

Memorandum

Date: 7/8/09

To: File

From: Matthew Voss
Associate Environmental Planner

Subject: Ferguson Slide Community Impact Assessment Consistency

The Ferguson Slide Community Impact Assessment was completed in August 2007 and used to prepare the Environmental Assessment/Initial Study. After the public circulation of the environmental document, Caltrans decided to begin preparing an Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report that included a broader range of alternatives as suggested by public and regulatory agency comments.

The purpose of the August 2007 Community Impact Assessment was to identify land use, socioeconomic, and public service impacts that would result from implementation of the proposed project. Upon completion of this document, the following alternatives were being proposed:

- Alternative E – Remove the rockslide and restore the highway on the existing alignment. This alternative was considered during the alternative development process, but was rejected.
- Alternative R – Construct a rockshed through the rockslide debris and restore the highway on the existing alignment.
- Alternative C - Realign the highway to the northeast, spanning the Merced River and bypassing the rockslide. State Route 140 would cut through the mountain across from the rockslide and then span back across the river where it would meet the existing alignment. Two bridges would be constructed to cross the river.
- Alternative T - Realign the highway to the northeast, spanning the Merced River and bypassing the rockslide. State Route 140 would tunnel 700 feet through the mountain across from the rockslide and then span back across the river where it would meet the existing alignment. Two bridges would be constructed to cross the river.
- Alternative S - Realign the highway to the northeast, spanning the Merced River with two bridges and bypassing the rockslide with a hillside viaduct and retaining wall.
- Alternative T-2 – Realign the highway south of the Ferguson rockslide by tunneling one mile through the mountain. This alternative was considered during the alternative development process, but was rejected.
- No Build Alternative – State Route 140 would remain damaged and blocked by the rockslide. Further coordination with the regulatory agencies led to further

development of this alternative. The temporary detour would be considered the new State Route 140 alignment. The temporary bridges however do have a limited lifespan of up to 10 years and would require removal once they are considered unsafe or if they suffer unforeseen damage from flooding. State Route 140 would then be closed to traffic.

Three additional alternatives were developed to broaden the range of alternatives and they include:

- Alternative S-2 - This alternative is similar to Alternative S and would realign the highway to the northeast, spanning the Merced River with two bridges and bypassing the rockslide with a hillside viaduct and retaining wall. This alternative differs from Alternative S in that it proposes two different bridge type variations along with their own specific roadway alignments. The variations are referred to as S2V1 and S2V2. S2V1 would construct two tied-arch bridges. S2V2 would construct two slant-leg bridges.
- Alternative T-3 - Realign the highway by tunneling under the area of the slide. The tunnel would be 2,200 feet long.
- Alternative A - Realign the highway to the northeast, spanning the Merced River with two at-grade concrete bridges. State Route 140 would bypass the rockslide by utilizing 0.5 mile of Incline Road and then span the river to meet with the existing alignment. This alternative was considered during the alternative development process, but was rejected.

These additional alternatives fall within the scope of the Community Impact Assessment as they were developed to reopen and restore full access to State Route 140.

Ferguson Slide Restoration Project



Final Community Impact Assessment

Mariposa County, CA

State Route 140 Between Mariposa and Yosemite National Park

10-MPA-140/ (Post Mile: 42.0 and 42.5)

10-0P9200 Ferguson Slide Restoration Project

July 2007



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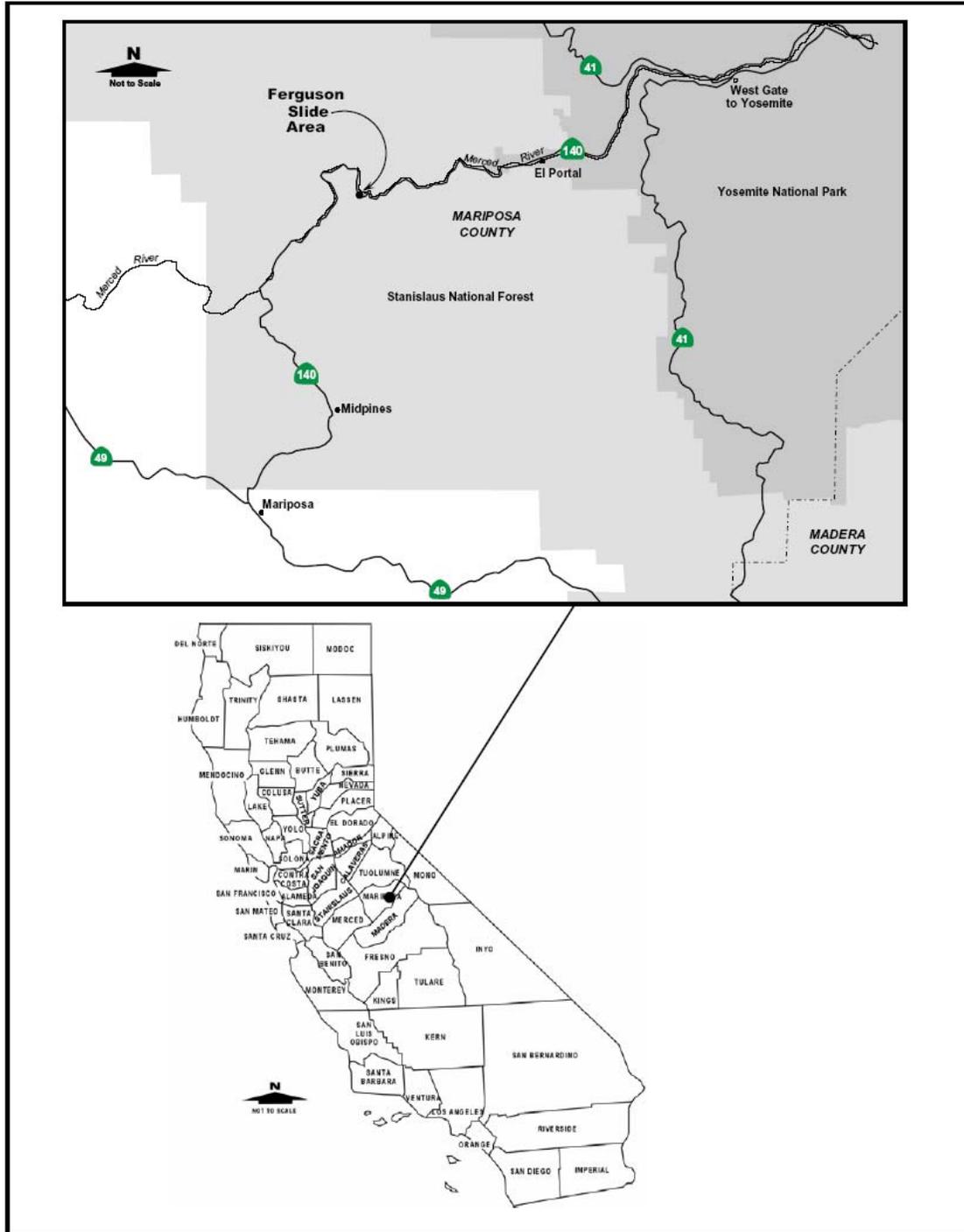
1 Executive Summary

The purpose of this Community Impact Assessment (CIA) is to identify land use, socioeconomic, and public service impacts that would result from implementation of the proposed project. The CIA is in compliance with the rules and regulations of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and is prepared pursuant to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Environmental Guidebook, 2006. This summary section briefly describes the key findings of the CIA. Chapter 2 describes the potentially affected environment, including existing land use characteristics, access and circulation, planning goals and policies, and the demographic, housing stock, neighborhood, economic, and labor force characteristics of study area. Chapter 3 discusses the potential impacts of the project and Chapter 4 lays out proposed mitigation measures.

1.1 Project Background

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is considering alternatives to permanently reopen a section of State Route (SR) 140, a two-lane highway known as the “All Year Highway” in the Merced River Canyon between Mariposa and Yosemite National Park (YNP) which was closed on April 29, 2006 due to a massive rock slide six miles west of the Yosemite Park entrance. Other possible routes to Yosemite’s west gate are frequently blocked during the winter months (Highways 120 and 41). See Figure 1, Project Location.

The Ferguson Slide of April 29, 2006 eliminated the most accessible (gentle grades and curves) and direct established route for tourists visiting Yosemite, as well as the route for Yosemite residents traveling to Mariposa for goods, services, and schools. While Caltrans was able to re-open the roadway to limited traffic within a few days, on May 25, 2006, the highway was again closed as the slide increased in activity and a section of the road became completely covered. Due to the economic impacts of the highway closure, the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors declared a local state of emergency.



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PROJECT LOCATION
Figure 1.0

As of August 18, 2006, a temporary project consisting of a single one-lane detour with one-way traffic control was completed to re-open passage through the slide area. However, this temporary project (existing interim condition) cannot accommodate tour buses, campers, recreational vehicles, motor homes, trailers, emergency vehicles, garbage trucks, construction equipment, and school buses (or any vehicle over 28 feet in length). The partial road closure continues to negatively impact the economies of Mariposa, El Portal, Midpines, and Yosemite National Park.

In December 2006, a Permanent Restoration Project of the Ferguson Slide was initiated by Caltrans. There are seven (7) separate alternatives being considered, including no action (closure of the road); removal of the slide; building a rock shed; an open cut realignment; tunnel realignment; side-hill viaduct; and tunneling one mile through the mountain. All of these alternatives but the road closure and existing interim condition provide for access to and from Yosemite for the full range of vehicle sizes that were previously accommodated.

1.2 Project Summary Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) are considering proposals to permanently fully reopen a section of State Route 140 that has been closed by the Ferguson rockslide. The proposed project would reopen the route in order to provide tourists a direct route to Yosemite National Park and eliminate multiple hour detours or extended commute times for residents, businesses and workers of the area. This action would also reestablish a direct route for emergency services.

The project will study seven alternatives: one “No-Build” Alternative, and six “build” alternatives. The intended purpose of the Community Impact Assessment is to study the impact of the project alternatives on the surrounding communities and businesses.

The primary difference between the No-Build Alternative, existing interim condition, and the any of the build alternatives is access to and from Yosemite National Park. The No-Build Alternative will eliminate access. All of the build alternatives will have temporary and immediate impacts similar to existing interim condition of the road, but the economic, social, and public service impact costs will not be permanent.

The following is a description of each proposed alternative.

1.2.1 Alternative E (Slide Removal)

Remove the rockslide and restore the highway on the existing alignment.

1.2.2 Alternative R (Rockshed/Tunnel)

Construct a rock shed through the rockslide and restore the highway on the existing alignment.

1.2.3 Alternative C (Open-Cut Realignment)

Realign the highway to the northeast, spanning the Merced River and bypassing the rockslide. The highway would cut through the mountain across from the rockslide and then span back across the river where it would meet the existing alignment. Two bridges would be constructed to cross the river. The highway would be constructed with two 12-foot lanes and 8 foot outside shoulders.

1.2.4 Alternative T (Tunnel Realignment)

Realign the highway to the northeast, spanning the Merced River and bypassing the rockslide. The highway would tunnel through the mountain across from the rockslide and then span back across the river where it would meet the existing alignment. Two bridges would be constructed to cross the river. The highway would be constructed with two 12-foot lanes and 8 foot outside shoulders.

1.2.5 Alternative S (Viaduct Realignment)

Realign the highway to the northeast, spanning the Merced River with two bridges and bypassing the rockslide with a hill-side viaduct. The highway would be constructed with two 12-foot lanes and 8 foot outside shoulders.

1.2.6 Alternative T-2 (Southern Tunnel Realignment)

Realign the highway south of the Ferguson rockslide by tunneling one mile through the mountain.

1.2.7 No Build

State Route 140 would remain damaged and blocked by the rockslide. This alternative would not meet the purpose and need of the project.

Table 1.2-1: Summary of Major Potential Impacts of Alternatives		
Potential Impact	Build Alternatives E, R, C, T, T-2, and S	No-Build Alternative
Agricultural Displacements	No	No
Farmland Converted	Prime	No
	Unique	No
	State or Local Importance	No
Business Displacements	No [^]	Yes*
Housing Displacements	No [^]	Yes*
Consistency with the City General Plan	N/A	N/A
Consistency with the County General Plan	No	Yes
Growth Inducement	No	No
[^] Short term, serious disruptions for business and housing are occurring and will continue until completion of any of the build alternatives. * Permanent business and housing disruption will occur as an indirect effect of the road closure.		

1.3 Study Area Definition

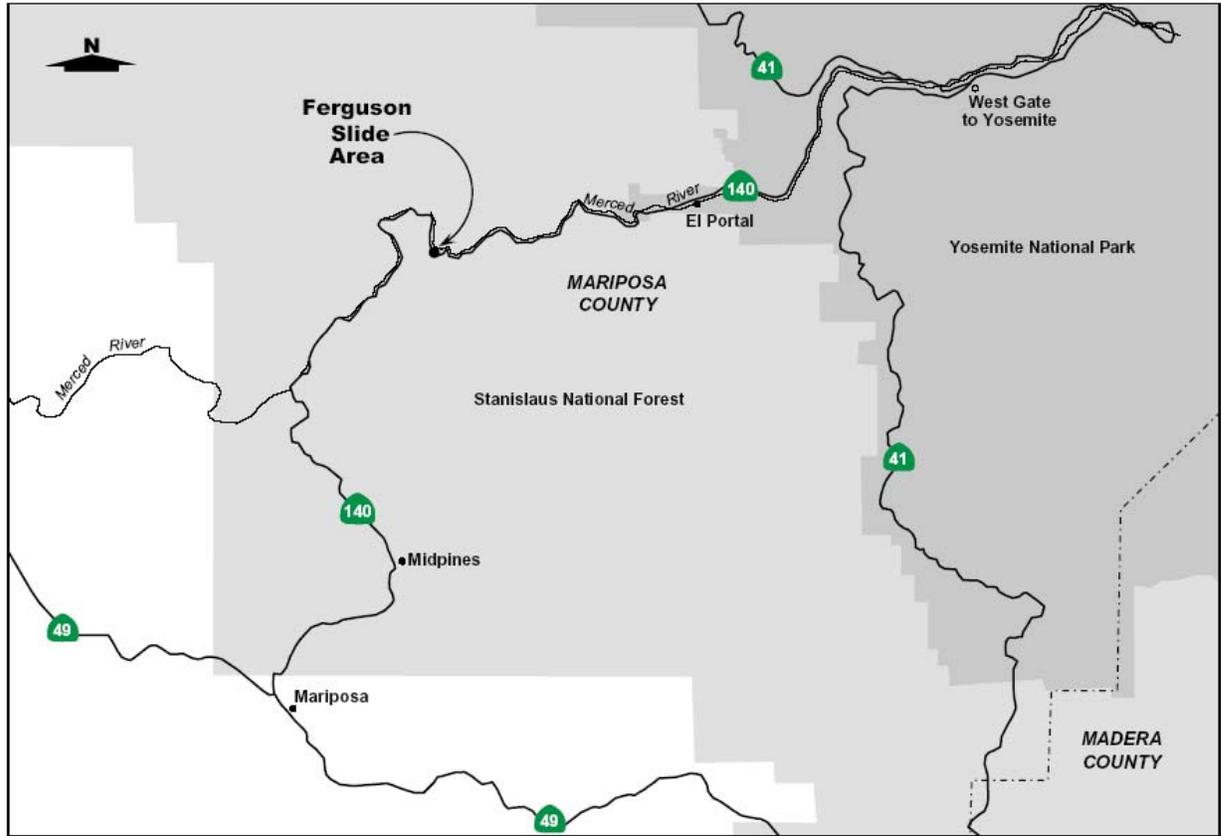
The geographic region expected to be affected by the project is determined based on Caltrans public meetings, interviews with local businesses and residents, and interagency coordination discussions. For this project the immediate area includes: the towns of Mariposa, El Portal, Midpines (communities located along SR 140 near the Ferguson slide), SR 140 at the Ferguson slide, and the western entrance to Yosemite National Park. See Figure 2 for a map of the immediate study area.

Town of Mariposa. The town of Mariposa is the largest town along SR 140 between Merced and Yosemite. Tourism and government services (Mariposa serves as the County Seat) are the primary occupations of the 2500+ residents (2005 census). Future land use plans provide for a core area supporting a population of approximately 3,000 people.

Midpines Area. The Midpines area is a cluster of residential lands (Population 882) surrounding a small scale commercial center. Close to Mariposa and near to Yosemite National Park, Midpines faces growth pressures as the Park Service implements the Yosemite Valley Plan and looks for vacant land in private ownership for seasonal and other employee housing. It also faces issues associated with fire protection and lack of community water.

Town of El Portal. El Portal is a business center, resort area, and high density residential area of about 581 people. Although not part of the Yosemite National Park, El Portal is substantially owned by the National Park Service and used for administrative and housing purposes. Mariposa County manages the limited private ownerships, while the National Park Service manages its lands. Nearby smaller communities include Clearinghouse and Incline.

Yosemite National Park. The National Park Service manages Yosemite National Park. Both the Merced River Plan and Yosemite Valley Plan have been adopted by the NPS, and these documents help guide its long-range operational goals and vision. Over 1300 people live in Yosemite.



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PROJECT STUDY AREA
Figure 2.0

2 Setting

2.1 Community Profile

This section contains a summary of the history, present conditions, and anticipated future of the area. Descriptions of community characteristics, including population demographics, economic and social history, importance of various facilities, and plans for the future are included.

2.1.1 History

The Ferguson Slide project site is located in the Merced River valley on State Route (SR) 140 in Mariposa County in central California, on the western slopes of the central Sierra Nevada Mountains. Elevations in the County range from approximately 300 feet along the western boundary to over 13,000 feet in the mountainous eastern part (Yosemite National Park). The western half of the County consists of gently sloping foothills, while the northeastern half of the County consists of steep to extremely steep foothills and mountains that crest in the Sierra Nevada range.

The first roads into Yosemite were established in the 1870s. Once the Mariposa Road (later to become SR 140) to Yosemite Valley was completed in 1875, tourists could much more easily reach the Valley through Mariposa and Wawona. The Yosemite Valley Railroad was built from Merced Falls in Yosemite to El Portal between 1905 and 1907, but only operated to bring tourists into the Park until it closed in 1945.

SR 140 is now the major east-west route through Mariposa County and is approximately 52 miles in length. It extends from Interstate 5 in the west to Yosemite Valley in the east, passing through the communities of Mariposa, Midpines, Briceburg, El Portal, Clearinghouse, and Incline. The section of SR 140 from the junction of SR 49 in the Town on Mariposa to the Yosemite National Park entrance is officially designated as a State Scenic Highway.

In 1987, Congress placed 122 miles of the Merced River, which SR 140 follows between Briceburg and Yosemite, under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service is responsible for managing the river area surrounding the slide, and maintaining the river's qualities through proper use and protection of the surrounding resources. Each segment of the river is classified into one of three categories: Wild, Scenic, or Recreational. The portions of the Merced River near El Portal are considered recreational, while the portions in the West Yosemite Valley are classified as scenic. The area where the Ferguson Slide occurred is classified as recreational.

Yosemite National Park is a world-renowned, 1,200 square-mile National Park located in the mountainous eastern portion of Mariposa County. The park contains numerous granite peaks such as El Capitan and Half Dome. Established as a National Park in 1890, Yosemite National Parks' rivers, lakes, national forests, rural scenery, scenic routes, and historic sites within Mariposa County make

the County an attractive destination for visitors. As a non-theme park visitor destination, Mariposa County ranks third nationwide, behind New York City and Los Angeles. Tourism has accounted for the largest share of Mariposa County's economy (2005 California Travel and Tourism Bureau).

From the earliest period, concession operations in the park were a major source of employment for people living in and outside the park in communities such as El Portal and Mariposa. In 1925, two major concessionaires were consolidated into the "Yosemite Park and Curry Company". Visitation to Yosemite exceeded one million in 1954 for the first time, and by 1976, the visitor count was well over two million. In 2000, visitation was nearly 3.5 million.

2.1.2 Present Conditions

The Ferguson Slide closed SR 140 from April 26, 2006, until August 17, 2006. This road closure forced all goods, services, personal, and emergency trips to be routed approximately 2.5 hours around the slide through other communities to reach either Mariposa or Yosemite destinations. As of August 18, 2006, a temporary project (existing interim condition) consisting of a single one-lane detour with one-way traffic control was completed to re-open passage through the slide area. However, this temporary project could not accommodate tour buses, campers, recreational vehicles, motor homes, trailers, emergency vehicles, garbage trucks, construction equipment, and school buses (or any vehicle over 28 feet in length). Short term, serious disruptions are occurring due to restricted access.

This restriction on vehicle length is of great concern because the Mariposa area economy is heavily weighted to servicing visitors rather than local residents. It is largely a service-producing economy, with concentrations of employment in the accommodations industry, governmental services, retail trade, and eating and drinking establishments. The present economic impact of the road closure as well as the partial road opening is analyzed in section 2.4, Economic Conditions.

2.1.3 Anticipated Future

While mining and tourism were pivotal in the early development of the economy for this area along SR140 (from Mariposa to Yosemite), the decrease of mining and logging activity has left tourism as the largest single sector of the local economy. Mariposa and the other small towns adjacent to Yosemite depend upon tourism and plan for the cycle of seasonal employment between May and August every year. The receipts from this time period allow businesses to survive the winter months.

Mariposa County is currently in the process of completing an Economic Development Strategy. Expanding the visitor economy is an important short- and long-term economic goal. This expansion will be accomplished through a number of different efforts, but the primary goals are to extend the "season" from five to nine months or longer, increase lengths of stay and room occupancy rates, and make Mariposa County, outside Yosemite National Park, a major destination for visitor activities. These objectives all depend upon an open access road between Mariposa and Yosemite that accommodate all types of vehicles.

All of the alternatives but the No-Build Alternative provide for access to and from Yosemite for the full range of vehicle sizes that were previously accommodated. However, the existing interim

condition and all of the build alternatives will have temporary and immediate impacts related to the restriction of traffic, but the economic, social, and public service impact costs will be shorter term, than those for the No-Build Alternative, depending on the time it takes to rebuild the road,

2.1.4 Community Characteristics: Population and Demographics

The Town of Mariposa, with approximately 1,565 people (Mariposa County General Plan, 2003), is the County seat and largest town in the County. The next largest community is Yosemite Village, headquarters for Yosemite National Park, with over 1,300 full time residents.

Mariposa has 765 housing units in the Town Planning Area, of which 676 are occupied. The average size of households in Mariposa (2.20 persons per household) are slightly higher than Census 2000 figures for the County (1.94 persons per household).¹

The ethnic composition of the existing population is 86.6% white, with the largest minority group American Indians/Alaskan Natives, at 6.3%. The distribution of the Mariposa area population by age groups shows a growing trend toward older residents. Median age is 43.3 years.

The median value of owner-occupied housing units in the Mariposa Area in 2005 was \$119,000, while the County median value was \$149,000 (a 22% difference). However, the median income for Mariposa area individuals was significantly lower: \$18,144, versus \$35,359 for the County (a 51% difference). The number of households with incomes below the officially-defined poverty level is 332, which is 24% of the Mariposa area population. This number is over twice the poverty rate for the County (11.3%), and almost twice the rate for the State (13.8%). Finally, unemployment reached 9.2% in 2005, which is not unusual for the area. Figures for 2006 were not available.

2.1.5 Community Characteristics: Economic and Social History

The County of Mariposa is an international destination because of Yosemite National Park.

Each year, thousands of visitors from the nation and the world come to Yosemite to experience its natural wonders. Yosemite National Park is considered a crown jewel of the National Park system. It is internationally recognized as one of the natural wonders of the world. Most visitors arrive by automobile, while others arrive as part of a bus tour. For these visitors, there are four access routes to or from Yosemite through Mariposa County –Highways 140, 41, 120, and 132.

Highway 140 through Mariposa County provides direct, all-weather access to Yosemite Valley. As such, Highway 140 facilitates the Town Planning Areas of Mariposa and El Portal and the Community Planning Area of Midpines to serve as hosts to thousands of international visitors².

The Mariposa County economy can be described as mainly a service producing economy with a concentration of employment in the accommodations industry, government services, retail trade and eating and drinking establishments. The county's economy sustains positive employment growth with

¹ From the Mariposa Town Planning Area Specific Plan, 1990, updated 2003.

visitor growth, but experiences significant economic setbacks when visitor demand is disrupted. The Mariposa civilian labor force fluctuates seasonally as the number of individuals working changes in response to seasonal job opportunities. Labor force fluctuations varied by as much as 19.2% between seasonal highs and lows, while civilian employment fluctuations varied by as much as 16.6% in 2004 to early 2005³.

While the seasonal fluctuation of jobs has generally been directly related to the slowdown of visitor demand in the winter months, the Ferguson Slide closed down the entire summer season for local businesses. Although there is a small core economy in Mariposa that serves local residents, businesses and government, visitor serving businesses are the primary engines of the local economy.

2.1.6 Community Characteristics: Importance of Various Facilities

The State Route 140 roadway facility that exists today is essential to supporting the Mariposa and Yosemite area communities. SR 140 is relied upon as a means for supplying and delivering food, housing, and the other necessary elements to sustain life and access to these communities. The accessibility of SR 140 and the services that can be provided through its use are the basis of community cohesiveness. (By way of comparison, the Highway 120 entrance to Yosemite Valley has repeatedly been subject to closure due to rock slides, and the Highway 41 entrance is closed often due to snow).

2.2 Land Use

2.2.1 Rural / Urban Land

Mariposa County is located in central California on the western slopes of the central Sierra Nevada Mountains. Elevation in the County ranges from approximately 300 feet along the western boundary to over 10,000 feet in the mountainous eastern part. The western half of the County consists of gently sloping foothills with generally thin soils and hard underlying metamorphic bedrock. The northeastern half of the County (generally above Highway 49) consists of steep to extremely steep foothills and mountains that generally ramp upwards to the northeast to the crest of the Sierra Nevada range.

At the project site the Merced River is designated as a “Wild and Scenic River” under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (Public Law 90-542, as amended), of which 81 miles are managed by the National Park Service (United States Fish and Wildlife Service at project site). The area surrounding the river and the river itself may be impacted by any road reconstruction efforts. Each segment of the river is classified into one of three categories: Wild, Scenic, or Recreational. The portion of the Merced River near El Portal is considered recreational, while the portions in the West Yosemite Valley and the Gorge are classified as scenic. The comprehensive management plan for the river includes resource protection, development of lands and facilities, user capacities, and other management practices to

² Mariposa County 2003 General Plan

³ Ibid.

ensure the "outstanding and remarkable values" of the river are protected under the regulations stated in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

The project has no direct effect on land uses in the immediate environs. Rural lands will not be affected by choice of alternative, and urban and rural lands in the associated towns are not directly affected by this project.

2.2.2 Existing Land Use Patterns

The County of Mariposa General Plan, Town of Mariposa Specific Plan, and the Economic Vitality Strategy for Mariposa County all assume continuous, full accessibility to and from Yosemite on SR 140 in order to achieve orderly and healthy development. The presence of Yosemite National Park, rivers, lakes, national forests, rural scenery, scenic routes, and historic sites within Mariposa County makes the County an attractive destination for visitors. As a non-theme park visitor destination, Mariposa County ranks third nationwide, behind New York City and Los Angeles. Millions of tourists visit Mariposa County each year, and tourism accounts for the largest share of Mariposa County's economy.

All land use and transportation plans assume ongoing growth in the Mariposa area due to its accessibility to core local services and availability of developable land. The focus of the County Plan policies is on community preservation and enhancement. Mariposa objectives include enhancing the area by capitalizing on:

- Yosemite and National Forest Lands
- Large intact tracts of agricultural and forest lands separating discrete, unique communities
- Small retail centers that support larger rural developments
- Close proximity to active, as well as passive outdoor recreation
- Historic structures, ruins, and monuments

2.2.3 Development Trends

The project site and surrounding area is protected against development by the various plans and the overlapping jurisdictions of local, State, and Federal agencies. More than half of Mariposa County is in Federal ownership. The largest portion, over 250,000 acres, is Yosemite National Park. The National Park Service also controls the Merced River Plan. Small portions of the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests are located in Mariposa County sharing nearly 200,000 acres of the County's land area. The Mariposa portion of the Stanislaus National Forest is located west of Yosemite and north of the Merced River and the Sierra National Forest unit is south of the Merced River and west of Yosemite. The Bureau of Land Management has scattered holdings, primarily located along the Merced River wild and scenic corridor outside of Yosemite National Park, and throughout other portions of the County. See Figure 2 (page 1-7).

The build alternatives are not expected to promote future economic or population growth, but could enable the area to maintain levels achieved before the Ferguson Slide occurred. Economic losses to the community are occurring as a result of the existing interim condition, and will likely occur in a

more permanent form as a result of the No-Build Alternative, because that alternative will completely eliminate tourism access. This will indirectly affect development in the Mariposa area. All of the build alternatives will have temporary and immediate impacts, but the land use impacts would be lessened. Access through the interim route will remain open during construction.

2.2.4 Adopted Goals and Policies

The goals and policies of the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Sierra and Stanislaus Forests primarily focus primarily on habitat preservation and management. The Mariposa County General Plan, however, addresses a broader range of goals and topics, including land use, economic development, transit and transportation, and historic resources. Specific policies that may affect the choice of alternatives include:

2.2.4.1 Transit and Transportation Systems

Policy: Mariposa County General Plan 9-2: Maintain an effective transit system.

Public and group transit in Mariposa County has traditionally focused on visitor-serving needs and on the needs of Yosemite employees. With growth and development countywide, the need for public and group transit serving local residents and workers has increased. These needs include expanded operating hours and increasing the number of stops, communities served, and the service routes to Yosemite National Park. Mariposa County anticipates that land use and economic development trends under the General Plan will result in a need for increased visitor-oriented transit. In the past, visitor oriented transit has focused on moving tourists from outside Mariposa County to Yosemite.

During the timeframe of the General Plan, the County anticipates greater demand for visitor oriented transit linking communities and events not associated with Yosemite.

Policy: Mariposa County General Plan Implementation Measure 9-1a(2): In order to facilitate provision of needed long-range (2015-2025) improvements to state highways serving Mariposa County, and particularly to those state routes where projected capacity would be less than Level of Service (LOS) “D,” the County shall:

- Maintain a close working partnership with the State to solve state highway capacity deficiencies and funding limitations.
- Monitor State activities in responding to the long-term transportation needs in the County and provide input to the state concerning the priorities for state highway improvements based on capacity below LOS standards, including timing of long-term Project Study Reports (PSR) for priority projects and their inclusion in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) in the needed timeframe.

2.2.4.2 Emergency Services

Policy: Mariposa County General Plan 9-9: Maintain quality emergency service delivery.

Policy: Mariposa County General Plan 16-12: Minimize risks to people and property during emergencies through pre-planning.

Mariposa County manages and coordinates its emergency response activities in conjunction with the California State Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS). The State Office of Emergency Services administers the SEMS, which provides a framework for coordinating multi-agency emergency response. Among other things, SEMS incorporates mutual aid agreements, establishes lines of communication during emergencies, and standardizes incident command structures.

Defining acceptable service standards and creating a comprehensive emergency response plan to attain and maintain service delivery is greatly affected by the closure or partial closure of SR 140. The Mariposa County General Plan contains policies that build upon this resource by minimizing risks to people and property during emergencies, and striving to maintain quality emergency service delivery. These are:

2.2.4.3 Scenic Resources

Policy: Mariposa County General Plan 11-1: Conserve the natural and scenic resources, and open space lands to protect and enhance the County's quality of life and character ensuring a viable economy.

Scenic resources as viewed from the County's highways are among the most important scenic values and complement the beauty of the Yosemite Valley and Merced River Canyon. Although viewed by residents and tourists alike as important elements of the overall scenery, these lands are important to the County's economy and character values as well. The Mariposa General Plan, 2003 has the following broad goal:

2.2.4.4 Regional Tourism

Policy: Mariposa County General Plan 13-1: Preserve, protect and enhance regional tourism opportunities and resources.

Policy: Mariposa County General Plan 13-4: Create visitor access to communities and points of interest.

Policy: Mariposa County General Plan 13-5: Provide job growth and sustain County revenues by enhancing and expanding the visitor-serving sectors of the economy.

Improvement of visitor accessibility to the County’s tourism assets including its communities and other local points of interest is one of the goals for improving regional tourism. The Regional Tourism Element focuses on regional tourism issues related to the County’s character and regional recreation opportunities that support and complement the Economic Development Element, including:

- Protecting and enhancing the County’s natural attractions that support regional tourism activities, and
- Improving visitor access (both on-road and off-road) to provide greater opportunities to experience less-traveled areas of the County.

2.2.4.5 Historic Preservation

Policy: Mariposa County General Plan 14-4: Utilize the County’s historic sites to increase tourism opportunities.

Policy: Mariposa County General Plan 14-5: Create historic districts to preserve the County’s historic character and promote tourism.

The preservation of the County’s historic and cultural heritage is important in the ability to achieve its economic development goals, as set forth in the Economic Development Element. The Historic and Cultural Resources Element recognizes the contribution that preservation rehabilitation and creative and adaptive use of historic resources can make to the County’s tourism development, through:

- building upon the County’s historic scenery to increase tourism opportunities, and
- creating historic districts to preserve the County’s historic character and promote tourism.

2.2.5 Farmland

While agriculture is a very important land use in Mariposa County, it is not a feature of the project area. There would be no agricultural displacements or farmland converted to other uses by the project or any of the project alternatives.

2.3 Population and Housing

Population and housing trends within the Mariposa Area, Mariposa County, and State of California are analyzed in the next sections.

2.3.1 Regional Population Characteristics

As occurred in most other Foothill counties⁴ between 1980 and 1990, Mariposa County was one of the fastest growing counties in Northern California on a percentage basis. Between 1980 and 1990 the population increased nearly 30 percent from about 11,000 to over 14,000 people. The County's growth is the result of people moving into the county, rather than from a natural increase (births exceeding deaths) of the resident population.

Between 1990 and 2000, the County's population increased from 14,302 to 17,130 residents, an increase of nearly 20 percent. The California Department of Finance (DOF) estimated the County's population at 17,195 in 2001. Much of the growth in the County's population since 1990 has resulted from the migration of families from urban areas of the state.

In comparison to other central Sierra Foothills counties (Amador, Calaveras, and Tuolumne), Mariposa County's growth rate during the past decade has been above the four-county average, which ranged from over 20 percent for Calaveras County to under 11 percent for Tuolumne County. The study area grew at a rate of 13.9% between 2000 and 2005.

The general composition of Mariposa area households:

- Of 676 households, 328 are families (48.5%), and 348 are non-family households (51.5%).
- 92 (13.6%) are female heads of households, with an additional 62 (9.2%) of those having children.

Table 2.1 shows Mariposa area households, persons per household and housing units in comparison to the County and State. Table 2.2 provides a similar range of information on income, poverty levels, median home value and median travel time to work.

Table 2.1: Households, Housing Units, Ownership Rates, and Multi-Unit Structures				
County/State Census Overview, 2005	Mariposa Area		Mariposa County	California
Households, 2000	676	100.00%	6,613	11,502,870
Persons per household, 2000	1.94		2.37	2.87
Housing units, 2005	771	100.00%	9,478	12,989,254
Living in same house in 1995 and 2000, pct 5 yrs old & over	474	34.40%	53.00%	50.20%
Homeownership rate, 2000	320	47.30%	69.80%	56.90%
Housing units in multi-unit structures, percent, 2000	337	44.00%	6.80%	31.40%

The following sections continue to compare the study area to the County and State in the age and ethnicity of householders.

⁴ The "Foothill Counties" are Nevada, Placer, El Dorado, Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne, and Mariposa counties.

2.3.2 Population, Age, and Sex

The 1990 and 2000 Census age distribution was nearly identical for the County, and in 1990, the County's median age was 39.5 years old. In 2000, the median age increased to 42.5 years old. In 2005, the median age was 43.3. It is widely believed that Mariposa County has a predominantly older population. However, the percentage of population by age group changed very little from 1990 to 2000, largely due to the influx of younger households and families during the 1990s.

The largest area of population growth is in the "Persons 65 years old and over" category, followed by persons in the 35 to 44 and 45 to 54 years of age classifications (see Tables 2.2 and 2.3).

County/State Census Overview, 2005	Mariposa Area		Mariposa County	California
Population, 2005 estimate	1,565	08.6% of county	18,069	36,132,147
Population, percent change, April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2005		13.9%	5.50%	6.70%
Population, 2000	1,373	8.0% of county	17,130	33,871,648
Persons under 5 years old, percent, 2005	74	4.73%	4.00%	7.40%
Persons under 18 years old, percent, 2005	283	18.08%	18.80%	26.90%
Persons 65 years old and over, percent, 2005	371	23.71%	17.30%	10.70%
Female persons, percent, 2005	761	48.63%	49.30%	50.10%

	Mariposa Area Population	Percentage of Population	State Percentage
Total Population	1,373*		
SEX AND AGE			
Male	612	44.6	49.8
Female	761	55.4	50.2
Under 5 Years	74	5.4	7.3
5 to 9 years	86	6.3	8.0
10 to 14 years	79	5.8	7.6
15 to 19 years	85	6.2	7.2
20 to 24 years	71	5.2	7.0
25 to 34 years	133	9.7	15.4
35 to 44 years	185	13.5	16.2
45 to 54 years	141	10.3	12.8
55 to 59 years	69	5.0	4.3
60 to 64 years	79	5.8	3.4
65 to 74 years	127	9.2	5.6
75 to 84 years	172	12.5	3.8

85 years and over	72	5.2	1.3
Median Age (years)	43.3		33.3

2.3.3 Ethnicity

In 2005, Mariposa County had a predominantly white population (92 percent) compared to the State (77 percent). The County also had a relatively small Hispanic population (9 percent) and American Indian population (3 percent). Blacks, Asian/Pacific Islander and Multiracial composed 5 percent of the population.

The ethnic composition of the Mariposa Area (Mariposa, El Portal, Yosemite, and Midpines) is also predominantly white (87 percent). Native Americans account for six percent of the remainder of the population. See Table 2.4.

County/State Census Overview, 2005	Mariposa Area	Percentages (%)	Mariposa County (%)	California (%)
White persons, percent, 2005 (a)	1192	86.8	92.30	77.00
Black persons, percent, 2005 (a)	8	0.06	1.10	6.70
American Indian and Alaska Native persons, percent, 2005 (a)	87	6.3	3.10	1.20
Asian persons, percent, 2005 (a)	12	0.09	1.00	12.20
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, percent, 2005 (a)	0	0	0.10	0.40
Persons reporting two or more races, percent, 2005	49	3.6	2.40	2.40
Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin, percent, 2005 (b)	80	5.8	9.60	35.20
White persons not Hispanic, percent, 2005	1152	83.9	83.40	43.80

County/State Census Overview, 2005	Mariposa Area		Mariposa County	California
Foreign born persons, percent, 2000	20	1.40%	2.80%	26.20%
Language other than English spoken at home, pct age 5+, 2000	59	4.30%	5.20%	39.50%
High school graduates, percent of persons age 25+, 2000	288	84.20%	85.10%	76.80%
Bachelor's degree or higher, pct of persons age 25+, 2000	166	16.60%	20.20%	26.60%
Persons with a disability, age 5+, 2000	245	5.40%	3,516	5,923,361

2.3.4 Affected Neighborhoods / Communities

The defined communities in the affected area include the Towns of Mariposa and El Portal, Midpines, and Yosemite National Park. Where possible, this document discusses Mariposa area data, but often must rely on County-wide data. The 2000 Census shows that the Mariposa area population (El Portal: 518; Mariposa: 2,509; Midpines: 882; and Yosemite Village: 1,322; for a total of 5,231) comprises 31% of the County's population.

- **Town of Mariposa.** The town of Mariposa is the largest town (2,509 in 2005) along SR 140 between Merced and Yosemite.
- **Midpines Area.** The Midpines area is a cluster of residential lands off of SR 140 surrounding a small scale commercial center. This area accommodates approximately 882 residents.
- **Town of El Portal.** El Portal is a business center, resort area, and high density residential area of about 581 people. Nearby smaller communities include Clearinghouse and Incline.
- **Yosemite National Park.** Over 1300 people live in Yosemite Village. A key component of Yosemite National Park planning is the reliance on transit to serve workers and tourism. The present transit system, named Yosemite Area Regional Transit System, or YARTS, has been in operation since 2001.

2.3.5 Jobs / Housing Balance

The concept of a jobs/housing balance is based on the premise that commuting, the overall number of vehicle trips, and the resultant vehicles miles traveled can be reduced when a sufficient and appropriate range of jobs are available locally. A jobs/housing balance is said to occur when people live in housing that is affordable for the wages that they earn, and when travel is reasonable to and between the jobs and services they use.

The largest employers in the County are the National Park Service, Yosemite Concession Services, and the tourism industry as a collective employer. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, US Forest Service, and the School District also have large numbers of seasonal employees. Yosemite Concession Services (YCS) currently provides 1,300⁵ bed spaces during the summer and about 700 during the winter for its employees. An estimated 250 National Park Service (NPS) and YCS employees reside in Mariposa County outside of Park boundaries and its Administrative site. The current NPS Management Plan for Yosemite National Park calls for Yosemite Park employee housing to be relocated to El Portal and other parts of the park outside of Yosemite Valley, if adequate housing cannot be found outside of park boundaries. The biggest influx of employee housing needs are for seasonal employees during the peak summer months. At this point, these large employers cannot provide enough nearby housing for workers, so employees must travel from other local communities to get to work. Yosemite National Park is the anchor attraction;

⁵ Mariposa County General Plan, 2003

however, the large number of service type employees increases the demand for housing in the low and moderate-income ranges.

Yosemite National Park is a 26 mile drive from Mariposa on SR 140, on the opposite side of the Ferguson Slide from Mariposa. Although locals had a considerably shorter commute time (9.7 minutes to work) in comparison to the County and State in the year 2000, as of the closure of SR 140 in 2006, this time changed significantly. On closure, up to 2.5 hours was added to a one-way trip to and from Mariposa/Yosemite. With the partial re-opening of the corridor, travel time (for those vehicles that can fit) is still delayed by at least 15 minutes in either direction by a stoplight that controls bridge traffic. This results in a one-way travel time of over 34 minutes, higher than both the County and State levels that include urban areas.

Housing Unit Value and Travel Time to Work	Mariposa Area	Mariposa County	California
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2000	\$119,900	\$141,900	\$211,500
Mean travel time to work (minutes), workers age 16+, 2000	19.7	32.1	27.7

2.4 Economic Conditions

Economic development is an important concern since the character and performance of the local economy provides the livelihood of residents, businesses, and public institutions. This section describes and summarizes the central features of the local economy by examining local economic activity, employment conditions and trends, labor force conditions and trends and income conditions.

2.4.1 Regional Economy

Because of the importance of Yosemite National Park tourism, the national and global economy has had more of an impact on Mariposa County than the regional California economy for many years. However, regional tourism is heavily impacted by access along state highways and county roads. For tourism to thrive, visitors need access to points of interest. Some parts of Mariposa County that have great tourist potential are served by state routes or local roads that cannot now be used by the larger-sized tour buses that are becoming increasingly common. Tour buses transport a significant number of visitors in the County. Visitor attractions that are served by state routes or county roads not suited to these larger vehicles have witnessed a decline in the number of visitors in recent years.

Table 2.7 California Travel Economic Impacts for Mariposa County, 2005⁶					
Travel Tax Receipts					
Spending	Earnings	Employment	Local	State	Total
291.3 million	76.6 million	4,200 jobs	9.4 million	7.3 million	16.7 million

Over half of private economic activity and private sector jobs in Mariposa County can be attributed to tourism, primarily from visitors to Yosemite, and a significant share of governmental expenditures also relate to tourism. Millions of tourists visit Mariposa County each year. Over half of private economic activity and private sector jobs in Mariposa County can be attributed to peak season⁷ tourism, primarily from visitors to Yosemite National Park.

Table 2.8: Total and Visitor-Generated State Sales Tax Receipts⁸ for Mariposa County, 2005		
Tax Receipts		
Total	Visitors	Percent Visitor-related
\$10.1million	\$5.0 million	49.2%

Many visitors are also attracted to the unique features offered by the Sierra National Forest and Stanislaus National Forest. The five fastest growing outdoor recreation activities through the year 2005 as measured by number of participants (nationally) are projected to be: cross-country skiing, downhill skiing, visiting historic places, sightseeing, and biking. Wilderness recreation is also forecast to grow over the next 50 years. Many of these activities are potentially important to regional tourism in Mariposa County⁹.

⁶ California Travel Impacts by County, 1992-2005, and 2006 Preliminary State Estimates by Dean Runyon Associates The primary focus is on the direct impacts of visitor spending. Visitors are defined as persons that stay overnight away from home, or travel more than fifty miles one-way on a non-routine trip. Only the expenditures related to specific trips are counted as visitor spending. Other travel related expenditures such as the consumption of durable goods (e.g., recreational vehicles or sporting equipment) or the purchase of vacation homes are not considered.

While such a definition of the travel industry (i.e., the trip related expenditures of visitors) is conservative, it is also in keeping with the notion of the travel industry as being an export-oriented industry for specific local communities. That is, visitors are important to regions because they inject money into the local economy. This focus on the export oriented nature of the travel industry for local communities becomes blurred if the industry is defined so as to include non-trip related expenditures.

⁷ Peak season. "Peak season" means the period of the year during which tourism activities are at the highest levels. Normally May through September in Mariposa County.

⁸ Source: Dean Runyan Associates, Inc., Bureau of Economic Analysis and Bureau of Labor Statistics. Total earnings and employment for 2004 estimated by Dean Runyan Associates, Inc. from 2003 earnings and employment data from by the Bureau of Economic Analysis and 2004 payroll data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

⁹ Mariposa County General Plan, 2003

Mariposa has an opportunity to build upon existing tourist attractions to provide more reasons for visitors to stay, recreate, and spend money locally¹⁰. Mariposa County's current economy is based primarily on government employment, retail sales, services, and tourism. In 2003, these employment sectors account for more than 4,900 jobs, 90 percent of the County's 5,280 jobs. The average unemployment rate for 2003 (not seasonally adjusted) was about 6.6 percent, which is above the statewide rate of 6.4 percent. Employment levels fluctuate greatly during the year, with the lowest unemployment rates occurring in the summer, reflecting the importance of the tourist trade.

Expansion of the regional tourism sector of the County's economy is one of the fundamental goals of the County's 2007 Economic Development Element. That Element includes goals, policies, and implementation measures to expand the visitor-serving economy through a number of different efforts, including extending the "season" from five to nine months or longer, increasing lengths of stay and room occupancy rates, and making the County a major destination for visitor activities related to cultural tourism and agri-nature¹¹ tourism.

The travel industry generates proportionately more tax revenue from indirect business taxes than other export-oriented industries. In Mariposa County, 82% of total local tax receipts are generated by the transient occupancy tax. International visitors and residents of other states in effect pay about one-half of these taxes. Conversely, the travel industry places a relatively low tax burden on its employees through the state income tax, as compared to most other industries¹². The majority of visitor-related spending for Mariposa County in 2003 came from overnight visitors who stayed at hotel, motel and bed & breakfast accommodations. These visitors accounted for \$225,600,000 of the total \$276,500,000 of visitor related spending. However, travel spending is not sufficient to expand the employment base, as can be seen in Table 2.10, below.

Table 2.9: Mariposa County Travel Spending and Employment Generated														
Mariposa County Travel Spending (millions), 1992-2005¹³														
1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Annual Change
184.4	191.5	212.4	210.7	194.4	208.3	225.1	231.5	241.5	260.6	269.5	277	288.8	291.3	3.6%
Mariposa County Employment Generated by Visitor Spending (jobs), 1992-2005														
1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Annual Change
3,840	3,940	4,390	4,260	3,770	3,870	4,090	3,930	3,910	4,040	4,090	4,260	4,300	4,200	0.9%

¹⁰ State of California Employment Development Department, 2003

¹¹ Agri-nature Tourism. "Agri-nature tourism" means visitor-oriented destinations and experience which are centered on an agricultural and/or natural theme. It is the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation and/or activities and experiences taking place in natural areas.

¹² California Travel Impacts by County, 1992-2005, 2006 Preliminary State Estimates, March 2007.

¹³ California Travel Impacts by County, 1992- 2005, 2006 Preliminary State Estimates, March 2007.

Day travelers visiting Mariposa County account for 10.8% of all visitor spending, while overnight public campground visitors account for 2% of all spending. Tax revenues from travel-related economic activity have increased by \$2,500,000 between 1999 and 2003. County tax revenues from visitors in 2003 are estimated at \$9,100,000, while State tax revenues from visitors in Mariposa amounted to an estimated \$9,800,000.

The most direct fiscal impact of regional tourism to the County's revenue is through the generation of transient occupancy taxes (TOT), sometimes referred to as the "bed tax". This tax represents nearly half of the County's General Fund revenues. Between the 1996-97 and 2000-2001 fiscal years, annual TOT revenues rose from just under \$5 million to \$6.8 million. Among California counties, Mariposa County has the highest rate of TOT collection in relation to other revenue sources and year-round population.

The transient-occupancy tax for 2005 (\$8,670,006), was similar to that for calendar year 2006 (\$8,959,678). City officials¹⁴ suggest that the transit-oriented tax remained stable only through this period because of a general increase in room rates.

2.4.2 Employment and Income

The Mariposa County¹⁵ and area economy can be described as mainly a service producing economy with a concentration of wage and salary employment in the accommodations industry, government services and, to a lesser degree, eating and drinking establishments. Over half of private economic activity and private sector jobs in Mariposa County can be attributed to tourism, primarily from visitors to Yosemite, and a significant share of governmental expenditures also relate to tourism. Positive employment growth is sustained with growth in visitor demand, but the area experiences significant economic setbacks when visitor demand is disrupted. Seasonal fluctuation of jobs is directly related to the slowdown of visitor demand in the winter months. There is a smaller, but significant, core economy that serves local residents, businesses, and government.

The County's lower household median incomes reflect the large number of seasonal workers. The number of lower wage jobs also affects the median household income: seasonal and service worker jobs are generally paid at the lowest end of the pay scale. This is reflected in a Mariposa County area median household income at only 72% of the State median income. Poverty levels are also higher for the County than the State. Specific census tracts in Mariposa County project area (Tract 1, Block Group 3 at 25%, and Tract 4, Block Group 1 at 21%) show pockets where over 20% of the population lives in poverty. For these reasons, the area qualifies as a "low-income population". See Section 3.2.2 and the conclusion for a discussion of what this designation means in the context of this study. There is significant concern about the need to raise area wages.

¹⁴ Conversation with Rick Benson Mariposa County Chief Administrative Officer, April 2007.

¹⁵ Where possible, this document discusses Mariposa area data, but often relies on County-wide data.

Table 2.10: Income and Poverty in 1999-2000 Census

Geographic area	Median Income in 1999 (dollars)		Per capita income in 1999 (dollars)	Median Earnings in 1999 of Full-time, Year-round Workers (dollars)		Income in 1999 Below Poverty Level		
	Households	Families		Male	Female	Percent of Population for Whom Poverty Status Is Determined		
						All Ages	Related Children Under 18 Years	65-Years and Over
Mariposa County	35,151	27,344	18,190	26,771	26,635	13.0	18.5	10.2
California	48,836	53,025	22,711	40,627	31,722	12.7	19.5	4.0

The 2003 County General Plan offers a cogent discussion of economic productivity, employment characteristics, and labor force characteristics. As expected, the largest source of economic productivity is Yosemite National Park, with retail sales and eating and drinking topping \$88 million per year. Accommodations follow at \$61 million, and resident-serving core retail sales at \$13 million. Visitor related jobs were mostly in accommodations, also eating and drinking establishments, for 71% of all jobs.

The Industry Employment & Labor Force Report, using March 2006 as a Benchmark¹⁶, reports the following negative changes in some 2007 economic sectors of activity for Mariposa County over the past year since the Ferguson Slide:

- Total Non-farm: -50%
- Private Services providing: -1.7%
- Service Providing: Trade, Transportation and Utilities: -5.4%
 - Wholesale Trade: - 33.3%
 - Retail Trade: - 7.1%
- Leisure and Hospitality: -5.1%
 - Entertainment, and Recreation: -6.7%

These are significant downturns in the context of a healthy and expanding State economy and visitor receipts at Yosemite that remained constant or increased at other entrances to the Park.

2.4.3 Study Area Business Activity

As previously stated, businesses that supply goods and services to the tourist industry, providing 50% of local jobs to local residents, are the hardest hit by the road closure.

¹⁶ Labor Market Information Division of the California, State Employment Development Department, March 2007.

Currently, Mariposa citizens are waiting to see if the road repair will be delivered within a time frame that allows them to maintain their businesses and residences in the area. Since the closure of the road and partial reopening, business in the real estate industry in Mariposa has been down between 10 and 20%¹⁷.

Delaware North is a supplier for Yosemite National Park as is one of the largest companies of its kind, managing a network that offers a wide range of food, hospitality and facilities management in the Yosemite area (among other areas across the world). Delaware North has reported a loss of \$4 million since the bridge has been closed to tour buses and recreational vehicles¹⁸.

Additional major employers in the Mariposa area that are affected by the closure/partial closure of the road include all the businesses listed in the following chart.

Business Name	Location	Business Type	Number of Employees
Forestry & Fire Protection	Mariposa	Government-Forestry Services	500 - 999
John C. Fremont Hospital	Mariposa	Hospitals	100- 249
Mariposa County Offices	Mariposa	Government Offices - County	100-249
Mariposa Fairgrounds	Mariposa	Campgrounds	50-99
Miner's Inn Restaurant and Lounge	Mariposa	Restaurant	20-49
Pioneer Market	Mariposa	Grocers - Retail	50-99
Redwood Guest Cottages	Yosemite	Resorts	20-49
Triple D Corporation	Mariposa	Grocers - Retail	20-49
Yosemite View Lodge	El Portal	Resorts	50-99
Cedar Lodge Motel	El Portal	Hotel- motel	29-40
Company headquarters are shown here. All but three of the major county employers are located in Mariposa, El Portal, or Yosemite. America's Labor Market Information System, 2006			

This study surveyed business owners along State Route 140 to ascertain potential impacts of the closure on local businesses. Many of these businesses also wrote letters to Caltrans and/or appeared at the March 6, 2007 local community meeting.²⁰

Business Closures:

- Four businesses have closed related to the slide: a new retail business, gift shop business, a taxi company, and a tour company.

¹⁷ Conversation with Tolley Gorham, owner of Mariposa Properties.

¹⁸ Dan Jensen, CFO of Delaware Northern, quoted in the Ferguson Slide Community Meeting Article of March 9, 2007.

¹⁹ Labor Market Information System, 2006.

²⁰ See Appendix for summary of meeting and copies of all letters from community meeting in March 2007.

Local Motels:

Up to 30% of rooms are reserved for bus tours, and the lodging industry has reported a 30% reduction in bed revenues²¹. Total number of buses annually is estimated at 250, which has dropped to approximately 34 this coming (2007) season. These buses are following through on a two-year contract, and no more contracts for future years have been signed.

- A local motel suffered a \$200,000 loss, when usually it would have had a \$200,000 profit (\$400,000 loss swing)
- One local motel usually gets 50 to 80 tour buses a year. They expect to get 34 buses this season. This motel usually gets overflow from El Portal when they are booked up, however, they have seen much less of that, and attribute this to the road blockage.
- Use of a Small Business Administration (SBA) loan was offered to many but not a realistic option for many people.
- Overall the motels group (including “name brand motels”) lost the whole season last year. Expectation is for the room rentals to be down 40-45% this year and 70-75% next year.

Concrete & Supply Company:

- The Concrete and Supply Company has lost 60% of its business. Trucks, equipment, and supplies are much more costly to deliver now that access to large parts of the company’s market takes an extra 2 or 3 hours of travel time. Loss of over \$1 million so far from not being able to supply concrete north of the slide. He also has to apply a surcharge to account for the detours.

Local Restaurant:

- 60% loss this year. Primary business is tour bus lunches.
- Tour buses are going to Catheys Valley now. Have discussed situation with Chinese, Korean, some Asian tour companies, but all have cancelled tours. There is one bus on one contract remaining for this year.
- Owners have a 20 year lease on the building. Will likely be unable to hold out for years while the project is rebuilt.

Gas Stations:

- Receipts are down 50% since the Ferguson Slide and partial re-opening.
- There is no tow-truck access, so vehicles needing service cannot be towed into Mariposa for service.

Local Gifts and Retail Shops:

- Tourist gifts, retail items, historic buildings downtown.

²¹ Ferguson Slide: Economic Impact of State Route 140 Closure, by Marilyn Lidyoff January 29, 2007.

2. Setting

- May- August 2006 50% or more drop in sales.
- For 2007: all months are down considerably – 20 to 30%.
- Many husband and wife, or woman-owned businesses in town; Owner believes that Mariposa will be a “ghost town in 6 years” if that is how long it takes to rebuild the road.
- Working 7 days a week, expanding into giving classes, going out to craft fairs. Overall strategy is to modify business plan to meet local/regional needs.

Apparel Shop:

- Summer of 2006 sales were down 20%. Owners expect the same this year, and have bought less stock to compensate.

Fast Food Restaurant:

- Lost tour buses (20% of summer 2006 business).
- Cisco supplier no longer uses long trucks, therefore they have to pay higher prices for smaller amounts of supplies trucked to the site, plus three days of delivery are lost so more must be stored on site.
- Towns near to Yosemite with casinos have access, places for RVs to park, making Mariposa less competitive. Need parking for RVs and buses in Mariposa (assume road will be fixed to allow tour buses).
- Public relations issue: people see the signs saying the “road is open but...”, and people think that means it is closed.

Grocery Store:

- 10% decrease last year, similar possible this year. Does not have “deep pockets”, may not make it if he has another year like last.
- At minimum staff levels necessary for market operation, cannot have fewer even if business drops off.
- Was offered a 4% SBA loan last year, but this did not help and was declined. Would like a tax break – i.e., no interest loan.
- Speed of fix is the issue- money was spent on a temporary bridge that doesn’t support tourism industry.

Real Estate:

- Visitors would say “It’s so beautiful- I want to live here”, but now they are seeing Oakhurst and saying that. The increase in Oakhurst business is probably one way to tell the offset of business from Mariposa. Mariposa’s main feature is the quick, easy route to Yosemite- without that...people don’t come through.

- Immediately after road closure, website traffic steeply dropped off (the website is how visitors find out about buying property in Mariposa- they recall how great Yosemite was and do searches for Yosemite area property).
- Experienced 3-4 months without anyone “dropping by”. A 50-60% drop in business from May to August 2006.
- Overall, a 10- 15% drop in business since partial closure.

Coffee Shop:

- Feeling ripple effects of downturn, fewer locals hanging out and buying coffee. New owner as of one year ago (just prior to slide).

Newspaper Stand:

- Tour buses buy papers. Down \$3,000 for the months of January and February this year.

Museum and History Center:

- Tours from Yosemite still seem to come this way, but come around via a big loop. 22 Tour buses cancelled as of March 7, 2007. Those that do come arrive later with less time to shop & explore. Use as a rest stop hasn't changed.
- 4th graders still come to Mariposa from Fresno and Merced to do California History tours, but do not combine this with a trip into the park as in prior years.

2.4.4 Widespread Difficulties since the Slide

- Vendors in town and in Yosemite are undergoing surcharges due to the added transport time.
- Several businesses have had to undergo a change in credit terms—cash instead of credit, which increases the amount of capital needed to run a business.

2.4.5 Relatively Unaffected Businesses To-Date

These businesses reported virtually no impact due to the rockslide; however as the base economy of the town declines, these businesses will also be negatively affected.

Local Retail:

- 5 year-old business showing steady growth every year. Last year still grew, but not as much as in prior years. Not much tour bus business, mostly folks coming to Mariposa for the day from Merced and Fresno.

Hardware:

- No impact, steady growth. When times get tight, people buy more hardware rather than less. Try to make do with what they've got, fix it.

Health Foods:

- Minimal effects. Really a local serving business (including El Portal customers, who can still arrive by car).

2.4.6 Discussion of Business Relocation in This Project

While no businesses or residents will be directly affected by right-of-way acquisitions or other roadway improvement efforts, both businesses and residents in the Mariposa/Yosemite area are greatly impacted by the road closure or partial closure, because it affects access to needed goods and service. This is discussed at greater length in the “Access” Section 2.5.3.

Should the road be closed, the existing interim condition remain, or any alternative require significant time to build (over another year from Spring 2007), there will be substantial job losses and business closures through either the immediate impact of a lack of tourism, or from the ripple effects that follow that loss. These jobs are generally of the skilled and unskilled labor types. Few firms will be able to relocate, and even fewer employees will be able to find suitable jobs within a reasonable commuting distance. The closure or partial closure of SR 140 will disturb the major employers of the area and eventually reduce or eliminate these types of service jobs in the Mariposa area.

2.5 Community Facilities and Services

This section contains a discussion of the community facilities and services along SR 140 and the region of the slide. This includes a discussion of child care, schools, fire and sheriff’s protection, hospitals and emergency services, and overall circulation and access.

2.5.1 Child Care

There are a number of childcare facilities in the County, particularly in the town of Mariposa²². The Infant/Child Enrichment Services, Inc., a non-profit community based organization funded by the State Department of Education, Child Development Division, provides childcare resources and referrals to county residents. They refer parents to licensed family childcare and center-based childcare programs free of charge. Available child care facilities in the County include the Almost Like Home Before and After Schooling Center, the Mariposa Children’s Center, Mariposa County Head Start, Mariposa Lutheran Childhood Discovery Program, and El Portal Child Development Center, among others. In addition, services are available in nearby Oakhurst and other towns outside Mariposa County for border residents.

With the partial opening of SR 140, parents have been able to transport children between Mariposa and the El Portal Child Development Center and the Yosemite Valley Daycare Center. There are the two primary childcare facilities serving Park employees. The Yosemite Valley Daycare Center serves 52 children and operates at full capacity. The program can accommodate approximately 30 infant and school age children at the same time. Thirty percent of the children utilizing this facility are from

²² Mariposa County General Plan, 2003.

Park employee households. The El Portal Child Development Center also serves children of Park employees. The center serves 15 to 20 infant and school age children, but has the capacity to serve up to 40 children. (Yosemite Valley Plan, 3-152).

2.5.2 Schools

Schools are located on either side of the Ferguson Slide, and closure or partial closure of the road has affected both the access and the type of equipment used to transport students. 824 children were enrolled in Mariposa area schools according to the 2000 census.

The Yosemite area includes Yosemite Valley School, which is located within Yosemite National Park, El Portal Elementary School, and Yosemite Park High School, which are located in the town of El Portal. Residents living near the county borders may utilize schools in their bordering counties or towns, however many Park employee children are bused to Mariposa for middle school and high school.

- Yosemite Valley School provides education for grades Kindergarten through eighth grade. Current enrollment is approximately 39 students, which has decreased due to the downsizing of Park concessionaires' middle management staff following the 1997 flood. Capacity of Yosemite Valley School is approximately 100 students. All 4 classrooms are currently in use, and the school contains a library, office complex, multipurpose room and kitchen, and a teacher lounge. The school is staffed by 3 teachers and 4 support staff. 3 teachers and 11 students participate in the after school program²³.
- El Portal Elementary School consists of grades Kindergarten through sixth and has a current enrollment of approximately 57 students, although the school has a capacity for 85 students. Since enrollment is low compared to the capacity, only 3 of the 6 classrooms are currently utilized. In addition to classrooms, the school is equipped with a combination gym/auditorium/kitchen, computer lab, and one office complex. The school is staffed by 3 teachers and 8 support personnel. 1 teacher and 16 students participate in the after school intervention program. Since enrollment is declining in the area, there are no plans for expansion.
- Yosemite Park High School serves the students of El Portal and Yosemite Valley who are not interested in traveling to Mariposa daily. With a capacity of only 12 students, 6 students are currently enrolled. There is one classroom with a kitchen, along with office space. 2 teachers and 2 support staff are at the school.

The central Mariposa County area includes Mariposa High School and Mariposa Elementary School, both of which are located within the town of Mariposa.

Mariposa High School has approximately 721 students in grades 9 through 12 and is operating over capacity (capacity is 640 students). All 38 classrooms are currently in use and are complemented by a gym, library, media center, auditorium, kitchen, two computer labs, and an office complex. There are

²³ Mariposa County General Plan, 2003

39 teachers and 24 support staff. Classrooms for both the high school and Mariposa Elementary School share the same campus.

The original slide closure forced detours of up to 2.5 hours each way between Mariposa and Yosemite. With the partial opening of SR 140, both parents and the school district (using a smaller bus) have been able to transport children at a more reasonable pace between Mariposa and the El Portal Child Development Center and the Yosemite Valley Daycare Center. To accomplish this for the schools, however, the School District had to spend over \$93,000 to purchase a new smaller school bus that could navigate the now restricted SR 140 corridor. This bus can hold 32 students; often the number of children needing to be moved is just below or above 32. The School District reports that in the event that more students need transportation than can be accommodated on the smaller bus, two trips may be required to accommodate all passengers.

2.5.3 Police and Fire Protection

2.5.3.1 Sheriff's Department Services

The Mariposa County Sheriff's Office is the primary law enforcement agency for Mariposa County covering 1,455 square miles and no incorporated cities located in the county. The Mariposa Sheriff's Office currently serves all 17,400 residents and 651,244 visitors to Mariposa County annually. The Mariposa County Sheriff's Office also provides Coroner/ Public Administrator, Animal Control, Search and Rescue, boating and safety on county waterways, Civil Service, Court Security, Corrections and Emergency 911 Dispatch.

Mariposa County Sheriff's Office provides the primary services for Coroner, Civil Service and Animal Control inside Yosemite National Park, while the California Highway Patrol is responsible for traffic enforcement and accident investigation along roadways in the County. Although Yosemite National Park has its own law enforcement unit, the County Sheriff also patrols BLM and US Forest Service Lands and receives supplemental funding from these agencies to carry out law enforcement on federal lands.

The Mariposa County Sheriff's Office operates out of eight (8) facilities, with the main office and five of the facilities located in the Town of Mariposa. The other facilities are located in Greeley Hill and La Grange. There are 140 personnel operating out of the Mariposa offices, of which approximately 100 are Search and Rescue and SCOPE volunteers. The Mariposa County Sheriff's Office Volunteer Search and Rescue Team assists the Sheriff's Office in conducting the search and rescue duties for Mariposa County. The team also responds to other counties and jurisdictions, upon request, to assist them in their search and rescue operations.

The team is responsible for the searching and rescuing of missing persons, rescuing those stranded or injured in the white waters of the Merced River, recovering drowning victims from the County's many waterways, rescuing victims of "over the bank" vehicle accidents, rescuing hikers and climbers who fall and or become injured on back country cliffs, performing evacuations of populated areas during wild land fires or flood and assisting the Sheriff's Office in investigations by searching for and locating evidence.

All existing services are based on the Mariposa side of the Ferguson Slide, and cannot easily respond to emergencies or requests from El Portal and Yosemite Village. Furthermore, the stoplights now in existence at the beginning and end of the partial closure route can impede emergency access that could be critical to saving a life.

The limitations of the partially closed road with regard to fire services are the following:

- Primary equipment includes a ladder truck, which cannot now get to upper floors of the tall government building or the three-story motels in El Portal.
- Only three of the nine water tenders will fit over the bridge. This is more of a problem than it sounds in that the ones that don't fit carry more water and are better positioned to respond to fires up the river and thus are not available quickly in the Mariposa area..
- Ongoing delay with using the bridge. The California Highway Patrol (CHP) is willing to control traffic to cut the transit time, but it would only be difficult to get two CHP officers in the vicinity to do this in an emergency.
- California Fire Department cannot get its bulldozer transports through. This is a serious hindrance in fighting a wildfire in the river canyon. Without being able to cut a timely firebreak, fires in the river canyon could easily spread into more inaccessible wilderness areas and threaten more forest and property.
- There have already been delays on a half a dozen Emergency Management System calls; however, none of these delays have affected the outcome negatively so far.

2.5.3.2 Fire Services

The California Department of Forestry (CDF) operates five fire stations, one of which is located in Mariposa. This site houses an administrative office and dispatch center as well as two fire engines and a bulldozer, with on-duty crews of seven to eight people during the fire season.

The Yosemite Fire Department provides wildland and structural fire protection, and responds to hazardous material spills, emergency medical calls, searches, rescues, public service, and motor vehicle accidents. The Yosemite Fire Department provides these services to Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and other areas of Mariposa County.

The Mariposa Public Utility District (MPUD) has provided fire protection service to the historic district in the town area of Mariposa since 1947. The Fire Chief, appointed by the District Board of Directors, oversees a group of on-call fire fighters, who are paid for emergency response within the district, drills, and equipment maintenance. The fire station is located in the MPUD office building in Mariposa. The MPUD Fire Department receives and provides mutual and automatic aid to and from the Mariposa County Fire Department and CDF.

Mutual/automatic aid agreements exist between the Yosemite Fire Department and the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests and the National Park Service is signatory to the Five Party Agreement – a cooperative agreement for local government fire suppression - and the Four Party Agreement - a

master mutual aid agreement. The Yosemite Fire Department entered into a Memorandum of Agreement for structural fire protection services with Mariposa County; although an automatic aid agreement with the County has not yet been established.

1.1.1.1 2.5.3.3 Hospitals and Emergency Services

The John C. Fremont Hospital District (JCFHD) is a countywide independent district. Its five-member elected Board of Directors is independent of the County. The hospital operates a clinic, an extended care facility, inpatient beds, twenty-four-hour emergency trauma services, and a heliport for emergency air transportation, all located near the town of Mariposa²⁴. JCFHD has a capacity for approximately 1,600 patient visits per month and received between 1,200 and 1,400 patients prior to the Ferguson Slide.

The National Park Service contracts with Doctors Medical Center for medical services within Yosemite National Park. The Yosemite Medical Clinic is able to treat minor injuries, medical conditions, and first aid for incidents occurring within the park and El Portal area and handles approximately 9,000 cases each year. The clinic provides health screening, physical therapy, medical training, and worker's compensation treatment for park employees. A dental clinic is located within the medical clinic, but operates independently.

The services of John C Fremont Hospital and Doctors Medical Center occur on either side of the Ferguson Slide, so basic medical services are available to both the Mariposa and Yosemite communities. However, the services in Yosemite Park offer only assistance with minor injuries and first aid. Larger medical emergencies must be handled by John C. Fremont Hospital. One effect of the partial road closure has been to slow access to the hospital from the El Portal and Yosemite Village areas. These outlying areas are now vulnerable to less-than-timely transportation to comprehensive medical access and care. If access between the two areas continues to be restricted, or delayed by the stoplights installed on the bridges, some patients' health may be compromised by the increased waiting time.

2.5.3.4 Parks and Recreational Resources

The County's major tourist attractions, such as Yosemite National Park provide significant opportunities for local residents to enjoy wilderness and other types of recreation not available in the County's park system. The Regional Tourism Element defines policies and implementation measures for maintaining and enhancing these recreational opportunities. In addition, the County's park and recreation facilities, which are addressed in the Local Recreation Element, provide recreational opportunities for visitors that complement the County's major tourism attractions.

The Merced River tumbles over the cascading Nevada and Vernal Falls of Yosemite National Park. The river meanders along the valley floor through Yosemite and builds into a river of pure whitewater. With its' steep gradient, sweeping bends, and few obstacles to negotiate, the Merced provides long straight forward rapids with big rolling waves. With no upstream reservoir releases, the

²⁴ Mariposa County General Plan, 2003

Merced relies on runoff from snowmelt. Whitewater rafting can be enjoyed from April to July depending on the winter snowpack. Peak flows generally occur during the months of April and May.

This Class IV River is a favorite for whitewater river rafters. Operating under permit from Local, State and Federal governing agencies, commercial whitewater rafting outfitters provide access to the river. Rafters can rent boats out of El Portal at the Red Bud Picnic Area and Whitewater Rafting Put-in, or at the Briceburg Put-in & Take-out area.

Camping is another of the most popular recreational activities in Sierra National Forest. There are a few camping options along the Merced River, which are managed by The US Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Three BLM campgrounds exist below Briceburg with both tent and RV campsites. All campsites are on a first come - first serve basis. All BLM campgrounds provide pit or composting toilets, fire pits, grills and garbage collection. Under the US Americans with Disabilities Act, all BLM campgrounds are wheelchair accessible. There is a 14 day limit in BLM camps. Camps include McCabe Flat, Willow Placer, and Railroad Flat.

More public camping is available in nearby Yosemite National Park. Private campgrounds exist along SR 140 between Briceburg and Yosemite. Those on the left bank are more secluded. Gold dredgers often occupy right-bank campsites²⁵. Both private and public campgrounds are crowded on spring weekends and all week during the summer.

2.5.3.5 Scenic Resources

The area has an extraordinary diversity of scenic resources that contribute to the character and tourism base. The Yosemite Valley is a world-renowned scenic area and Yosemite National Park encompasses some of the world's most recognized scenic vistas. Although perhaps less known, the Merced River Canyon (west of Yosemite National Park, the location of the Ferguson Slide) also has major scenic value. The U. S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management have jurisdiction over 98 percent of the Merced River Canyon area. The ruggedness of the terrain around the Canyon has precluded development in the area that could detract from its scenic value.

Scenic resources encompass its forested ridges and valleys, grasslands and rolling hills, free-flowing rivers and streams, and the historic character of its towns and settlements. Proper management protects the scenic qualities of these landscape elements.

2.5.4 Circulation and Access

As stated, State Route 140 is the major east-west route through the county. It extends from the Merced County line in the west to Yosemite Valley in the east passing through the communities of Catheys Valley, Mariposa, and El Portal. In terms of regional travel, State Route 140 provides a connection to State Route 99 in the Central Valley. The section of State Route 140 from the junction of State Route 49 in the Town on Mariposa to the Yosemite National Park entrance is officially

²⁵ Excerpted from [California White Water by Jim Cassidy](#)

designated as a State Scenic Highway. It is in this section where the Ferguson Slide occurred (approximately six miles from the Western Gate to Yosemite).

The key component of Yosemite National Park planning and Mariposa area economic health is the reliance on open access for many types of transportation to serve tourism and employees that support tourism. Transit systems providing general transit service range from regional operations serving inter- and intra-county patrons to demand responsive (door-to-door) operations tailored to meet local trip making needs.

2.5.4.1 Tour and Charter Buses

Over half of private economic activity and private sector jobs in Mariposa County can be attributed to tourism, primarily from visitors to Yosemite, and a significant share of governmental expenditures also relate to tourism. The primary “vehicle” for tourism is the tour bus. Tour buses tend to reduce the number of automobiles (and therefore pollutants) in the park; however, they can cause delays on steep grades and winding roads. To avoid delays and steep slopes, State Route 140 is the preferred tour bus route to Yosemite.

In 2005, over 250 tour buses stopped in the Mariposa area on the way to Yosemite. These buses generally measure 45 feet in length, and require roads with relatively minor curves and flatter surfaces for successful navigation. The closure and the partial road opening at the Ferguson slide does not allow for these types of vehicles to reach Yosemite or return via SR 140. As a result, most tour bus operators have either re-routed service through Oakhurst temporarily (steep slopes and winding roads make these areas especially difficult during snow, ice, and rain), or are canceling bus service to Yosemite altogether. These tour buses, however, provide the primary income generator for motels, food and drinking establishments, and retail goods. Loss of the tour bus industry due to the configuration of the partial road opening is having a significant negative effect on the Mariposa area economy.

2.5.4.2 Transit

The VIA Yosemite Connection Highway 140 service has been in operation since 1992. The generally 45 foot long buses operate on Highway 140 between the City of Merced and Yosemite Valley. The schedule varies depending on the seasons with fewer trips during the winter months and increased service during peak tourist months. Since the closure/partial closure of SR 140, VIA has reported a \$100,000 loss in operations²⁶.

Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) is another service that provides inter-county transit services to Yosemite National Park. YARTS is designed to provide an alternative mode of transportation to both Yosemite Park visitors and employees. YARTS operates service along two corridors that utilize State Route 140 and State Route 120. YARTS service began on May 19, 2000 as a part of a two-year test program for expanding the use of transit to access Yosemite National Park. In February 2001, a decision was made to formally establish the service on a permanent basis. The present transit system moved 5,200 visitors and 2,800 employees in August of 2005 (prior to when

²⁶ Ferguson Slide Community Meeting Article reported by the Sierra Sun Times, 03/09/2007

SR 140 was obstructed in May of 2006). Since the slide, visitors to Yosemite using transit have declined by -37%²⁷ and employee use is down -48%²⁸. See Figure 3.

2.5.4.3 School Buses

The Mariposa County Unified School District currently operates 31 bus routes throughout the county serving approximately 1600 out of 2400 students on a daily basis during the school year. The District primarily utilizes large (45 foot-length) vehicles that can carry between seventy and ninety passengers²⁹. As stated in the section on schools, access between Mariposa and Yosemite is critical in getting students to and from school on time. The interruption in access has extended travel times and forced those without private transportation to look for alternative educational arrangements.

2.5.4.4 Pedestrians and Bicycles

Pedestrian and bicycle facilities tend to be inconsistent in quality and often lack continuity in the Mariposa area. For example, in the Town of Mariposa along State Route 49/140, there are formal sidewalks that connect to parking lots without sidewalks and areas with no sidewalks. In many areas pedestrians must walk on the shoulder of the roadway. While there are some limited bicycle paths within the county (notably along portions of the Merced River near Foresta), there are no dedicated bicycle lanes. The temporary bridges and the one lane road installed to skirt the SR 140 Ferguson Slide area are not conducive either to bicycling or pedestrian use.

2.5.5.5 Emergency Vehicles, Waste Hauling, and Construction Equipment

TWS and Fiske Disposal provide commercial and residential solid waste hauling services throughout Mariposa County and the NPS provides hauling for Yosemite National Park. The Mariposa County Sanitary Landfill is located 2.2 miles north of Mariposa on Highway 49. The County owns, operates, and manages the landfill.

To reduce the amount of waste entering the landfill, the County is building a mixed solid waste (MSW) composting facility that includes a new recycling center and sort stations. The facility location is at the existing Mariposa County Landfill site. All garbage currently entering the landfill would go instead to the MSW Composting facility first. This includes all residential and commercial garbage from Mariposa County and Yosemite National Park.

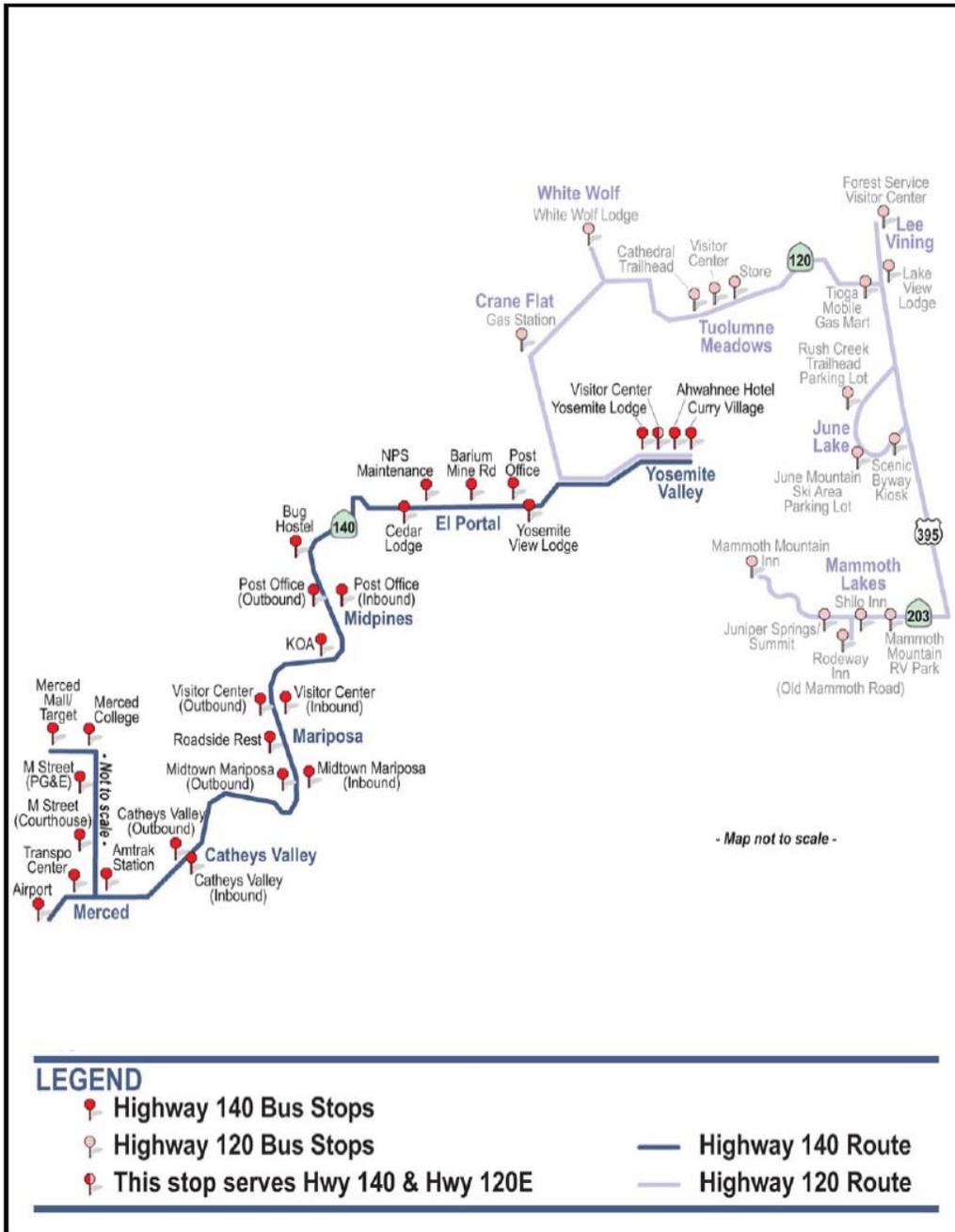
At this time emergency services are compromised by the one lane bridges and road that bypass the slide area. Waste hauling services requires smaller vehicles that carry smaller amounts of waste and must make more trips to accomplish needed services.

Construction equipment, tow trucks, and other heavy service vehicles cannot use the partially closed roadway between Mariposa and Yosemite due to the limited length on vehicles and narrow width of the roadway.

²⁷ Ferguson Slide Economic Impact of State Route 140 Closure, January 29, 2007

²⁸ Ferguson Slide Community Meeting Article reported by the Sierra Sun Times, 03/09/2007

²⁹ Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) Authority Advisory Committee Minutes, July 24, 2006.



2.6 Public Involvement

Caltrans and the County have worked together to keep members of the public apprised of their actions. Public meetings have been held to hear about the impact the closure and partial reopening of the road have had on area businesses and residents.

2.6.1 Community Based Organizations

No Community Based Organizations (CBO's) have been identified or contacted in regards to this project.

2.6.2 Stakeholders

Stakeholders in this project include a wide range of businesses, residents, government, and tourists, many of whom remained anonymous for interviews. The following companies or individuals were contacted during the formation of this report:

Delaware North Corporation
JC Fremont Hospital
Mercy Ambulance
China Station
Yosemite Gifts
Miriam's Place
Fremont Women's Apparel Shop
Happy Burger
Eastwood's 49er Supermarket
Mariposa Real Estate
Pioneer Gas, Market, and Liquor Store
Yosemite Management Group (hotels)
Miner's Inn
Mariposa Lodge
Chevron Gas Station
Pony Espresso Coffee Shop
Newspaper Stand
Museum
Skate Shop
Coast Hardware
High Country Health Foods

Government/Other:

City Administrative Officer: Rick Benson
County Business Development Coordinator: Marilyn Lidyoff
Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau: Leroy Radonovich
Sheriff Jim Allan/ Undersheriff Brian Muller
Chamber of Commerce: Dorothy Kuhnel
Mariposa County Fire Department Chief.
YARTS: Dick Whittington

Mariposa County Unified School District, Patrick Holland, Superintendent
Economic Development Corporation of Mariposa: Roger Biery
Southern Sierra Miwok Nation: Anthony Brochini
County Clerk: Marjorie Williams

2.6.3 Community Participation Program

As of April 30, 2007, the Caltrans' community involvement plan included a Public Information Meeting scheduled for May 23, 2007 at the Mariposa County Government Center. For this meeting, there were displays showing the project description and project alternatives. Caltrans staff was present to address any concerns. Comments were taken from the public.

A second Public Information Meeting was held on June 12, 2007 in El Portal. This meeting was similar to the May 23 meeting. When the Draft Environmental Document is circulated to the public, a Public Hearing will be held to give the public an opportunity to comment on the document. This meeting is tentatively being scheduled for November 1, 2007.

Caltrans has a web link for this project on the Caltrans District 10 website. This provides all informational displays presented at the meetings. <http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist10/>

On the left side of this web page there will be a green 140 shield - please click on this icon for the displays.

3 Impacts

3.1 Land Use Impacts

The following two sections discuss the proposed actions' consistency with local and regional plans.

3.1.1 Existing Land Use

The project site and surrounding area is protected against development by the various plans and the overlapping jurisdictions of local, State, and Federal agencies. More than half of Mariposa County is in Federal ownership. The largest portion, over 250,000 acres, is Yosemite National Park. The National Park Service also controls the Merced River Plan. The Mariposa portion of the Stanislaus National Forest is located west of Yosemite and north of the Merced River and the Sierra National Forest unit is south of the Merced River and west of Yosemite. The Bureau of Land Management has scattered holdings, primarily located along the Merced River wild and scenic corridor outside of Yosemite National Park, and throughout other portions of the County.

All alternatives, including the No-build alternative, will have some impact on the Merced River. The No-build Alternative will eliminate a scenic travel corridor to Yosemite and recreational access to the Merced River. All alternatives will temporarily close or continue to offer limited access between Mariposa and Yosemite until construction is complete.

Other rural areas and rural lands in the nearby towns are not directly affected by this project, but would suffer the indirect impacts resulting from limited or total inaccessibility. Permanent business and residential losses would result from the No-Build Alternative, and shorter-term losses will result from the time required to implement any of the build alternatives. These losses will inevitably result in vacant buildings and properties in the nearby areas.

The County's General Plan, the Yosemite Valley Plan, the Economic Strategy for Mariposa County and other long-range policy documents for the area all show an underlying reliance on easy and full access between the Yosemite and Mariposa areas. Therefore, complete closure of SR 140 under the No-Build Alternative is inconsistent with planning goals and policies as identified in these local and regional plans. Additionally, while the build alternatives would not cause these impacts, there are ongoing, long-term substantial negative social and economic effects on established towns and land uses along either side of the Ferguson Slide area as a consequence of the closure of the highway to vehicles over 28 feet in length.

3.1.2 Adopted Goals and Policies

Adopted Goals and policies of the County General Plan and Specific plans for local areas are reliant on full-service access between Yosemite and Mariposa. Goals and policies discussed in Section 2.2.4 include the following, which cannot be met under the No-Build Alternative:

- Maintain an effective transit system.
- Maintain an effective emergency system.
- Preserve, protect and enhance regional tourism opportunities and resources.
- Create visitor access to communities and points of interest.
- Provide job growth and sustain County revenues by enhancing and expanding the visitor-serving sectors of the economy.
- Utilize the County’s historic sites to increase tourism opportunities.
- Create historic districts to preserve the County’s historic character and promote tourism.
- Facilitate provision of needed long-range (2015-2025) improvements to state highways serving Mariposa County, and particularly to those state routes where projected capacity would be less than LOS “D,” the County shall:
 - Maintain a close working partnership with the State to solve state highway capacity deficiencies and funding limitations.
 - Monitor State activities in responding to the long-term transportation needs in the County and provide input to the state concerning the priorities for state highway improvements based on capacity below LOS standards, including timing of long-term Project Study Reports (PSR) for priority projects and their inclusion in the STIP in the needed timeframe.

If any of the build alternatives are implemented in a short time frame, the partial closure would only temporarily deter the County from reaching these goals. As the time required for implementation lengthens, more damage to the existing community will occur, making economic recovery an even longer, more uncertain and difficult process.

3.1.3 Farmland

While agriculture is a very important land use in Mariposa County, it is not a feature of the project area. There would be no agricultural displacements or farmland converted to other uses by the project or any of the project alternatives.

3.2 Population and Housing

This project has been developed in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended and Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations.” The Executive Order requires each Federal agency (or its designee) to take the appropriate and necessary steps to identify and address ‘disproportionately high and adverse’ effects of federal projects on minority and low-income populations.

3.2.1 Affected Neighborhoods / Communities

The defined communities in the affected area include the towns of Mariposa and El Portal, Midpines, and Yosemite National Park. Community cohesion exists between these smaller areas in part because no single community has the requisite resources to be totally self-sufficient. SR 140 is a lifeline that links these communities together for emergency services, schools, recreation, housing, and

employment. All of these communities are dependent on outside tourism and other services. The No-Build Alternative or failure to return the road to full access in a timely manner will eliminate community cohesion.

3.2.2 Residential and Business Disruption

This is not a typical situation where right-of-way is necessary for a project, and therefore business and residential properties will not be disrupted or displaced. Here, the *lack of a project* will cause an indirect take of businesses and residences. Continuation of the existing interim condition or closure of SR 140 under the No Build Alternative will have economic impacts causing people to leave and relocate from the area.

The Mariposa area has a service based economy, contingent on tourism for almost half of local revenue. If tourism is no longer a viable option, businesses and residents will be indirectly and severely impacted. The dynamic nature of business in the local marketplace, coupled with the time necessary for the road repair could cause a rapid loss of jobs and population. At this time it is not possible to estimate the number of potential businesses and families that could be displaced.

3.3 Economic Conditions

Economic development is an important concern since the character and performance of the local economy provides the livelihood of residents, businesses, and public institutions. This section describes the potential economic impact of leaving the road closed (No-Build Alternative) or only partially re-opened (existing interim condition).

3.3.1 Regional Economy

For tourism to thrive, visitors need access to points of interest. Some parts of Mariposa County that have great tourist potential are served by state routes (including SR 140) or local roads that cannot now be used by the larger-sized tour buses that are becoming increasingly common. Over half of private economic activity and private sector jobs in Mariposa County can be attributed to tourism, primarily from visitors to Yosemite, and a significant share of governmental expenditures also relate to tourism.

Failure to provide full access between Mariposa and Yosemite along SR 140 has the potential to:

- Eliminate potential visitor access to Yosemite
- Reduce the number of local employers (50% of all employers) that are dependent on the tourist trade
- Diminish the local demand for goods and services as a result of job losses

3.3.2 Employment and Income

Businesses that will be impacted by the project are not likely to relocate within the community or region, as the majority of them have a niche market and have built and adapted their establishments to

this specific location. Unemployment, while already high in winter months, could continue into spring and summer months (during “peak” season). Key employees may seek positions in other areas where the economy is not impacted by road closures or partial road closures.

3.3.3 Study Area Business Activities

Positive employment growth is sustained with growth in visitor demand, but the area experiences significant economic setbacks when visitor demand is disrupted.

Businesses in the Mariposa and Yosemite areas have been profitable not only because they have established a loyal clientele over time, but are roadside businesses located on the way to and from a major attraction. These businesses are positioned to be seen by new and repeat customers. Several businesses offer convenient parking for tour buses and recreational vehicles. Access limitations would affect all businesses in this area.

Permanent business closures will occur as a result of the No-Build Alternative. Short-term closures and a significant loss of economic activities will occur with any of the build alternatives that require significant construction time.

Based on the existing proportion of area jobs focused on tourism, it is estimated that at least 50% of local jobs could be lost through either the immediate impact of a lack of tourism, or from the ripple effects that follow that loss, should the No-Build alternative be chosen. These jobs are generally of the skilled and unskilled labor types. Firms will not be able to relocate to capture the Yosemite tourism market, and even fewer employees will be able to find suitable jobs within a reasonable commuting distance. The closure of SR 140 will disturb the activities of the major employers of the area and eventually eliminate these types of service jobs in the Mariposa area.

3.3.4 Fiscal Conditions

For comparison purposes, sales tax receipts in calendar year 2005 were \$1,464,903. Sales tax receipts in calendar year 2006 were \$1,140,836, a difference of almost -\$25,000 since the Ferguson Slide. The transient occupancy tax (TOT), or “room tax” for 2005 was \$8,670,006 and \$8,959,678 for 2006. The TOT appears to have remained stable in part because rooms were already booked for the summer (and consequently billed, unless there was a 48-hour cancellation). County officials also report there was a general increase in room rates. Occupancy rates were not reported, but anecdotal accounts by every lodging and/or hospitality provider in the Mariposa area contacted indicated significant losses since the Ferguson Slide and partial road re-opening.

If the No-Build Alternative is chosen, the Mariposa area and the County can expect to sustain significant, permanent financial losses from the lack of Sales and Transient Occupancy Taxes. Losses, albeit short-term or temporary, would also be sustained until completion of any of the build alternatives. The short-term impact of the slide would be the reduction in income to the County and State from taxes and fees, thereby affecting service types or levels to be made available to the public. The time it will take for economic recovery to pre-slide levels will depend largely on the length of time the road repair takes and efforts to reclaim the Yosemite tourism market.

3.4 Community Facilities and Services

This section contains a discussion of the community facilities and services that are affected by the road closure/partial road closure of SR 140. This includes a discussion of child care, schools, sheriff and fire protection, hospitals and emergency services, scenic resources, and overall circulation and access.

3.4.1 Schools and Childcare

The No-Build alternative will eliminate direct access between Yosemite and Mariposa. The impact will affect parents, guardians, childcare providers, children, and the Mariposa Unified School District's ability to move between childcare, school and after-school activities in a timely manner. The original slide closure forced detours of up to 2.5 hours each way between Mariposa and Yosemite. This closure will once again force rerouting and/or new measures for providing access to childcare and educational resources. Costs for services will rise.

Given that the closure will also create major economic changes in Mariposa and towns nearby, it is expected that overall job losses will reduce the number of families in the area that the District serves. This reduction in students will have a continuing negative effect on the District, as the costs per student rise when fewer students require the same basic services (the subsidy provided for students is based on the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) in California schools).

The build alternatives will provide direct, full access. This is important in maintaining School District cohesion and family stability. However, there will be on-going, short-term negative impact on access due to the partial closure until the completion of a build alternative. These short term impacts will also include job losses, which will escalate as the time for rebuilding lengthens. Job losses will affect the ability of residents to stay in the community and keep children in the schools.

3.4.2 Sheriff and Fire Protection

As discussed further in this section, the No-Build Alternative will eliminate the ability of the Mariposa Sheriff and Fire departments to provide services to the El Portal and Yosemite areas. All existing services are based on the Mariposa side of the Ferguson Slide, and will not be able to respond effectively to emergencies or requests from El Portal and Yosemite Village.

The build alternatives all offer full and complete access for the departments; however, there will be on-going, short-term negative impact on access due to the partial closure until the completion of a build alternative. The current detour would remain open during construction, which would continue to allow emergency access for vehicles. Short-term impacts in the community will also include job losses (discussed in Section 3.3.3), which will escalate as the time for rebuilding lengthens. Job losses will affect the ability of residents to stay in the community, maintain their assets, and continue to volunteer for the local search and rescue team.

3.4.3 Hospital and Emergency Services

The services of John C Fremont Hospital and Doctors Medical Center occur on either side of the Ferguson Slide, so basic medical services are available to both the Mariposa and Yosemite communities. However, the services in Yosemite Park offer only assistance with minor injuries and first aid. If the No-Build Alternative is selected, larger medical emergencies will have to be handled by medical centers farther away and via other roadways or helicopter. In the No-Build Alternative, large and small medical emergencies for the Mariposa area can be handled by John C. Fremont Hospital.

In the any of the build alternatives, full and complete access is provided. There will be on-going, short-term negative impact on access due to the partial closure until the completion of a build alternative. Short term impacts in the community will also include job losses (discussed in Section 3.3.3), which will escalate as the time for rebuilding lengthens. Job losses will affect the ability of residents to stay in the community and maintain their assets.

3.4.4 Access and Circulation

3.4.4.1 Local Access

The No-Build Alternative would be similar to the original closure in the effect that all goods, services, personal, and emergency trips had to be routed approximately 2.5 hours around the slide through other communities to reach either Mariposa or Yosemite destinations. This “detour” would become permanent. Job losses and residential relocations would result.

The build alternatives would accommodate all vehicles, including tour buses, campers, recreational vehicles, motor homes, trailers, emergency vehicles, garbage trucks, construction equipment, and regulation sized school buses. However, there will be on-going, short-term negative impact on access due to the partial closure until the completion of a build alternative. Short-term impacts in the community from the partial closure could also include job losses, which will escalate as the time for rebuilding lengthens. Dwindling jobs due to lack of tourism will affect the ability of residents to stay in the community, maintain jobs and assets, and provide community continuity.

3.4.4.2 Tour and Charter Buses

The No-Build Alternative will eliminate Tour Bus services from the Bay Area and Fresno to Yosemite destinations. Tour bus operators have already cancelled the remainder of this season and are not renewing contracts for next season, based on the unavailability of reliable roadway passage into the Park. Loss of the tour bus industry would be a significant blow to the Mariposa area economy, which relies on tourism for approximately 50% of its jobs. As the tour buses stop booking, motel and restaurant reservations diminish, and tourist-related gifts, services, and apparel shops suffer from non-sustainable incomes and reduced inventories.

The build alternatives would restore full access for 45 foot buses, allowing the tour bus industry to reestablish itself over time. Since at least 30% of accommodation bookings and tourism expenditures are related to bus tours, simultaneous recovery in this sector will also be important.

3.4.4.3 Transit Service

Since the slide, visitors to Yosemite using transit Yosemite Area Regional Transit System (YARTS) have declined by 37%³⁰ and employee use is down 48%³¹. If the road closure becomes permanent, these numbers will worsen and the YARTS will not likely be able to survive. With the road closure, only one of the two routes to Yosemite (Figure 3) would be open: from Yosemite Valley to the east along Highway 120. Since YARTS serves partly as an employee shuttle into the Yosemite Valley, loss of this service would put an additional premium on parking and housing in the Yosemite Valley.

The build alternatives would restore full access, as noted above for Tour Buses. However, temporary or short term reductions in service for the YARTS could affect both YARTS employees' jobs and the long term employment of in-park workers. The key to YARTS survival is the provision of full access service within a short period of time.

3.4.4.4 Pedestrians and Bicycles

While there are some limited bicycle paths within the county (notably along portions of the Merced River near Foresta), there are no dedicated bicycle lanes. The temporary bridges and the one lane road installed to skirt the SR 140 Ferguson Slide area, and the narrow shoulders of State Route 140 through the Merced River Canyon are not desirable pedestrian or bicycle routes. The impact of the No-Build Alternative would be to close down all potential access to and from Yosemite.

The build alternatives do not address the subject of pedestrians and bicycles moving along State Route 140.

3.4.4.5 Emergency Vehicles, Waste Hauling, and Construction Equipment

The No-Build Alternative would affect emergency vehicles, waste hauling, and construction equipment similarly. Direct access to and from Mariposa to Yosemite would be eliminated. These services would no longer be available to other communities on the opposite side of the slide and other jurisdictions would be called to respond. Waste hauling from Yosemite to the Mariposa County Landfill site could not be efficiently accomplished. Any towing or construction equipment needed on the opposite side of the slide area would have to make the 2.5 hour detour, making costs prohibitively high and potentially leading to increased business losses.

The build alternatives would provide full and complete access. Additionally, construction of a new roadway could provide employment for some construction suppliers and contractors in the local community, to offset potential job losses while the road is under construction.

3.4.5 Parking

The proposed project will not have an impact on parking.

³⁰ Ferguson Slide Economic Impact of State Route 140 Closure, January 29, 2007

³¹ Ferguson Slide Community Meeting Article reported by the Sierra Sun Times, 03/09/2007

3.5 Growth Inducement

None of the build alternatives would increase the area of developable land in the vicinity of the project. These areas are protected against further development by the various plans and the overlapping jurisdictions of local, State, and Federal agencies. The project and its alternatives are not expected to promote future economic or population growth, but will enable the area to maintain levels achieved before the Ferguson Slide occurred. Economic losses to the community will occur as a result of the No-Build Alternative. There would also be short-term losses prior to the implementation of any of the build alternatives.

3.5.1 Cumulative Effects

The No-build Alternative will have a cumulative negative economic impact on business and residents of the local area and Mariposa County as a whole. If Yosemite is less accessible, this will have a long range negative impact on tourism, which is the primary economic driver for the region.

Reestablishing pre-slide conditions and access will have positive economic effects for Mariposa and Yosemite businesses, residents, and tourists.

3.5.2 Secondary or Indirect Impact of Growth

There are no secondary or indirect effects anticipated as an impact of *growth*.

The Ferguson Slide itself, however, is having a direct negative effect on the area economy. In turn, the No-Build Alternative will have the secondary impact of a sharp reduction in the tourism business that is the major employment source in the area. The ripple effects of the reduction in tourism, which provides at least 50% of the available jobs in the area, are already being felt by local businesses and residents alike. The No-Build Alternative will have the secondary impact of job losses, residential relocations, and the negative sentiments that often accompany a community in decline.

There would also be a short-term secondary impact from the Ferguson slide prior to the implementation of any of the build alternatives, eventually with a more positive impact than the No-Build option, but initially quite similar. The build alternatives will restore full access between these communities and workplaces. However, the longer this reconstruction takes, the more community business and residential losses will occur. One positive impact of any of the build alternatives is that choosing to reopen the roadway will give the community hope for recovery.

4 Draft Mitigation Measures

The proposed project alternatives do not impact the community, and therefore, no mitigation is required for this project.

The existing condition continues to have negative economic impacts on the community. Mariposa is the County seat, serving the entire County area as a center for employment, K-12 schools, shopping, law enforcement, and medical services. For this reason, the towns that comprise the Mariposa community and Mariposa County would like the State to re-designate the Ferguson Slide project area as a State of Emergency area. Should the State so choose, then a number of approaches may be explored to remedy the existing condition. These are recommendations, not mitigations, because Caltrans is not responsible for the original slide or road blockage. These are suggestions to assist in solving the problem posed by the existing interim condition.

COMMUNITY COHESION:

The defined communities in the affected area include the towns of Mariposa and El Portal, Midpines, and Yosemite National Park. Community cohesion exists between Mariposa and these smaller areas in part because no single community has the requisite resources to be totally self-sufficient. SR 140 is a lifeline that links these communities together to Mariposa. All of these communities are dependent on outside tourism and other basic services. To enable community cohesion to be maintained:

- 1) Develop all needed services within each community, since no single community (Mariposa, Midpines, Yosemite, or El Portal) have the requisite resources to be totally self-sufficient if separated by extended road closure. These services include stand-alone emergency services, law enforcement, K-12 schools, medical care facilities, housing, and employment.
- 2) Choose an alternative to rebuild SR 140 to become a full access highway between Mariposa and Yosemite that:
 - a. Provides for the emergency construction of a temporary bridge and road (within one year) that can accommodate the full access needs of the community.
 - b. Rapidly construct a final solution so as to avoid serious business and residential losses.

ACCESS AND CIRCULATION:

Measures to improve access and circulation could include:

- 1) Provide the emergency construction of a temporary bridge and road within one year, which will accommodate the full access needs of the community while design and construction of a final structure is underway.
 - o Direct 24 hour construction work on the project to occur.
 - o Investigate fast-track design and permitting procedures similar to those used for the rebuilding of Route 120 near the Merced River.
 - o Financially support YARTS and other transit services to provide the same level of in-season service prior to the road closure, until the new roadway is completed.

JOBS and LOCAL TAX REVENUES:

The present partial closure of SR 140 is having ongoing negative economic impacts on the community. Because of this ongoing economic impact, a Declaration of a State of Emergency by the County and the State could give Caltrans access to additional resources to support the community during the downturn related to loss of tourism. Actions could include:

- 1) Acceptance of a cash subsidy to the County, or a moratorium on State and local taxes for Mariposa area businesses while a full access road is being constructed.
- 2) Request the State support the County and local government during periods where fees and taxes from sales tax and transient taxes are insufficient to provide basic community services such as sheriff and fire, public works, maintenance, etc.
- 3) Request the State to authorize and fund relocation services wherever possible (this won't Mariposa, but will help individual businesses and residents to get established in other places in the County).

5 Conclusions

The intended purpose of the Community Impact Assessment is to study the impact of the alternatives on the surrounding communities and businesses.

5.1 Overview

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are considering alternatives to permanently reopen a section of State Route (SR) 140, an all-year two-lane highway in the Merced River Canyon between Mariposa and Yosemite National Park (YNP) that was closed on April 29, 2006 due to a massive rock slide (Ferguson Slide) six miles west of the Yosemite Park entrance.

The Ferguson Slide eliminated the easiest and fastest established route for tourists and business suppliers to Yosemite, as well as the most efficient route for Yosemite residents traveling to Mariposa for goods, services, and schools. As of August 18, 2006, a temporary project consisting of a single one-lane detour with one-way traffic control was completed to re-open passage through the slide area. However, this temporary project cannot accommodate tour buses, recreational vehicles, motor homes, trailers, emergency vehicles, garbage trucks, construction equipment, and school buses (or any vehicle over 28 feet in length). The (No-Build Alternative) or only partially re-opened (existing interim condition) impacts the economies of Mariposa, El Portal, Midpines, and Yosemite National Park.

The project studies seven alternatives, including one “No-Build” Alternative and six “build” alternatives.

5.2 Summary of Findings

5.2.1 Land Use and Planning

Complete closure of SR 140 under the No-Build Alternative is inconsistent with planning goals and policies as identified in local and regional plans.

The existing interim condition prior to the implementation of any of the build alternatives is having substantial negative economic effects on established towns and land uses along either side of the Ferguson Slide area. The loss of economic activity is the driver for changes in land use. These changes include business consolidations and closures, falling property values, foreclosures, vacant storefronts, and vacant land, which are a result of the substantial reductions in tourism.

5.2.2 Neighborhoods and Businesses

The No-Build Alternative will endanger business survival and eliminate community cohesion between Mariposa and all of the small towns between Mariposa and Yosemite National Park. The No-build alternative will also endanger Mariposa's own community cohesion, as businesses and residents choose to leave the community to find other available jobs.

Furthermore, analyses in this report support business owners' claim that approximately 50% of the Mariposa economy, which is based on tourism, would be unable to remain in business in the coming years if the existing interim condition of SR 140 remains. Only those few businesses with substantial financial reserves or that cater to local needs only may be able to survive a lengthy partial closure. As tourism-based businesses close, employees would look for other work in other communities. As these employees leave, remaining businesses would suffer from the effect of lower consumer spending, leading to increased employee and resident loss.

The build alternatives would enable a re-establishment of community cohesion between Mariposa and other small towns along the route to Yosemite, as well as within Mariposa itself. These communities are interdependent and need each other to survive.

5.2.3 Access and Circulation

The No-Build Alternative would substantially disrupt or divide the physical arrangement of an established community. Circulation and access impacts as a result of the No-Build Alternative would require substantial permanent rerouting of local and tourist traffic between Mariposa, small towns near Mariposa, and the western gate for Yosemite National Park. These impacts include the addition of up to 2 ½ hours travel time per one-way trip between these locations, as well as elimination of tourism to Yosemite by tour bus or recreational vehicle through Mariposa. Other alternate routes to Yosemite, such as Highways 41 and 120 remain open during good weather only, and longer vehicles have difficulty using these routes due to the winding nature and steep slope of the roads. Other affected access vehicles include those for employee transit, emergency services, garbage removal, construction equipment, and school buses.

For any of the build alternatives, the existing detour would remain open during construction. However, during this period, and with the existing interim condition, the road will not be able to accommodate tour buses or other emergency, garbage, construction, and school vehicles over 28 feet in length. Minimizing the period of time required for construction for any of the build alternatives will be a key factor in reestablishing economic vitality in the area.

5.2.4 Public Services and Facilities

The effect of the existing interim condition and the No-Build Alternative would be the restriction and elimination of access to major public recreation facilities, thereby eliminating the economic mainstay of Mariposa and small towns located along the SR 140 route to Yosemite National Park. In turn, the economic decline of these areas will reduce demand for community facilities, as residents and employers move to other locations that can support business. The existing interim condition and No-

Build Alternative interferes with existing emergency response plans or emergency evacuation plans. This impact is ongoing until implementation of a build alternative to reestablish full access.

Monies to finance public services would be negatively affected with closure of the road. Taxes and fees currently in place on existing businesses and residents would be affected by the downturn in tourism and after even full access is restored it would take some time for funding to be reestablished at prior levels.

The short-term effect of the existing interim condition would be the continued need for emergency vehicles, garbage trucks, construction equipment, and school buses, and all other vehicles over 28 feet in length to make detours (up to 2 ½ hours per one-way trip), to observe road closures and temporary construction detours. Access to the John C. Fremont Hospital, County Administrative Offices, Yosemite National Park offices, Mariposa Visitor's Center, Mariposa Unified School District schools, and garbage pickup and drop off at transfer sites would all continue to sustain additional and substantial travel times and costs.

5.2.5 Environmental Justice

Two block groups qualify as environmental justice communities for income level based on 2000 U.S. Census data. These area's residents are largely low income wage workers (service jobs and seasonal employees) and retirees. The poverty levels in Tract 1, Block Group 3 at 25%, and Tract 4, Block Group 1 at 21%, as compared to the State level of 12.7%, are very high.

The effect of the No-Build Alternative will be substantial on all people (regardless of income) living or working in the Mariposa, Yosemite, or other small town areas along SR 140.

The effect of the existing interim condition will be more substantial (but not disproportionate) on people already in low wage jobs and living in poverty. Many people in this community do not have the means to wait not only for the conclusion of a multi-year construction project but also the time it will take to rebuild businesses in the area. Lower income individuals have the fewest resources to withstand the economic downturn.

The build alternatives would not impact Mariposa-area low-income communities disproportionately.

5.2.6 Economics

Almost 50% of Mariposa County income and employment is dependent on full-access to tourism in Yosemite from the Mariposa area along SR 140. The largest source of economic productivity comes from retail sales and eating and drinking, topping \$88 million per year, accommodations, following at \$61 million, and resident-serving core retail sales at \$13 million. Interruption to access between Mariposa and Yosemite has had a significant economic cost to the community since the closure. Since the partial re-opening, the loss of the tour bus industry (the engine that supplies most tourists) is having negative ripple effects that are widening into many other sectors of the local economy.

Since no business or residential property would have to be taken to provide an adequate public right-of-way for any of the alternatives, no *direct* loss of property tax revenues would occur. However, if the existing interim condition remains and/or SR 140 is closed, local town populations will diminish and businesses that depend upon tourism will close down. If any of the build alternatives take an extended timeframe to construct, the local economies of Mariposa and other smaller towns that depend upon through traffic and tourism to Yosemite National Park would be negatively affected by the interim condition for a substantial length of time, thereby affecting sales and TOT tax revenues for years to come.

Economic activity generated by the project during the construction phase could benefit some local construction materials companies if these businesses can survive until the time period for construction to commence.

Table 5-1: Significant Effects Under CEQA	
Does the proposed project disrupt or adversely affect a property of cultural significance to a community or ethnic or social group?	No*
Does the proposed project induce substantial growth or concentration of population?	No
Does the proposed project cause an increase in traffic which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system?	No
Does the proposed project displace a large number of people?	No*
Does the proposed project disrupt or divide the physical arrangement of an established community?	No*
Does the proposed project conflict with established recreational, educational, religious or scientific uses of the area?	No*
Does the proposed project convert prime agricultural land to non-agricultural use or impair the agricultural productivity of prime agricultural land?	No
Does the proposed project interfere with emergency response plans or emergency evacuation plans?	No*
* Short term, serious disruptions in all of these categories are occurring due to the existing restricted access condition, and will continue until completion of any of the build alternatives.	

6 Appendices

6.1.1.1 AD 1006 Form

U.S. Department of Agriculture					
FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING					
PART I (To be completed by Federal Agency)			Date Of Land Evaluation Request		
Name of Project			Federal Agency Involved		
Proposed Land Use			County and State		
PART II (To be completed by NRCS)			Date Request Received By NRCS		Person Completing Form:
Does the site contain Prime, Unique, Statewide or Local Important Farmland? (If no, the FPPA does not apply - do not complete additional parts of this form)			YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	Average Farm Size
Major Crop(s)		Farmable Land In Govt. Jurisdiction Acres: %		Amount of Farmland As Defined in FPPA Acres: %	
Name of Land Evaluation System Used		Name of State or Local Site Assessment System		Date Land Evaluation Returned by NRCS	
PART III (To be completed by Federal Agency)			Alternative Site Rating		
			Site A	Site B	Site C
A. Total Acres To Be Converted Directly					
B. Total Acres To Be Converted Indirectly					
C. Total Acres In Site					
PART IV (To be completed by NRCS) Land Evaluation Information					
A. Total Acres Prime And Unique Farmland					
B. Total Acres Statewide Important or Local Important Farmland					
C. Percentage Of Farmland in County Or Local Govt. Unit To Be Converted					
D. Percentage Of Farmland in Govt. Jurisdiction With Same Or Higher Relative Value					
PART V (To be completed by NRCS) Land Evaluation Criterion Relative Value of Farmland To Be Converted (Scale of 0 to 100 Points)					
PART VI (To be completed by Federal Agency) Site Assessment Criteria (Criteria are explained in 7 CFR 658.5 b. For Corridor project use form NRCS-CPA-106)			Maximum Points	Site A	Site B
1. Area In Non-urban Use			(15)		
2. Perimeter In Non-urban Use			(10)		
3. Percent Of Site Being Farmed			(20)		
4. Protection Provided By State and Local Government			(20)		
5. Distance From Urban Built-up Area			(15)		
6. Distance To Urban Support Services			(15)		
7. Size Of Present Farm Unit Compared To Average			(10)		
8. Creation Of Non-farmable Farmland			(10)		
9. Availability Of Farm Support Services			(5)		
10. On-Farm Investments			(20)		
11. Effects Of Conversion On Farm Support Services			(10)		
12. Compatibility With Existing Agricultural Use			(10)		
TOTAL SITE ASSESSMENT POINTS			160		
PART VII (To be completed by Federal Agency)					
Relative Value Of Farmland (From Part V)			100		
Total Site Assessment (From Part VI above or local site assessment)			160		

TOTAL POINTS (Total of above 2 lines)	260				
--	-----	--	--	--	--

Site Selected:	Date Of Selection	Was A Local Site Assessment Used? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
----------------	-------------------	---

Reason For Selection:

Name of Federal agency representative completing this form:	Date:
---	-------

(See Instructions on reverse side)

Form AD-1006 (03-02)

6.1.1.2 Caltrans Relocation Assistance

6.1.1.3 References Used and Contacts

References:

County of Mariposa General Plan, 2003

County of Mariposa General Plan -- Technical Background Report, Volume III

Mariposa Town Planning Area Specific Plan, 1990, updated 2003

California Travel Impacts by County, The Division of Tourism, California Trade and Commerce Agency.

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<http://www.city-data.com/city/Mariposa-California.html>

2005 California Travel and Tourism Bureau

Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) Authority Advisory Committee Minutes July 24, 2006

California Travel Impacts by County, 1992-2005, 2006 Preliminary State Estimates by Dean Runyon Associates

US Census, 2000 and 2005 reports

Contacts:

The following companies or individuals were contacted during the formation of this report:

Delaware North Corporation
JC Fremont Hospital
Mercy Ambulance
China Station
Yosemite Gifts
Miriam's Place
Fremont Women's Apparel Shop
Happy Burger
Eastwood's 49er Supermarket
Mariposa Real Estate
Pioneer Gas, Market, and Liquor Store
Yosemite Management Group (hotels)
Miner's Inn
Mariposa Lodge
Chevron Gas Station
Pony Espresso Coffee Shop
Newspaper Stand
Museum

Skate Shop
Coast Hardware
High Country Health Foods

Government/Other:

City Administrative Officer: Rick Benson
County Business Development Coordinator: Marilyn Lidyoff
Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau: Leroy Radonovich
Sheriff Jim Allan/ Undersheriff Brian Muller
Chamber of Commerce: Dorothy Kuhnel
Mariposa County Fire Department Chief.
YARTS: Dick Whittington
Mariposa County Unified School District, Patrick Holland, Superintendent
Economic Development Corporation of Mariposa: Roger Biery
Southern Sierra Miwok Nation: Anthony Brochini
County Clerk: Marjorie Williams

6.1.1.4 List of Preparers

Iris Starr, AICP. B.A. in Architecture, UC Berkeley; M.A in Architecture UC Berkeley; M.C.P. (City and Regional Planning), UC Berkeley. 18 years of experience. Contribution: Primary author of the Community Impact Report.

Guillaume Shearin, Ph.D. Ph.D. in Transportation Planning and Economics, Stanford University. 33 years of experience. Contribution: technical review of Community Impact Report.

Craig Richey, Assistant Planner. B.A., Literature, California State University, San Bernardino; Over 5 years of experience in environmental and transportation planning. Contribution: Responsible for the environmental justice tables and analysis of this document.

Ljubica B. Osgood, Graphics Designer. B.F.A., Art Institute and University of Chicago; Over 31 years of experience in the supervision and design of graphics and presentation materials for engineering, environmental, and transportation planning projects. Contribution: Responsible for graphics design and production.

Jeanne Hazemoto, Supervisor of Word Processing. Education, Major, School; 16 years of experience in the production of publications. Contribution: Responsible for document preparation.

6.1.1.5 Summary of Mariposa County Workshop on Ferguson Slide, 3/6/07

6.1.1.6 Comment Letters to Mariposa County Regarding Ferguson Slide
