



Project Name: Delano to Pixley 6-lane with Pavement Rehabilitation

DIST-CO-RTE-PM: 06-KER-56.4/57.6; 06-TUL-0.0/13.5

EA: 06-0W790/06-0W791

EFIS ID: 0617000307/0621000142

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS**

FOR

**REHABILITATE PAVEMENT AND CONSTRUCT AN ADDITIONAL
NORTHBOUND AND SOUTHBOUND LANE ON STATE ROUTE 99
FROM DELANO TO PIXLEY IN KERN AND TULARE COUNTIES**

The following information is presented to comply with State CEQA Guidelines (Title 14 California Code of Regulations, Division 6, Chapter 3, Section 15093), and the Department of Transportation and California Transportation Commission Environmental Regulations (Title 21 California Code of Regulations, Division 2, Chapter 11, Section 1501 et seq.). Reference is made to the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the project, which is the basic source for the information.

The following impacts have been identified as significant and not fully mitigable:

- Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)

There are impacts because of the project work which are not fully mitigable that include increased passenger car and light-duty truck traffic on State Route 99.

Overriding considerations that support approval of this recommended project are as follows:

The purpose of the project is to:

The purpose of this project is to improve operational deficiencies, improve freight movement, provide for future growth, and repair and extend the service life of the existing pavement along this segment of State Route 99.

The current action is needed because:

Enhancement of this segment of State Route 99 in Tulare County is needed to improve truck freight throughput and travel time reliability. In addition, the pavement within the project limits is distressed and needs repair. Addressing the repair of the existing pavement would decrease the exposure of Caltrans maintenance crews over time and decrease the risk to their safety.



Trucks account for approximately 22 percent of the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) count within the San Joaquin Valley corridor, compared with the State average of 9 percent truck traffic. The 2020 California Freight Mobility Plan estimates over 463 million tons of goods moved into, out of, and within the region in 2010. This is expected to grow to more than 800 million tons by 2040.

The San Joaquin Valley produced \$36.8 billion in agricultural commodities in 2020. The corridor includes eight of the top 10 agriculture-producing counties in California and the three largest agriculture-producing counties in the nation producing 25 percent of the nation's food supply. The San Joaquin Valley was responsible for \$5.8 billion in dairy milk production alone in 2020, higher than any other state. About 250 different crops are grown in the San Joaquin Valley, and agricultural exports are shipped throughout the nation and internationally to over 100 countries. Also, the San Joaquin Valley is becoming a major logistical connection, with a growing number of mega-distribution centers and new manufacturing/processing facilities.

Improve Operational Deficiencies

Improving State Route 99 from a 4-lane highway to a 6-lane highway will reduce congestion, benefits from lower congestion levels and more reliable travel conditions include reduced commute times, improved freight and delivery schedules, reduced emissions and fuel consumption, and increased productivity and economic development.

Improve Freight Movement

Enhancement of this segment of State Route 99 in Tulare County is needed to improve truck freight throughput and travel time reliability. An analysis done by Caltrans for the 2015 Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan showed that State Route 99 and Interstate 5 in the Central Valley, and Interstate 10 between Palm Springs and Arizona, bear the greatest load of interregional freight trips per facility than any other in the state outside of the major urban areas. These routes have higher than average volumes of large, long-haul trucks using all lanes for travel and passing, which creates potential safety and capacity problems for interregional travelers. The limited nature of the east- west network for truck movement and the distance between State Route 99 and Interstate 5 through much of the Central Valley hinder the ability for trucks to bypass areas of congestion by switching between these routes.

The factors noted above, when combined with local truck traffic distributing goods to/from local areas to support the agricultural supply chain, strain the capacity of State Route 99 within the project area. An almost continuous flow of trucks along the outside lane of State Route 99 throughout the region is often the case during peak travel times. The 4-lane sections of State Route 99 do not provide the additional space for trucks and autos to maneuver as easily as on the 6-lane or 8-lane segments.

According to the California Freight Mobility Plan (March 2020), trucking is the most common used mode for California's freight transportation, and trucks transport almost



all freight and services during some point within the supply chain. For this reason, the trucking industry is one of California's most valuable freight assets, particularly for the "first and last mile" of a trip. California must continue to develop, maintain, and operate a safe, efficient, and reliable freight transportation network to accommodate the truck volumes necessary to move freight within the state.

Provide for Future Growth

The most important goods movement corridor in the region is State Route 99. It is a major interregional corridor that provides access to national and international markets both into and out of the San Joaquin Valley. The success of Proposition 1B provided a billion dollars to the corridor but the effort is not complete. Tulare County Association of Governments along with Caltrans District 6 are committed to obtaining the funding to improve the corridor. State Route 99 in Tulare County routinely exceeds 25% truck traffic in the 4-lane sections which combined with the speeds of automobiles creates dangerous conditions that contribute to accidents along the corridor. Safety along the corridor will continue to degrade as more logistics facilities locate in the region and from increased port activity in Los Angeles and Long Beach. The rural sections of State Route 99 in our region are not considered commute corridors. Freeway widenings in the Tulare Region are constrained to this one corridor.

There are four remaining segments proposed for widening in the 2022 Regional Transportation Plan, including the Delano to Pixley 6-lane with Pavement Rehabilitation project, which are designed to complete the system and close the remaining dangerous 4-lane gaps in the region.

Repair and extend the service life of the existing pavement along this segment of State Route 99

The pavement within the project limits is distressed and needs repair. Addressing the repair of the existing pavement will decrease the exposure of Caltrans maintenance crews over time and decrease the risk to their safety. Pavement rehabilitation will preserve the roadway network, enhance pavement performance, and reduce user delays by delaying major rehabilitation or reconstruction projects.

Benefits of the Selected Build Alternative:

The Delano to Pixley 6-lane with Pavement Rehabilitation project Build Alternative would result in the following traffic operations benefits for the year 2027:

- The Build Alternative would result in improved travel speeds and Level of Service during the evening peak hour when compared to the No-Build (No-Action) Alternative.

The Delano to Pixley 6-lane with Pavement Rehabilitation project Build Alternative would result in the following traffic operations benefits for the Design year 2047:



- The Build Alternative would result in improved travel speeds and Level of Service during the evening peak hour when compared to the No-Build (No-Action) Alternative.

For the evaluated Build Alternative and No-Build Alternative in the FEIR, Caltrans has determined that the Build Alternative is a feasible and prudent alternative that achieves the project’s purpose and need for State Route 99. Given that the Build Alternative has public support, does not require any permanent right-of-way acquisition, and performs better from a traffic operations standpoint than the No-Build Alternative, the Project Development Team has reached a consensus to select the Build Alternative to move forward as a recommendation to the Caltrans District 6 Director for consideration as the preferred alternative.

Caltrans will implement a VMT-reducing managed lane strategy that has the potential to fully mitigate induced VMT. However, the VMT-reducing managed lane project would not be implemented until after the facility has been open to traffic. The District will program a VMT-reducing managed lane project prior to Project Construction Closeout in 2026. The VMT reducing managed lane project will be based on the Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plan currently being completed, the VMT-reducing managed lane project will be ready to list for advertisement in the fiscal year 2026/2027 or 2027/2028. A Statement of Overriding Considerations has been prepared to document the mitigation strategy described above.

To the extent the significant effects of the project are not avoided or substantially lessened to a level of insignificance, Caltrans, having reviewed and considered the information contained in the FEIR for the Delano to Pixley 6-lane with Pavement Rehabilitation project, and having reviewed and considered the information contained in the public record, and having balanced the benefits of the project against the unavoidable effects which remain, finds such unmitigated effects to be acceptable in consideration of the overriding considerations discussed herein.

Diana Gomez

District Director (or designee)

Signature

9/11/2023

Date