delivered -- Salinas Road Interchange, San Juan Road -- the reason why we got the funding is because we had an environmental document down. You don't get invited to the table unless you have your environmental document done because they don't -- see, the people that are giving you the money don't believe you know what you're doing until you've gone through the public comment and things like that. So we've reached a pretty important stage on the project. We

have a master plan that's about to be completed.

So what's the current estimated cost? $437 million total cost. That's a lot of money. Potential future funding sources could come from bond measures, what we call the State Transportation Improvement Program. If we ever bring back a local sales tax measure, that's another possibility; another federal transportation bill. What we've found in the last four or five years is that the funding comes from a lot of different sources and it just shows up. Suddenly, you've got a new funding pot. Which is why we want to be ready, so if funding becomes available, we'll have an environmental document and a master plan to grab that money when it becomes available.

Now, another way to grab that money -- and this is the last comment I'll make on the funding -- is TAMC and the project team are going to be looking at ways to break up the master plan into phasing, into fundable chunks that can -- so we can deliver the master plan over time. It may be a way to get funding if we can show that, Hey, we don't need $437 million; we need $60 million. And money like that has become available. That's not an unreasonable amount of money to ask for from a bond measure, and things like that.

The target schedule: Basically close of public comment period will come August 17th; the final environmental document should be completed by December 2010; so that's

about a year-and-a-half from now, a little less than that. Under plan document and right-of-way, we didn't put a date because we're awaiting funding. We didn't think it would be appropriate to put a date down there because we didn't have a funding source.

But I think the message I really want to convey is this is not a waste of time. This is -- having this available and having our master plan and our environmental document in hand gets us to the table when funding becomes available. Next slide, please.

The other thing I was going to mention that has been an area of concern, this is what I'll conclude with. Because the projects is so far off, a lot of local folks have been saying, What are you doing now? And the supervisor, recognizing -- Supervisor Calcagno, recognizing that fact, formed a safety committee that ended up meeting, I believe it was once a month for a while, and now it's once a quarter, and they've pushed Caltrans. What can we do now?

Some of the measures that were done were immediate tree cutting and tree trimming at intersections, and we did that pretty quickly. We followed up with doing a center line rubber strip -- and I think all of you have seen that. That's where you get the little divots in the center line of the road. And we believe that has helped, although we've asked the CHP to kind of come back with a report to see if

it's measurable. But certainly, when you hit that, it helps people to realize they're about to do something they shouldn't and that's passing on 156. So we hope we're not seeing much of that anymore.

And also we did improvements to signing. And so we're trying to do whatever we can do in the short term so that we can at least improve some of the operational and some of the safety on the corridor.

So with that, I think I'm done here. And I'm going to pass the microphone back to Lou. Then he's going to facilitate public comment.

MR. HEXTER: Okay. Thank you, David. This is our presentation on the project and the status. Again, I want to emphasize Dave's job is done for the moment.

I have speaker cards, people who have said they want to have a little air time in front of the group. If you have a speaker card you want to turn in, give it to Paul, or just bring it up and give it to me.

So again, this isn't a dialog. This is your chance to state your comment or concern or question for Caltrans, and for the project team to hear it and to make sure that it's addressed in the draft -- the final environmental document.

So with that, I would invite Art McLaughlin. Where are you? Why don't you just tell us what's on your mind?

ART McLAUGHLIN: A lot. But in 2006 when we were here, the project was going to cost $300 million. We've come now three years later and we have advanced that another $137 million. My question is, how many more millions is it going to cost when we finally get around to doing the project? That's a concern. 8

Secondly, a couple years ago when the governor came and made some promises to the people in this area about 156 if we would pass a bond measure in the state, what was it, 65 or 70 percent of the folks in our area passed that bond measure? Yeah, over 75 percent, and we didn't get our share for 156. That is a concern.

Now in the interim, I still hear the helicopters coming to transport the injured from the accidents, one of which happened last week, again, on 156. And, yes, the rumble strips have helped and other things have helped. But that highway is just too inadequate. And I, myself, the concern for myself and my neighbors in Oak Hills, as we stated this evening, we --

It was indicated that Friday, Saturday and Sunday are traffic nightmares. Well, now this is the first July that I haven't been visiting my kids on the East Coast, and I noticed it's a traffic nightmare almost every day. How do I get out safely and cross those lanes? Well, I'm lucky. I've got a car with an engine that responds, but I'm going

into tight spaces all the time. It scares me. And at my age, my reactions are not those of a teenager. So that is a concern.

And so I would recommend something we've been pushing for for a long time with Caltrans and have been turned down. That as we go forward with this project -- and we're happy with, you know, the project that we're making and we see the light at the end of the tunnel. But in the meantime, we'd like the light to continue to stay on.

MR. HEXTER: Mary Tsie.

MARY TSIE: I had a comment about the availability of the draft EIR. I think a document of this size, to be 9
available only through supervisors' offices or TAMC's office is really inadequate. It's very non-conducive to a full reading of the document. There were no CDs available. I was directed to the website, and it's a 94-megabyte download, so it's a large document. And certainly we have not had enough time to absorb it thoroughly before tonight's meeting.

I also have another question, largely because I haven't been able to complete the document, the time and source of it. I wonder if that's the same one that was used in support of the Measure C program last year? If so, there was some issues that I had about whether it concerned intersections or whether it concerned traffic segments.

From my observation, if it's the same data, it was

dealing with intersections, which is quite a different matter than road segments which might cause trouble to people thinking they were observing results. Lastly, I'm a little concerned whether the funding goes to 156 or other projects first. That's also a concern. I think that's it. Thank you.

MR. HEXTER: Thanks a lot, Mary. Ed Mitchell.

ED MITCHELL: I have one comment and one concern. The comment is for the TAMC team, and Bill Feedskin, who was our representative from the Prunedale Alliance and the Prunedale Neighbors' Group for those of us at the very end of 156. 10

The last time we had the open house here, the 156 just ran right into Berta Canyon Road, and we pointed out that that could cause a very detrimental situation in our community by people stealing off into that neighborhood. I'm happy to see that both Alternatives 11 and 12 have now kept all that traffic from going onto Berta Canyon Road. We appreciate that. Thank you for helping our neighborhoods.

The concern -- and I hadn't raised it previously -- was in terms of the modeling of the loading that comes off of the highway headed north into the Berta Road area to get to Vierra Canyon to get to the flyover to the other side. That loading ties into what Mary said, that if we're not looking at segment loading, you may wind up with traffic trailing out

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into Highway 101, and it won't be working like you want it.

So when I look at the EIR, we'll be looking closely at that. That is a concern that I would hope that someone could stand up from TAMC and talk about, but this is what the modeling showed.

MR. HEXTER: Thanks so much. JoAnn.

JoANN REITER: Couple of things. I agree with what that gentleman suggested. We have a light at Cathedral Oak, and to go along with that, obviously, we need to lower the speed limit. Just kind of like what they did on Highway 68, and they ended up putting a light at Josselyn Canyon, San Benancio and so on and so forth because they had to eventually, but they had to lower the speed limit as well.

The other question is the price of Alternative 11, does that include the property, the cost of the property? 11

MR. HEXTER: Good time to buy some property now, I guess.

So those are the speaker cards you have. Joanne is over here as our court reporter. She's been taking notes on these oral comments and I'll get right back to you in a second. I'm doing this commercial announcement before we see if there's any others that want to speak through the group.

She will be here until the time period ends at 8:00. The card you picked up in front, it's your opportunity to put in your own words exactly what you want Caltrans and

the project team to address on your behalf in the final document. So please avail yourselves of any of these opportunities.

Our team will be drafting a summary of public comments that we receive, both comments, part from the court reporter and from the oral comments tonight, and providing that to Caltrans for inclusion in the final document. We are listening. We care about your observations, concerns and your questions. So in a moment after we complete with the oral comments, we'll open it back up to the open house.

But this is your opportunity to talk to the traffic folks, right-of-way folks, environmental folks directly, and perhaps get some information you're looking for, and perhaps you can leave with a little more information. Bee.

BEE THOMAS: I'm Bee Thomas with North Monterey County Mothers Committee. And I really like this document. It is a long document and it is done very well. 12

My greatest concern with it is -- as always, and I perfectly understand the need for the interchange, is what is -- I'm just absolutely appalled that we're going to lose 35 businesses, 27 homes and mobiles and some triplexes. My concern is, can we, in our community, afford to lose 35 businesses out of the Prunedale area, and what are they going to do about relocating them, because in the EIR, it says they can relocate it.

DELL MATT: I'm Dell Matt, and I was curious. When they relocate the businesses, where will they be relocated? And those who are, maybe like McDonald's, won't exist any longer. That means people would go to the Burger King on the San Miguel Canyon side and have the project impact our side where it didn't before. So I'm curious when the public will know where the businesses will be relocated, and if they will be relocated. 13

MR. HEXTER: All right. Any other comments from the group right now, then we can finish that part of the agenda up?

JEANNE BINDEL: I'm Jeanne Bindel, Monte del Lago. Mine is a specific request for the Monte de Lago folks. We have no on ramp or off ramp from our park onto the highway. We have a slight widening of the road to get in and out. Since this is going to be a few years down the road, what are the chances of getting us an on and off ramp into our park? Seems like we could use a little more room to get in and out while we're waiting for the full project. 14

MR. HEXTER: Mr. Reiter.

ANDREW REITER: Andrew Reiter, okay.

Most of the accidents historically have been head-on collisions, okay? So why not install a center barrier like what's on the Golden Gate Bridge? It doesn't have to be movable; it's static, but just enough that we 15

reduce greatly these head-on collisions that occur along 156.

MR. HEXTER: Okay. Paul, did you get any additional comments?

Okay. So once again, don't worry. If you didn't get a chance to speak in front of the group, you can visit Joanne or fill out the comment card. That's the way to get the comments into the record officially. So go ahead and fill out a comment card. We have a little over an hour.

Before we started, we failed to properly acknowledge the TAMC folks, the Transportation Agency for Monterey County. They're a very important part of this effort. Where are the TAMC representatives? Okay. Thank you all very much. Okay. And Don, okay. So I just wanted to make sure that TAMC was recognized for their efforts on our behalf.

And if you have anything you want to say, dispute or note for any reason, you are encouraged to do so at this time.

Debbie, do you want to say anything? This is your chance.

DEBBIE HALE: It was really hard to hear up there, so the question was prospects for what?

MR. HEXTER: Debbie, just anything you want to say to the group.

DEBBIE HALE: I was just talking with my colleagues

about how frustrating it is that we have a project that a lot of people support here, but we don't have any money. So we'll do what we've been doing for the last several years: We'll give the project a go, address the comments you have, and when the economy comes back and when there's a bill for a sales tax county-wide, we'll be ready to go.

But it doesn't do us any good to stop in the middle of the process. We appreciate your interest, support and community. I know how they're attempting to make this as good a project as they can. So we'll wrap it up and wait until we can take further action on the project.

MR. HEXTER: Leave us your comment cards on the front table. We're very interested in getting those comment cards from you tonight.

Once again, the comment period ends August 17. So thank you again.

(Adjourn back to open house.)

(Close the record at 8:00 p.m.)

STATE OF CALIFORNIA)
) ss.
COUNTY OF MONTEREY)

I, JOANNE C. BUSHAW, a Certified Shorthand Reporter, License No. 4334, duly certified by the State of California, do hereby certify:

That the foregoing proceedings, being pages 1 through 29 only, were taken before me at the time and place first herein set forth;

That the foregoing transcript is a true and correct record of all proceedings had at the time and place of this public hearing, as recorded by me stenographically, to the best of my ability, and thereafter prepared in transcript form under my direction;

I further certify that I am a disinterested person, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of said action.

DATED this 1st of August, 2009.

Joanne C. Bushaw
Certified Shorthand Reporter
State of California

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Response to transcript comment from Dorothy Lawson

1. Alternative 11 was selected as the preferred alternative for the project. Thank you for your comment.

Response to transcript comment from Joanne Reiter

2. Alternative 11 was selected as the preferred alternative for the project. Thank you for your comment.

Response to transcript comment from Toyoko Mayer

3. Alternative 11 was selected as the preferred alternative for the project. Thank you for your comment.

Response to transcript comment from Jeanne Bentle

4. Alternative 11 was selected as the preferred alternative for the project. Thank you for your comment.

Response to transcript comment from Jack Bentle

5. Alternative 11 was selected as the preferred alternative for the project. Thank you for your comment.

Response to transcript comment from Hazel Tompkins

6. The proposed project would add four lanes south of the existing State Route 156. Construction of this new alignment would divert interregional traffic away from the residential communities next to State Route 156 and U.S. Route 101. Residents and communities next to State Route 156 and U.S. Route 101 would be provided a more direct travel route via the frontage road (the existing State Route 156) to shopping, services and jobs in Prunedale and Castroville. Tourist traffic to the Monterey Peninsula would use the new four-lane freeway south of the existing State Route 156.

   Rising project costs are frustrating to everyone including the government agencies in charge of getting the projects out to construction. For many years, it seemed like the project costs for 156 just kept going up. However, the upside of the poor economy over the last few years is that the cost of this project has gone down significantly. As of April 2012, the cost estimate for building Alternative 11 has dropped from $450 million to about $250 million. This lower estimate is still beyond what the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) can currently afford. Many funding avenues are being considered for this project. Caltrans, and the Transportation Agency of Monterey County have developed a phased approach to delivering this project. Due to funding constraints, the project will be constructed in two phases. Phase 1 will start just west of

Castroville Boulevard (PM R1.8) and tie back into existing State Route 156 at Prunedale North Road (PM T4.81). Phase 2 will be constructed at a later date when funds become available. The first phase would convert the existing State Route 156 from a two-lane highway to a four-lane freeway on a new alignment with a 46-foot-wide median. At the east end of the project, the proposed four lanes would transition back to the existing (U.S. Route 101/State Route 156) separation; to the west, they would transition back to the existing alignment. The existing State Route 156 into a frontage road. At the west end, the frontage road would tie into the proposed realigned Castroville Boulevard, and at the east end, it would connect to the existing Prunedale North Road. An interchange would be built at Castroville Boulevard and State Route 156 at the new alignment. A bridge would be built at Moro Coho Slough. Construction includes drainage improvements, utility relocation, soundwall installation and landscape planting. The escalated cost for alternative 11 is $176,602,000, which includes the right of way cost of $60,221,000. The escalated cost of the project is found by determining the present value of a project and then applying an inflation factor that will determine the project cost at the time the actual expenditures are estimated to occur.

Plans, Specifications and Estimates and Right of Way funding for Phase 1 of Alternative 11 has been approved in the 2012 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

Response to transcript comment from Martha Rau

7. Alternative 11 was selected as the preferred alternative for the project. Thank you for your comment.

Response to transcript comment from Art McLaughlin

8. The upside of the poor economy over the last few years is that the cost of this project has gone down significantly. As of April 2012, the cost estimate for building Alternative 11 dropped. The escalated cost for alternative 11 is $176,602,000, which includes right of way cost of $60,221,000. The escalated cost of the project is found by determining the present value of a project and then applying an inflation factor that will determine the project cost at the time the actual expenditures are estimated to occur.

It is recognized by Caltrans and TAMC staff that it is difficult for residents of Oak Hills to easily access State Route 156, especially on weekends. One of the major benefits of this project, once built, is that the existing State Route 156 lanes would become a

frontage road. Traffic volumes on the "new" frontage road would be much less than is currently experienced. This should make accessing your property much quicker and safer.

Response to transcript comment from Mary Tsie

9. Hard copies and CDs of the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment were available at the public hearing. A request for a copy of the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment could be done by filling out a comment card at the public hearing. The public notice that appeared in local newspapers before circulation of the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment and letters were sent to property owners in the project area. These listed four locations where documents were available for review, and also included a point of contact for project information. A phone number and email address were included for David Silberberger, the project manager of the Route 156 West Corridor project.

   The public circulation period was for 45 days, June 20, 2009 to August 17, 2009. Comments could be sent anytime during that period.

   This Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment is not the same report used for the Measure C program. This Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment is for the Route 156 West Corridor project.

Response to transcript comment from Ed Mitchell

10. Your comment concerning Berta Canyon Road has been noted. The wording in the final environmental document has been changed to reflect the fact that Berta Canyon Road would not connect directly into the new interchange. Please see page 81 of the final environmental document.

    Directional splits and traffic volumes were considered when designing the new frontage road between Berta Canyon Road and Vierra Canyon Road. Therefore, there should be no backup onto the freeway from the northbound off-ramp.

    Also, once drivers exit on the northbound off-ramp from U.S. Route 101 to the signal at the intersection of the ramp and State Route 156, they may immediately cross back over U.S. Route 101 to head westbound on State Route 156. There would be no need to head north on the new frontage road to Vierra Canyon Road to get to the other side for the flyover.

Response to transcript comment from Joanne Reiter

11. The project cost includes the acquisition and relocation of land, businesses and homes, and relocation assistance.

Response to transcript comment from Bee Thomas and Dell Matt

12. and 13. At this time, the number of businesses affected by the project is only an estimate for purposes of producing the environmental document and project report. Based on the final relocation impact report prepared by Caltrans, McDonald's, Country Restaurant and Valero would be full acquisitions. Small businesses that would require full acquisition and reestablishment include a rock and landscaping service, an auto repair and sales center, a used tire retailer, a pre-fabricated structure with show lot and sales facility, and a multiple-unit storage facility. More in-depth design work in the next phase could eliminate certain businesses from being affected. Until the design details are finalized, we cannot say exactly who would be affected at this time.

    Most of the businesses that would potentially be affected are in the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange area. Due to funding constraints, the project will be constructed in two phases. Phase 1 will start just west of Castroville Boulevard (PM R1.8) and tie back into existing State Route 156 at Prunedale North Road (PM T4.81). Phase 2 will be constructed at a later date when funds become available and will include the McDonald's, Country Restaurant, Valero and other businesses. It is unclear, then, when any of the businesses would be affected.

    If a business property is subject to relocation, Caltrans would provide relocation advisory assistance to a person, business, farm, or non-profit organization displaced as a result of Caltrans' acquisition of real propertys for public use. A displaced business, farm and non-profit organization could qualify for reimbursement of expenses incurred in searching for a replacement property. All displacees would be offered relocation advisory assistance for the purpose of locating a replacement property.

Response to transcript comment from Jeanne Bindel

14. This project does not address small, interim improvements along State Route 156. Your inquiry will be forwarded to the appropriate staff within Caltrans for analysis. Once this project is built, the existing State Route 156 lanes would become a frontage road. Traffic volumes on the "new" frontage road would be much less than is currently experienced. This should make accessing your property much quicker and safer.

Response to transcript comment from Andrew Reiter

15. The roadway (lanes and shoulders) are too narrow to allow a median barrier on the existing State Route 156 between Prunedale and Castroville. Although this idea was considered at one time, the cost of widening the road to handle the median barrier was not considered cost-effective. The funding was determined better spent on the larger solution.