

Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

Date: May 22, 2009

From: BIMLA G. RHINEHART
Executive Director

File: Book Item 2.2b
Action

Ref: Draft Environmental Impact Report – US 50 at Watt Avenue Interchange Project

ISSUE: Should the Commission, as a Responsible Agency, provide comments to the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) prepared for the US Route 50 at Watt Avenue Interchange Project (Project)?

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Commission make no comments relative to the alternatives or environmental impacts addressed in the DEIR. However, staff recommends that a letter be sent recommending that the County of Sacramento (County) identify and secure funds necessary to fully fund the project.

BACKGROUND: As the CEQA lead agency for the project, the County prepared a DEIR. The project is located on the east border of the City of Sacramento and the unincorporated area of Sacramento County. The project is not within the city limits of Rancho Cordova, but is in the County Cordova Community Plan area.

The County proposes to modify the existing full cloverleaf interchange on US 50 at Watt Avenue in order to reduce congestion, increase safety, and accommodate alternate modes of travel including bus rapid transit (BRT), bicyclists, wheel chairs, and pedestrians. A full cloverleaf is a four quadrant interchange that employs loop ramps to accommodate left-turning movements. The proposed project will reconfigure the interchange into a partial cloverleaf. Two loop ramps will be removed in order to eliminate the short weaving sections in the right lanes of northbound and southbound Watt Avenue. Two signalized intersections are proposed to allow left and right turns from US 50 onto Watt Avenue. A new center structure on Watt Avenue will close the gap opening between the existing northbound and southbound lanes for vehicle and BRT lanes with intersections at the eastbound and westbound US-50 off-ramps.

The County considered three build alternatives and a no build alternative. The County determined that two build alternatives, the Transportation System Management with median Bus Rapid Transit and the Partial cloverleaf interchange with high occupancy vehicle (HOV) ramp alternatives did not meet the purpose and need of the project and were not carried forward. Therefore, only the no build and the partial cloverleaf interchange with bicycle/pedestrian undercrossing alternatives were considered in the DEIR.

Impacts related to climate change are considered in the DEIR as significant and unavoidable after mitigation. No other unavoidable impacts were identified in the environmental analysis.

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The inclusion of accommodations for alternate modes of travel and reduction in delays for drivers will contribute to the overall goal of reducing GHG emissions. However, out of an abundance of caution, the County will identify mitigation measures that ensure this project's incremental contribution to cumulative climate change impacts are reduced to the extent possible. Mitigation measures include, but are not limited to, synchronization of traffic lights at signalized project intersections where feasible to limit vehicle idling time and allow traffic to pass more efficiently through congested areas; within the County right-of-way replace traffic signal lighting with light emitting diodes (LED) at signalized project intersections; equip construction vehicles with retrofit emission control devices, such as diesel oxidation catalysts and diesel particulate filters, verified by the California Air Resources Board (CARB); ensure that all project landscaping is designed to minimize water usage and runoff through the use of drought-tolerant plantings and irrigation systems.

According to the County, depending on the alternative selected, the project is estimated to cost \$52,520,000. The project is anticipated to be funded with Local (\$17,036,000), STIP (\$10,000,000), Federal (\$4,700,000), and TCRP (\$7,000,000). Additional funds totaling \$13,784,000 are not yet secured. Construction is estimated to begin in fiscal year 2010/11.

Attachment - Project Location

Plate PC -1, Regional Location

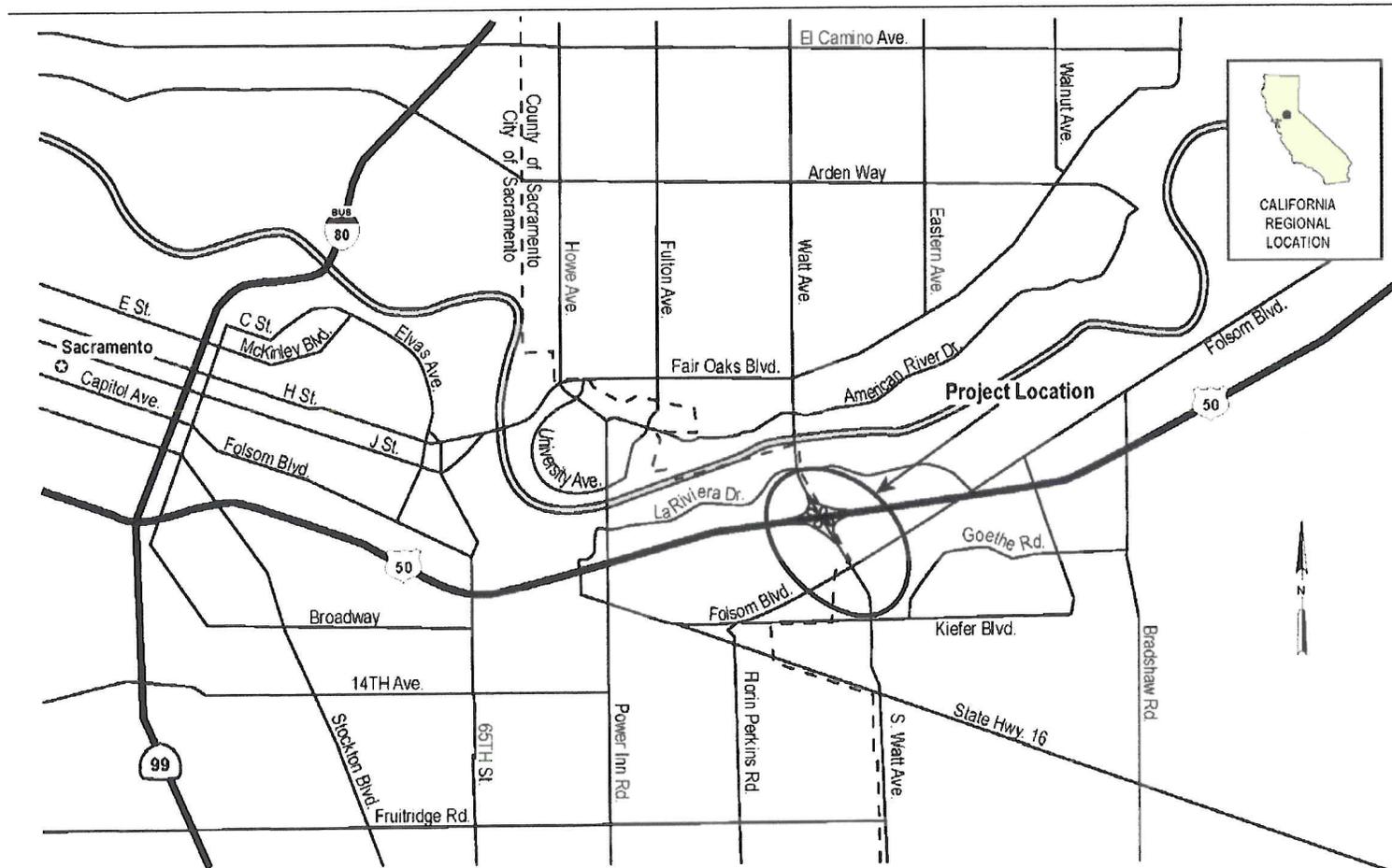


FIGURE 1
Project Location Map
Watt Avenue / US 50 Interchange

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