

Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

Date: May 24, 2010

From: BIMLA G. RHINEHART
Executive Director

File: Book Item 2.2c (11)
Action

Ref: **Final Environmental Impact Report for the Westside Parkway Project
(Resolution E-10-52)**

ISSUE: Should the Commission, as a Responsible Agency, accept the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR), Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations for the Westside Parkway Project (project) in Kern County and approve the project for future consideration of funding?

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Commission accept the FEIR, Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations and approve the project for future consideration of funding.

BACKGROUND: The City of Bakersfield (City) is the CEQA lead agency for the project. On June 30, 2008 the City prepared an addendum to reflect only minor technical design changes or additions to the FEIR. The project will construct a new east-west freeway referred to as the Westside Parkway within the Route 58 corridor from Heath Road to a point near SR 99 at Truxtun Avenue in the City of Bakersfield and an unincorporated portion of Kern County. The project also includes the extension of Mohawk Street south from Rosedale Highway, across the Kern River, to Truxtun Avenue.

The project as proposed will result in significant unavoidable impacts to agricultural resources and transportation/traffic. Specifically, the project would result in the conversion of 79 acres of prime farmland to transportation use. In addition, the level of service decrease at the Mohawk Street/California Avenue intersection cannot be mitigated through a grade separated interchange as the acquisition and relocation of at least four, and as many as eight, major commercial buildings near the intersection is not feasible.

Findings of Fact were developed which provide that mitigation measures and/or alternatives to the proposed project that would substantially reduce or avoid these significant unavoidable impacts are infeasible. On December 13, 2006, the City found that there were several benefits that outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects of the project. These benefits include, but are not limited to, reducing congestion; supporting the City's current and planned development west of SR 99; accommodating potential future multimodal transportation facilities; and providing an alignment for future multimodal transportation facilities that reduces congestion on the transportation network in the western Bakersfield metropolitan area. The City

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established a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program to ensure that the specified mitigation program specified is implemented.

On May 17, 2010 the City provided written confirmation that the preferred alternative set forth in the final environmental document is consistent with the project programmed by the Commission in the STIP and included in the Regional Transportation Plan.

The project is a fully funded STIP project and is estimated to cost \$252,650,000. Construction began in fiscal year 2009/10.

Attachments

- Resolution E-10-52
- Statement of Overriding Considerations
- Project Location

CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Resolution for Consideration of Future Funding 06 – Kern County Resolution E-10-52

- 1.1 **WHEREAS**, the City of Bakersfield (City) has completed a Final Environmental Impact Report pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines for the following project:
 - Westside Parkway
- 1.2 **WHEREAS**, the City has certified that the Final Environmental Impact Report has been completed pursuant to CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines for its implementation; and
- 1.3 **WHEREAS**, the project will construct a new east-west freeway referred to as the Westside Parkway within the Route 58 corridor in the City of Bakersfield and an unincorporated portion of Kern County; and
- 1.4 **WHEREAS**, the California Transportation Commission, as a Responsible Agency, has considered the information contained in the Final Environmental Impact Report; and
- 1.5 **WHEREAS**, Findings of Fact made pursuant to CEQA guidelines indicate that specific unavoidable significant impacts related to agricultural resources and transportation/traffic make it infeasible to avoid or fully mitigate to a less than significant level the effects associated with the project; and
- 1.6 **WHEREAS**, the City adopted a Statement of Overriding Considerations for the project; and
- 1.7 **WHEREAS**, the City adopted a Mitigation Monitoring Reporting Program for the project; and
- 1.8 **WHEREAS**, the above significant effects are acceptable when balanced against the facts as set forth in the Statement of Overriding Considerations; and.
- 1.9 **WHEREAS**, the City approved the Final Environmental Impact Report; and
- 1.10 **WHEREAS**, the City subsequently approved an addendum to the Final Environmental Impact Report pursuant to Section 15164 of the State CEQA Guidelines.
- 2.1 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the California Transportation Commission does hereby accept the Final Environmental Impact Report, Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations and approve the above referenced project to allow for future consideration of funding.

EXHIBIT D

Statement of Overriding Considerations

Westside Parkway Project

Pursuant to Section 15093 of the CEQA Guidelines, the City must balance the benefits of the proposed project against unavoidable environmental risks in determining whether to approve the project.

The proposed project would result in significant unavoidable impacts to agricultural resources and transportation/traffic. Findings of Fact have been developed, which provide that mitigation measures and/or alternatives to the proposed project that would substantially reduce or avoid these significant unavoidable impacts are infeasible.

The proposed project offers several benefits that outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects of the project. These benefits are described in detail in the EA/FEIR, and include the following:

- The proposed project would reduce congestion on existing east-west arterials in west Bakersfield;
- The proposed project supports Bakersfield's current and planned development west of SR99;
- The proposed project will improve connectivity of the existing transportation network in west Bakersfield;
- The proposed project will accommodate potential future multimodal transportation facilities;
- The proposed project will provide an alignment for future multimodal transportation facilities that reduces congestion on the transportation network in the western Bakersfield metropolitan area;
- The proposed project contributes to overall protection for sensitive species through the payment of MBHCP mitigation fees;
- The proposed project would generate substantial construction employment benefits in the Bakersfield metropolitan area;
- The project would provide substantial monetary savings for the region from improvements in operating efficiency, mobility, and safety of vehicular travel. Improvements in operating efficiency include such user benefits as savings in fuel, oil, tires, repairs, and maintenance; mobility improvements that result in time savings; and safety savings that include reduction in property damage and fatal and injury accidents. These savings would benefit commuters, emergency service providers, and businesses;

- The project would provide improved access to downtown Bakersfield by shifting traffic from existing east-west arterials, such as Rosedale Highway, onto the Westside Parkway; and
- The proposed project is consistent with the Land Use and Circulation Elements of the Metropolitan Bakersfield General Plan.

The City hereby finds that the benefits of the proposed project are considered to outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects to agricultural resources and traffic/transportation, which are therefore considered acceptable.

Westside Parkway
Environmental Assessment /
Final Environmental Impact Report

December 2006

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ORIGINAL





	REGIONAL LOCATION MAP		
	Project No. 29866227	December 2004	Westside Parkway Project