

SCH NO. _____

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: State Clearinghouse
1400 Tenth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: California Dept. of Transportation
50 Higuera Street
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

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: Scenic Route 68 Corridor Improvements Project

Project Location: The proposed project is located in northern Monterey County on Scenic State Route 68 (SR 68) from Josselyn Canyon Road (post mile 4.8) to San Benancio Road (post mile 13.7). The Project alignment crosses through the City of Monterey, the City of Del Rey Oaks, and unincorporated areas of Monterey County.

Project Description: The California Department of Transportation in partnership with the Transportation Agency for Monterey County proposes to improve intersection operations along SR 68 between Josselyn Canyon Road and San Benancio Road and enhance wildlife connectivity in order to reduce travel delays, vehicle collisions, and collisions between wildlife and vehicles.

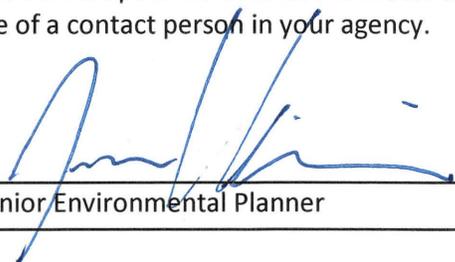
Contact: Jason Wilkinson, Branch Chief: (805) 542-4663; Jason.wilkinson@dot.ca.gov

Notice: This Notice of Preparation (NOP) is to inform you that the California Department of Transportation will be the lead agency and will prepare an environmental impact report for the Scenic Route 68 Corridor Improvements Project in conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Your participation as a responsible agency is requested in the preparation and review of this document. Caltrans would like to know the views of your agency on 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 prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approvals needed for the project.

A more detailed project description, location map, and the probable environmental effects are included on the following pages of this NOP. A copy of the Initial Study is NOT attached. 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 provide the name of a contact person in your agency.

Date September 13, 2019

Signature
Title

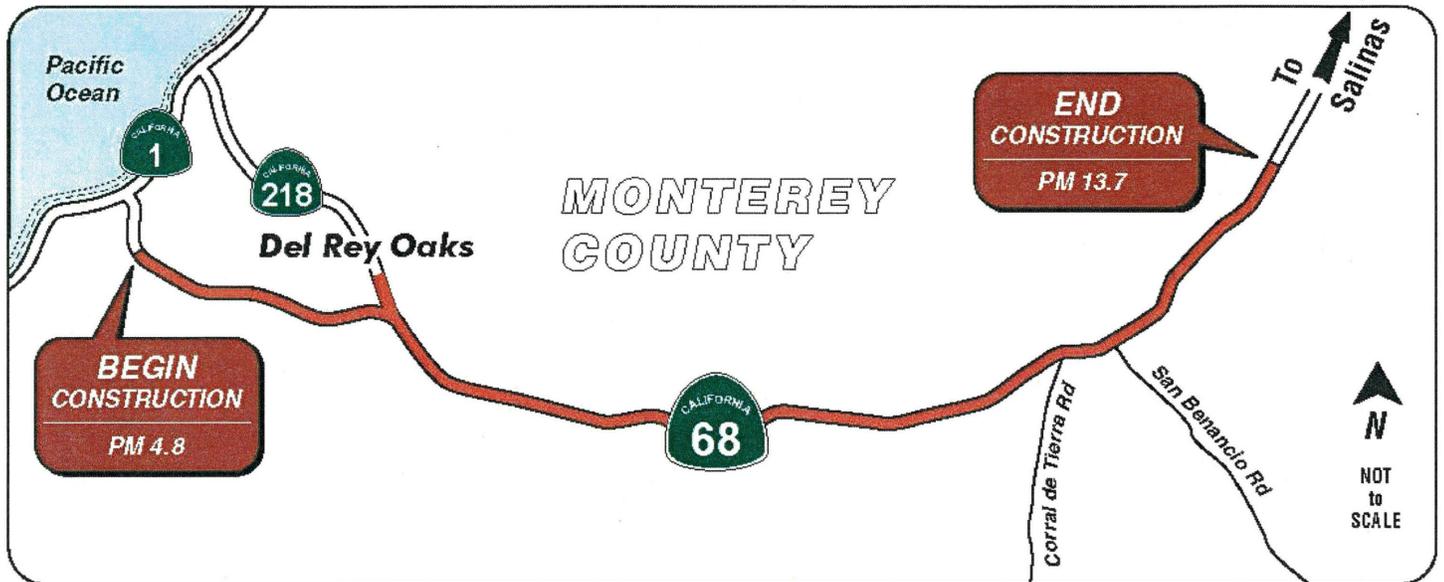

Senior Environmental Planner

Notice of Preparation of Draft Environmental Report

Scenic Route 68 Corridor Improvements Project

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in partnership with the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) proposes to improve intersection operations along SR 68 from Josselyn Canyon Road to San Benancio Road (post miles 4.8 -13.7) and enhance wildlife connectivity with the installation of wildlife crossings in order to reduce travel delays, vehicle collisions, and collisions between wildlife and vehicles.



PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

A no-build and two build alternatives are initially proposed for evaluation in the environmental document. The build alternatives propose intersection improvements between Josselyn Canyon Road and San Benancio Road and development of wildlife crossings at locations along the SR 68 corridor. Both build alternatives also include some operational improvements along SR 218 from the SR 68/SR218 intersection north to the Ryan Ranch Road intersection (SR 218 post miles 1.7-2.0).

Alternative 1 proposes to convert the following nine intersections into roundabouts. Alternative 2 proposes intersection modification and improvements at the following nine existing intersections.

- SR 68/Josselyn Canyon Road (post mile 5.2)
- SR 68/Olmsted Road (post mile 5.6)
- SR 68/SR218 Canyon del Rey Boulevard (post mile 6.8)
- SR 68/Ragsdale Drive (post mile 7.0)
- SR 68/York Road (post mile 8.2)
- SR 68/Pasadera Drive (post mile 9.8)
- SR 68/Laureles Grade (post mile 11.2)

- SR 68/Corral de Tierra Road (post mile 12.9)
- SR 68/San Benancio Road (post mile 13.3)

Alternative 2 also includes some mainline operational improvements, including possible four lane solutions between roundabouts at the following two locations:

- Josselyn Canyon Road to Olmstead Road
- Corral de Tierra Road to San Benancio Road

The wildlife crossing component included in all alternatives proposes enlargement of existing culverts at eight locations along SR 68 to facilitate large mammal movement and/or installation of directional fencing to deter wildlife from entering onto SR 68. Considered locations include:

- Immediately west of the SR 68/York road intersection (post mile 8.1)
- Immediately west of the SR 68/Pasadera Drive intersection (post mile 9.7)
- Immediately east of the SR 68/Pasadera Drive intersection (post mile 9.8)
- Immediately west of the SR 68/Laureles Grade intersection (post mile 11.2)
- Between the SR 68/Corral de Tierra and SR 68/San Benancio intersections (post mile 13.2)
- Immediately south of the SR 68/ San Benancio intersection (San Benancio bridge opening)
- East of the SR 68/ San Benancio intersection (Toro Creek Bridge, post mile 13.5)
- East of the SR 68/ San Benancio intersection (post mile 13.7)

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The Draft EIR will address potential environmental effects of the proposed project for each of the environmental topics outlined in the CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G. The proposed project may impact environmental resources, or may have the following effects, including:

- Potential impacts to biological resources, including: temporary or permanent riparian and wetland habitat impacts; potential impacts to State and Federally listed species; potential removal of native vegetation
- Potential impacts to visual resources, including: loss or changes to roadside vegetation; added paved surfaces, hardscape, and walls; increased lighting
- Potential impacts to cultural resources
- Increased traffic noise levels
- Grading and soil disturbance outside of the existing SR 68 right-of-way
- Temporary construction impacts to residents

AGENCY COMMENTS

Agency input regarding the scope of the EIR, environmental factors potentially affected, and project alternatives must be submitted to Caltrans no later than **5:00 pm on Friday, November 8, 2019**.

Written comments can be mailed to:

**California Department of Transportation, District 5
50 Higuera Street
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
Attention: Jason Wilkinson**

Or emailed to:

Jason.wilkinson@dot.ca.gov

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

Caltrans in its role as Lead Agency is also planning to hold a public Scoping Meeting on **Thursday, October 3, 2019**.

The purpose of the scoping process, as an extension to the Notice of Preparation, is to identify public and agency concerns, focus on the environmental documents that need to be prepared, and define issues that will be examined in the environmental impact report. No decision(s) will be made on the project itself during scoping meeting.

The Scoping Meeting will be held at the following time and location:

**Thursday October 3, 5:00 - 7:00 pm
Monterey-Salinas Transit Meeting Room
19 Upper Ragsdale, Suite 200
Monterey, California 93940**