

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: Terry Roberts, State Clearinghouse
Governor's Office of Planning & Research
1400 Tenth Street

Sacramento, CA 95814

From: California Dept. of Transportation
2015 E. Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
Attention: Sarah Gassner
Senior Environmental Planner

Subject: **Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report**
Reference: California Code of Regulations, Title 14, (CEQA Guidelines) Sections 15082(a), 15103, 15375.

Project Title: Centennial Corridor

Project Location: City of Bakersfield and the County of Kern

Project Description: The proposed project is a route adoption study to establish an alignment for the extension of Route 58 as a limited access facility from its current terminus at Route 99 in the City of Bakersfield westerly to Interstate 5 (I-5) in unincorporated Kern County. In addition, this Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) would provide environmental compliance documentation for construction of the project from State Route 58 to Heath Road. The project would incorporate the Westside Parkway, a proposed limited access facility approved by the City of Bakersfield and the Federal Highway Administration in 2006 as a component of the project. Construction of the Westside Parkway is projected to be initiated in 2009 and will extend from Mohawk Street to Heath Road.

This is to inform you that the California Department of Transportation will be the lead agency and will prepare an environmental impact report for the project described below. Your participation as a responsible agency is requested in the preparation and review of this document.

We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR/EIS prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project.

A more detailed project description, location map, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

Please direct your response to Sarah Gassner, Senior Environmental Planner, Southern Sierra Environmental Analysis Branch at the address shown above. Please provide us with the name of a contact person in your agency.

Date
September 16, 2008

Signature

CARRIE L. BOWEN,
Chief, Central Region
Environmental

Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Centennial Corridor Project

The California Department of Transportation (the Department), the Lead Agency, is preparing environmental documentation to address impacts associated with a route adoption study for State Route 58 as a limited access facility from its current terminus at State Route 99 to Interstate 5. In addition, this Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) would provide environmental compliance documentation for construction of the project from State Route 58 to Heath Road. The document will be prepared as a joint document pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. The Department will be preparing an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the project, which is known as the Centennial Corridor Project. As required by CEQA, the Department is distributing this Notice of Preparation requesting comments from responsible and trustee agencies regarding the significant environmental issues, reasonable alternatives, and reasonable mitigation measures that need to be discussed in the Draft EIR/EIS to address each agency's concern. An Initial Study has not been prepared for this project and is therefore, not attached to this Notice of Preparation.

Project Location

The project would traverse the Metropolitan Bakersfield area and is located between existing State Route 58 – East in the vicinity of Union Avenue (State Route 204) (about 2.0 miles east of State Route 99), and Interstate 5 in Kern County, California. The project would be located in both the City of Bakersfield and unincorporated portions of Kern County. Figure 1 provides a Regional Location Map and Figure 2 is the Local Vicinity Map.

Project Description

The project would establish an alignment for a new limited access facility that would connect State Route 58 to Interstate 5. In addition, construction level analysis would be provided for the portion of the project east of Heath Road. The portion of the project from Heath Road to Interstate 5 would remain at the route location level of detail.

For purposes of this EIR/EIS, the project has been divided into three segments:

- (1) Eastern Connection, which would connect the Westside Parkway to the existing Route 58 Freeway;
- (2) Westside Parkway, which extends from Heath Road to Mohawk Street; and,
- (3) Western Segment, which extends from I-5 to Heath Road.

The Western Segment and the Westside Parkway portions of the project have been addressed in previous environmental documents prepared pursuant to CEQA and NEPA. This EIR/ EIS will incorporate by reference these previous two documents:

- *Final Route 58 Route Adoption Project, A Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report* (Tier 1 EIS/EIR) (2002), which addresses the Western Segment of the project, and
- *Westside Parkway Environmental Assessment/Final Environmental Impact Report* (EA/FEIR) (2006), which addresses the Westside Parkway segment of the project.

For these two segments of the project, the analysis in the Centennial Corridor EIR/EIS will serve as a revalidation of the previous documents. New information will be provided to the extent necessary to ensure the environmental record is reflective of the current conditions.

Construction of the facility would be phased. The timeframe for construction of the Western Segment is unknown and is not anticipated in the near future. Therefore, the level of analysis for

this segment will remain at the route location level of detail, not construction level. The focus of the analysis for the Westside Parkway segment will be on improvements necessary to upgrade the facility to state highway standards for adoption into the State Highway System. Consistent with the *Westside Parkway EA/FEIR*, the updated analysis for the Westside Parkway segment will be at a construction level of detail. Construction of the Westside Parkway is anticipated to start in 2009 utilizing the previous EA/FEIR.

The Eastern Connection has not been subject to previous environmental studies. Various alternatives to connect State Route 58 to the Westside Parkway are under consideration, including options west of State Route 99, east of State Route 99, and parallel to State Route 99 as well as a “No Build” alternative, a transit alternative, and a transportation systems management alternative. The Department will continue to screen the alternatives identified through the scoping process and only carry forward those alternatives that are considered viable for evaluation in the EIR/EIS. The following alternatives are currently under consideration:

- Alternative A proposes to construct a new freeway west of the State Route 58/99 interchange. The alignment would travel in a westerly direction for approximately one mile on the south side of Stockdale Highway, at which point it would turn in a northwesterly direction and span the Carrier Canal, Truxtun Avenue, and the Kern River. The proposed route would then connect to the Westside Parkway alignment between Mohawk Street and Coffee Road. The total length of the project from the existing State Route 99/State Route 58 interchange to Interstate 5 utilizing Alternative A would be approximately 16.31 miles.
- Alternative B proposes to construct a new freeway west of the State Route 58/99 interchange. The alignment would travel in a westerly direction for approximately one-half mile on the south side of Stockdale Highway, at which point it would turn to the northwest, span the Carrier Canal, Truxtun Avenue, and the Kern River. Alternative B would connect to the Westside Parkway alignment at the Mohawk Street interchange. The total length of the project from the existing State Route 99/State Route 58 interchange to Interstate 5 utilizing Alternative B is approximately 16.61 miles.
- Alternative C proposes to connect existing State Route 58 to the Westside Parkway by means of routing new lanes adjacent and parallel to existing State Route 99. These additional lanes would run parallel to and independent of State Route 99. Movements between State Route 58, State Route 99 and the Westside Parkway would likely be facilitated by braided ramps and freeway-to-freeway connector ramps. The total length of the project from State Route 99 to Interstate 5 utilizing Alternative C is approximately 18.51 miles.
- Alternative D proposes to construct a new freeway in the vicinity of Union Avenue (State Route 204). The roadway would extend north from State Route 58 for approximately one mile, where it would turn to the west and run parallel to the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad tracks. Alternative D would connect to the Westside Parkway alignment at the new interchange at Mohawk Street. The total length of the project from State Route 58 at Union Avenue to Interstate 5 is approximately 18.98 miles.
- The “No Build” alternative, would not construct any improvements. State Route 58 - East would continue to end at State Route 99 where it would jog to the north to tie into State Route 58 – West (Rosedale Highway). The Westside Parkway would be constructed as a local facility, but would not connect to State Route 58, State Route 99, or Interstate 5.
- Alternative M would evaluate Transit and Transportation Systems Management (TSM) improvements. TSM focuses on low capital, environmentally-responsive improvements

that maximize efficiency of existing facilities. An example of TSM improvements would be providing signal interconnects to facilitate the flow of traffic or providing bus turn-out bays to minimize the interruption of buses along a specific route. Specific transit and TSM measures have not been developed at this point. Preliminary traffic data is required to determine the most effective transit and TSM measures. Once the traffic data is available it would be determined if transit and TSM improvements would be separate alternatives or if it is more effective to evaluate a single alternative that includes both transit and TSM improvements.

Environmental Effects

Probable effects of the project include impacts to farmland, residences, businesses and industrial uses; visual resources; cultural resources; water quality; air quality; noise standards; and biological resources. The following technical studies will be prepared as part of the EIR/EIS:

- Community Impact Assessment
- Relocation Impact Studies
- Natural Environment Study
- Visual Impact Assessment
- Air Quality Study
- Noise Report and Noise Abatement Decision Report
- Historic Property Survey Report (historical architecture, historic resources, and archaeological resources)
- Initial Site Assessment (hazardous materials)
- Floodplain Study
- Water Quality Report
- Paleontological Studies

Scoping Process

In addition to this Notice of Preparation, the Department will conduct a public scoping meeting. The meeting will be held on October 2, 2008 from 4:30 PM to 7:30 PM at the Kern County Administrative Offices, in the Building Rotunda located at 1115 Truxtun Avenue, in Bakersfield, California. Information on the project will be available at the meeting. There will also be opportunities for agencies and members of the public to provide input on the proposed project.