

Appendix M Wetlands Only Practicable Alternative Finding

Wetlands Only Practicable Alternative Finding

Pursuant to: Executive Order 11990 – Protection of Wetlands

Alternatives:

The Preferred Alternative for the Highway 101 HOV Lane Widening and Improvements Project is the Build Alternative with Northbound Option B and Southbound Option B for the Fulton Road/Airport Boulevard Interchange complex.

Under the preferred alternative, HOV lanes would be constructed within the existing median with standard inside shoulders and a concrete median barrier. Widening also would occur along the outside edges of the traveled way to provide standard outside shoulders. The freeway mainline alignment would generally be widened symmetrically about the existing alignment except at the southerly conform, where the alignment would be shifted to the west to conform with the proposed Steele Lane Interchange improvements. The vertical alignment would typically follow the existing profile.

The project would provide auxiliary lanes, interchange modifications and ramp improvements to improve safety and operations and to conform to the mainline widening. These modifications would upgrade interchanges to current geometric standards, where possible. All interchange on-ramps would accommodate future ramp metering. Improvement would include California Highway Patrol (CHP) enforcement areas; HOV preferential treatments at southbound on-ramps at the Bicentennial Way, Hopper Avenue, River Road, Airport Boulevard, Shiloh Road diagonal on-ramp, and Windsor River Road–Old Redwood Highway and at the diagonal northbound on-ramps at Mendocino Avenue and Airport Boulevard; and additional mixed-flow lanes to meet ramp metering storage requirements.

Twelve jurisdictional wetland areas are within the project corridor, as identified in Table I-1, Wetland Impacts under the Preferred Alternative, and shown on project plans in Appendix G. Under the Preferred Alternative, the project would involve permanent new fill in wetlands amounting to a total of 0.19 acres at various wetlands and roadside ditches along the project alignment. Caltrans and SCTA reviewed various alignment alternatives in an attempt to minimize impacts to wetlands. Because the project involves the widening of an existing roadway, opportunities to avoid wetlands that run along or are traversed by the roadway are limited. It is not possible to entirely avoid impacts to wetlands, given their locations with respect to the location of the existing roadway and interchanges. Most project alternatives and design concepts that were considered and withdrawn from consideration during the design process would have had equal or greater impacts to wetlands. Options under consideration at the Fulton road / Airport Boulevard Interchange would not result in impacts to wetlands.

No impacts to wetlands would occur under the No-Build Alternative, except for the effects of routine maintenance, but the No-Build Alternative would not meet the project purpose and need. Without the capacity and operational improvements represented by the HOV lanes and related facilities, traffic congestion and travel delay would continue to worsen over time and future travel demand would not be able to be served.

Table I-1 shows effects to wetlands under the Preferred Alternative.

Table I-1: Wetland Impacts under the Preferred Alternative			
	Location	Acres	
		Permanently Affected by Project	Temporarily Affected by Project (Construction Phase)
Wetlands	Ditches Between Paulin Creek and Bicentennial Way	0.0228	0.0271
	Bicentennial Way Interchange Ditches and Equalizers	0.0000	0.0000
	Fountain Grove I/C Ditches and Equalizers	0.0348	0.0083
	Tributary to Piner Creek	0.0003	0.0028
	Piner Creek and Adjacent Wetlands	0.0000	0.0019
	Wetland near River Road	0.0000	0.0000
	Ditches at Lavelle Road	0.0000	0.0038
	Ditch at Fulton Road	0.0000	0.0000
	Ditches at Pruitt Creek	0.0017	0.0327
	Shiloh Road Interchange	0.0764	0.0057
	Ditches at Pool Creek	0.0000	0.0055
	Ditches at Conde Lane	0.0572	0.0655
Total Wetlands		0.1932	0.1533

Measures to Minimize Harm:

The project has been designed to minimize impacts to wetlands within the project corridor. Mitigation measures will be implemented for both permanent and temporary (construction phase) impacts of the project to ensure no net loss of wetlands. During project construction, all wetland areas adjacent to the project will be designated as Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA). All wetland areas temporarily disturbed by construction will be fully restored following construction activities. Proposed project impacts to jurisdictional areas will be compensated by purchase of mitigation credits in an USACE-approved wetland mitigation bank.

Finding:

Based on the considerations reported above, it is determined that there is no practicable alternative to the proposed new construction in wetlands and that the proposed project includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands that may result from such use.

