

SUMMARY & LIST OF TECHNICAL STUDIES

Preparation of this document is in conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The lead agencies for the proposed project are the California Department of Transportation (Department) for CEQA, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for NEPA.

The Department and the FHWA propose to reconstruct the existing interchange at Interstate 8 (I-8) and Imperial Avenue in the city of El Centro in Imperial County. The purpose of the project is to: 1) accommodate planned growth, 2) redesign the interchange to be compatible with planned City and County improvements to the local and regional arterial system south of I-8, 3) improve drainage at the interchange, and 4) incorporate improvements to safety.

This project is one of the highest priority interchange improvement projects for Imperial County and provides consistency with the El Centro General Plan and regional planning documents. Imperial Avenue is identified as a major arterial in the El Centro General Plan and is expected to benefit regional circulation within the County, which is predicted to experience a 95 percent population increase by the year 2020, the highest predicted rate of population growth for any southern California county. Within the region, the Route 111 realignment project is currently under construction. No other major Department projects are planned within the El Centro vicinity. Projects planned within the project vicinity that have local approval include three residential subdivisions, a regional shopping mall at I-8 and Dogwood Road, and commercial development of the El Centro Town Center, to be located north of I-8 on Imperial Avenue.

Four Alternatives have been considered for the proposed interchange reconstruction, including a No Action or “No Build” alternative. Alternative project features are summarized in table S-1 and are shown on figure 1.2-1. Two additional alternatives were initially considered but were determined to be impractical for satisfaction of the project’s purpose and need. All “build” alternatives for the project would realign the westbound exit and entrance ramps to I-8 and reconstruct the eastbound exit and entrance ramps between La Brucherie Road on the west and 8th Street/Clark Avenue on the east. This project would also replace and upgrade the Imperial Avenue overcrossing from two lanes to four lanes and, upon extension of Imperial Avenue southward by others, would provide improved access to planned development areas south of I-8. Other improvements include drainage modifications in all four quadrants of the interchange.

Alternative 1 is the No Build option. This alternative would allow the existing interchange to function at current capacity and would not address the future need for increased capacity. Additionally, the opportunity would be lost to improve safety at the interchange. Although no construction costs are associated with this alternative, costs incurred with delay of commuter and truck traffic, traffic accidents, and maintenance would continue to increase through 2025 as regional population levels rise and associated traffic congestion worsens. The No Build alternative would not provide consistency with the *City of El Centro General Plan* and *El Centro Redevelopment Plan*.

All “build” alternatives have the same configuration north of I-8 but differ in scope south of I-8, including ramp configurations and amounts of new right of way (R/W) needed.

Alternative 2 would provide the highest traffic capacity, composed of a type L-2 diamond configuration north of I-8 and a type L-9 configuration south of I-8 (interchange types are illustrated in appendix A, exhibit 3). A four-lane Imperial Avenue overcrossing and a free-right-turn loop ramp to eastbound I-8 would provide an optimum accommodation of current and future increases in traffic from southbound Imperial Avenue to eastbound I-8. Alternative 2 would require the largest amount of right of way acquisition and is the highest-cost “build” alternative considered for selection.

Alternative 4 proposes a type L-2 diamond interchange north of I-8 and a type L-8 interchange south of I-8. Only a minimal amount of additional right of way in the southeast quadrant of the project area would be needed for this alternative, which would be constructed almost entirely within existing right of way. Alternative 4 is the lowest cost “build” alternative.

Alternative 5 proposes a type L-2 diamond interchange configuration north of I-8 and a type L-7 configuration south of I-8. As opposed to other type L-7 designs, this alternative proposes only a single cloverleaf in the southwest quadrant. Alternative 5 requires an intermediate amount of right of way and estimated cost compared to the other two “build” alternatives.

TABLE S-1 SUMMARY OF PROJECT FEATURES				
	ALTERNATIVE			
	1	2	4	5
Diamond Configuration	WB OFFR/ONR*	WB OFFR/ ONR EB OFFR/ONR*	WB OFFR/ ONR EB ONR*	WB OFFR/ ONR EB OFFR*
Loop Ramps	EB OFFR*	EB ONR*	EB OFFR*	EB ONR*
Improve LOS	NO	YES	YES	YES
New Overcrossing & Southerly Access	NO	YES	YES	YES
Improved Safety	NO	YES	YES	YES
Increased Capacity	NO	YES H**	YES L**	YES M**
Improved Drainage	NO	YES	YES	YES
Improved Bike/Ped Circulation	NO	YES L**	YES H**	YES H**
Improved Regional Circulation	NO	YES	YES	YES
Noise Abatement	NO	YES	YES	YES
Visual Aesthetic Enhancements	NO	YES	YES	YES
New Right of Way	NO	5.0 ha (12.4 ac)	2.0 ha (5.0 ac)	4.3 ha (10.6 ac)
Right of Way Cost	\$0.00	\$6,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$6,000,000
Total Cost	Cost of delays and accidents	\$26,000,000	\$20,000,000	\$22,000,000
* WB –westbound EB - eastbound OFFR – offramp ONR - onramp				
** H - highest M – intermediate L - lowest				

The Environmental Division of the Department conducted studies to determine potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed I-8/Imperial Avenue Interchange Reconstruction Project. Technical studies conducted included:

- Farmland
- Community Impact Assessment
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Water Quality
- Natural Environment/Wetlands
- Modified Access Acceptability
- Floodplain Assessment
- Historic and Archaeological Resources
- Hazardous Waste
- Visual and Landscape Assessment
- Geotechnical Report

Results of technical analyses are summarized in table S-2 below.

TABLE S-2 SUMMARY OF MAJOR POTENTIAL IMPACTS				
Potential Impact	Alternatives			
	1	2	4	5
Land Use/ Consistency with City & County General Plans?	No	Yes/Yes*	Yes/Yes*	Yes/Yes*
Farmland	No	Mitigated	Mitigated	Mitigated
Social and Economic	--	--	--	--
Economic	No	No	No	No
Income and employment	No	No	No	No
Housing	No	No	No	No
Growth	No	No	No	No
Community Character	No	No	No	No
Public Services	No	No	No	No
Environmental Justice	No	No	No	No
Relocation	No	No	No	No
Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities	No	No	No	No
Air Quality	No	No	No	No
Noise	No	Mitigated	Mitigated	Mitigated
Water Quality, Hydrology, Stormwater Runoff	No	No	No	No
Wetlands and Waters of the U.S.	No	No	No	No
Biology	No	No	No	No
Floodplain	No	No	No	No
Historic and Archaeological Preservation	No	No	No	No
Hazardous Waste	No	No	No	No
Visual	No	Mitigated	Mitigated	Mitigated
Utilities	No	Mitigated	Mitigated	Mitigated
Geotechnical	No	No	No	No
Construction	No	Mitigated	Mitigated	Mitigated
Cumulative impacts	No	Mitigated	Mitigated	Mitigated

*These alternatives would require revision of the Tentative Map for the Farmer’s Estates Subdivision project, resulting in a reduction in the number of houses approved for construction. The El Centro City Council is expected to approve this revision.

CEQA conclusions regarding significance of impacts may be found in Appendix B.

