

Chapter 2
Affected Environment,
Environmental Consequences, and
Avoidance, Minimization &
Mitigation Measures

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Introduction

Chapter 2 of this Final EIR/EA discusses various environmental resources and issues that could be affected by the proposed project. This chapter provides a description of the affected environment, environmental consequences, and avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures to minimize harm for the range of environmental categories that affect the human, physical, and biological environments. These issue areas are as follows:

- Human Environment
 - Land Use
 - Community Impacts
 - Utilities/Public & Emergency Services
 - Traffic & Transportation/Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities
 - Visual/Aesthetics
 - Cultural Resources
- Physical Environment
 - Hydrology and Floodplain
 - Water Quality and Storm Water Runoff
 - Geology/Soils/Seismic/Topography
 - Paleontology
 - Hazardous Waste/Materials
 - Air Quality
 - Noise
 - Energy
- Biological Environment
 - Natural Communities
 - Wetlands and Other Waters
 - Plant Species
 - Threatened and Endangered Species
 - Invasive Species
- Cumulative Impacts

In the sections that follow, project effects are assessed primarily for the two build alternatives – Alternatives 3 and 5. For all but a small minority of factors, the No Build Alternative would not result in permanent impacts and, in all cases, would not result in

construction impacts because no construction is proposed under the No Build Alternative. Unless a distinct project effect would result under the No Build Alternative, this alternative is not discussed.

In many cases, Alternatives 3 and 5 would result in the same or similar impacts during project construction and after the project becomes operational. Accordingly, unless there is a clear distinction among the build alternatives, they are both considered similarly.

It should also be noted that nearly all of the impacts discussed in this chapter, which focuses on the requirements of NEPA, would have the same consequences when viewed in the context of CEQA (see Chapter 3). When reading the contents of Chapter 3, the reader is generally referred to the analysis presented in Chapter 2, except in those instances in which the requirements of CEQA differ from NEPA with regard to regulatory guidance, impact thresholds, or prescribed mitigation. Nonetheless, each CEQA significance threshold is specifically addressed in Chapter 3.

Areas of No Potential Adverse Effects

As part of the scoping and initial environmental analysis conducted for the proposed project, the following environmental issues were considered, but no adverse effects were identified. Consequently, there is no further discussion in this document regarding the following issues:

Farmlands/Timberlands/Agricultural Resources. The proposed project is not located on existing farmland or on land within the immediate vicinity of agricultural operations; therefore, the project would not have the potential to affect any farmlands or other agricultural operations. No impacts to agricultural resources would result from the proposed project.

Mineral Resources. The proposed project is located in an urbanized area of the City. No mineral resources that would be of value to the region or residents of the state have been identified near the project site, and the State Department of Conservation has not designated the project site as a Significant Mineral Aggregate Resources Area; therefore, no impacts resulting from the loss of mineral resources are anticipated.

Growth/Population and Housing. During project construction, the temporary construction work force would come from the existing labor pool in the southern California area, and construction of the project would not require any relocation or new housing for construction workers. The proposed project does not include residential housing, commercial, office, industrial, or institutional uses, and it would not create any long-term employment; therefore, the project would not sustain future economic or population growth and would not induce change in the location, distribution, or rate of growth of local or regional population and housing. The project constitutes a redesign of an existing freeway and arterial highway interchange that would address existing operational deficiencies and accommodate projected future local and regional travel demand projected for the interchange area. It does not constitute the extension of any roads. Due to the fact that the project is a redesign of an existing interchange, it does not represent an “expansion of capacity” to the portions of Ortega Highway or the I-5

freeway beyond the immediate interchange area. The project site is located in an area of San Juan Capistrano that is already completely developed or “built out”. For these reasons, the redesign of the I-5/Ortega Highway interchange would not have the potential to generate or accommodate new offsite development that would induce additional traffic or development growth that are not otherwise expected to occur under currently adopted development plans or forecasts made by regional planning agencies. Furthermore, the project would not indirectly induce growth, as it would not remove barriers to growth and would not attract additional population or new economic growth. No residential housing would be displaced because of the proposed project, and no development of replacement residential housing would be necessary.

Section 4(f) Resources. Title 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 771.135 states that, “The Administration (FHWA) may not approve the use of land from a significant publicly owned public park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or any significant historic site unless a determination is made that there are no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of land from the property; and the action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the property resulting from such use.” The proposed project site and vicinity does not include any significant publicly owned public park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge. Furthermore, Alternatives 3 and 5 would not require the use of land on any significant historic site; therefore, a Section 4(f) resources analysis is not required and is not included in this EIR/EA. A more detailed discussion of the treatment of the sports fields located at San Juan Elementary School is provided below.

San Juan Elementary School is a public school that is located slightly within the project footprint of Alternative 5, while Alternative 3 does not affect any portion of the school property. Alternative 5 would require acquisition of a strip of the school property on its eastern border where the school property lines up with I-5, just north of the I-5/Ortega Highway interchange. The portion of the school site that would be affected by Alternative 5 consists of two buildings, a grassy portion of the school’s open space area, and part of the playground blacktop. The affected buildings and blacktop area would be replaced onsite at the school as part of a required onsite relocation plan if Alternative 5 is implemented. Alternative 5 would not affect any portion of the school’s designated sports fields (i.e., baseball/softball and soccer fields). While San Juan Elementary School is a public school, it is a “closed” campus, which means that its grounds and facilities are not open for informal or “walk-on” use by the general public during after-school hours, and there is no cooperative agreement in place with the City that would permit general public use of the school’s facilities or sports fields. All use of the school’s sports fields by outside organizations (e.g., Little League) is regulated through formal use applications that require approval by the school administration. Email correspondence with Silvia Pule (San Juan Elementary, Principal) confirmed that use of the San Juan Elementary School property and facilities are not permitted without prior approval and a Facilities Use Form. Because the San Juan Elementary School sports fields are not open to the public for general use, the sports fields do not meet the definition of Section 4(f) criteria for treatment as a significant publicly owned public park or recreational area. Furthermore,

Alternatives 3 and 5 would not require the use of any portion of the school's designated sports fields.