

To: Responsible/Trustee Agency

From: California Dept. of Transportation
703 B Street
Marysville, CA 95901

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: Yuba 70 Continuous Passing Lane Project (EA: 03-3F283)

Project Location: The proposed project is located on State Route (SR) 70 in Yuba County, California between post miles (PM) 16.20-25.80.

Project Description: The California Department of Transportation proposes to widen SR 70 between Laurellen Road and the Butte/Yuba County line to provide a five-lane cross-section within the full postmile limits; PM 16.2-25.8. Two 12-foot travel lanes and 8-foot shoulder would be provided in each direction with a 14-foot wide continuous center Two Way Left Turn Lane (TWLTL) bounded by a minimum 20-foot Clear Recovery Zone (CRZ).

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 prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project.

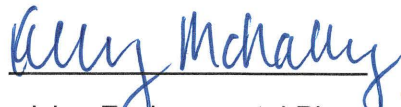
A more detailed project description, location map, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials.

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 direct your response to Cara Lambirth Telephone (530) 741-4549 at the address shown above. Please supply us with the name for a contact person in your agency.

Date: 2/7/20

Signature: 
Title: Supervising Environmental Planner

Notice of Preparation

Project Title

Yuba 70 Continuous Passing Lane Project (EA: 03-3F283)

Project Location

The proposed project is located on State Route (SR) 70 in Yuba County, California between post miles (PM) 16.2-25.80.

Project Background

Overview of SR 70 in the Project Limits

SR 70 is an interregional Road System (IRRS) route. This route primarily serves to move people or goods from outside the immediate region through Yuba County. Transporting agricultural commodities to markets has made SR 70 a vital economic link to local farmers and agriculture-related businesses. Additionally, SR 70 has become a "gateway" route used to access multiple recreational destinations in the Sierra Nevada and serves as an alternative route to and from Nevada when Interstate 80 is closed due to an accident or weather conditions.

SR 70, north of Marysville in Yuba County is a two-lane rural highway through agricultural land. The highway presently has standard 12-foot lanes, with shoulder widths less than 8 feet in most areas. There are currently left-turn lanes at county road intersections. This portion of SR 70 runs through what is commonly called District 10, which is short for Reclamation District 10. This area encompasses approximately 12,000 acres and includes 23 miles of levees. Forming the District's boundaries are Honcut Creek to the north, the Marysville Levee to the south, the Feather River to the west, and the Union Pacific Railroad tracks to the east. The area includes 50 businesses (31 farms, 13 agriculture-related businesses, and 6 other) and over 450 residences. Since extensive farming activities take place throughout the project limits, farming and harvesting equipment share the road with the traveling public. Clusters of houses share frontage with the highway throughout the project limits.

The project limits include a section of SR 70 north of Marysville with a cross section that does not meet current standards for shoulder width and clear recovery zone (CRZ). In 2007, between PM 18.9/20.0, the highway was widened, and a two-way left-turn lane (TWLTL) was installed under Contract 03-4A570. In 2009, centerline ground-in rumble strips were also installed through the project limits, but cross-centerline collisions have continued to occur.

On March 30, 2015, a Project Study Report (PSR) was approved for proposed safety improvements on SR 70. Improvements consisted of two standard 12-foot lanes, 8-foot shoulders a TWLTL where feasible, left-turn pockets at all county-maintained roads, and a 20-ft CRZ. This proposed safety project included two alternatives, a 3-lane and 5-lane

widening with standard 8-foot shoulders and a TWLTL where feasible, as well as providing for a 20-foot CRZ.

Subsequently, Caltrans approved a Project Study Report (PSR) for the Yuba 70 Safety Project (EA: 03-4F380) on June 20, 2019. Initially, this project was a combined Safety/State Transportation Improvement Project or STIP job. The scope of work included capacity increasing features, resulting in a five-lane design. After feedback from a series of public meetings and due to lack of funding for the STIP portion, the project was rescoped as a Safety-only project providing signed slow-moving vehicles lanes less than 1 mile long at up to three locations in each direction.

On February 27 and 28, 2019, a State Route (SR) 70 Safety Audit Workshop was held as a collaborative effort of Caltrans District 3, the California Transportation Commission (CTC), the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) and the Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG). One of the primary purposes of the study was to determine the net safety benefits of widening the corridor to the 5-lane ultimate concept facility on State Route 70 from Laurellen Road, north of Marysville, to the Butte/Yuba County Line (Post Mile 16.2 to 25.8). The SR 70 Safety Assessment Report concludes that an additional reduction of approximately 34 percent (from 4.06 to 2.68 collisions per MVM) for fatality and injury collisions could be expected with the conversion from a 3-lane to a 5-lane cross section based on the comparison of similar sites.

EA 03-1E060, The Simmerly Slough Bride Replacement Project, EA 03-1E060, began construction in summer of 2019 and will construct a three-lane facility which this project will tie-in to at its southern end. In 2022, EA 03-3H930, the Butte 70- Safety Project, will construct a five-lane facility that will tie-in to the north end of this project.

Project Description

The project involves widening SR 70 between Laurellen Road and the Butte/Yuba County line to provide a five-lane cross-section within the full postmile limits; PM 16.2 – 25.8. Two 12-foot travel lanes and 8-foot shoulder would be provided in each direction with a 14-foot wide continuous center Two Way Left Turn Lane (TWLTL) bounded by a minimum 20-foot Clear Recovery Zone (CRZ). The CRZ will incorporate side slopes of 4:1 or flatter and necessitate removal of any physical obstructions such as trees, utility poles, and other fixed objects.

Additional project elements include the following:

- Construction of roadside ditches outside the CRZ.
- Construction of County-maintained road intersections to facilitate the movement of tractor trailers and farming equipment.
- Extension or replacement of existing cross culverts as needed.
- Replacement of driveway culverts to convey drainage flows to the roadside ditches, as warranted.

- Minor shifting of the vertical profile and horizontal alignment as needed.
- Modification of existing driveways along the corridor, where needed, to conform to the widened highway.
- Relocation of utilities.

Alternatives

Under evaluation for this project are two build alternatives – Alternative 1 and Alternative 2, as described in the subsection below, as well as a No-Build (or No-Action) Alternative.

Regardless of the build alternative, the proposed project would contain standardized project measures that are employed on most, if not all, Caltrans projects and were not developed in response to any specific environmental impact that could potentially result from the proposed project. These measures are detailed in the *Environmental Consequences* subsections of Chapter 2, *Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Avoidance, Minimization and/or Mitigation Measures*.

Common Design Features of the Build Alternatives

The construction approach would be the same for both alternatives. Both build alternatives contain the following design features:

- Two 12-foot travel lanes and 8-foot shoulder would be provided in each direction.
- A minimum 20-foot Clear Recovery Zone (CRZ). The CRZ will incorporate side slopes of 4:1 or flatter and necessitate removal of any physical obstructions such as trees, utility poles, and other fixed objects.
- Construction of roadside ditches outside the CRZ.
- Construction of County-maintained road intersections to facilitate the movement of tractor trailers and farming equipment.
- Extension or replacement of existing cross culverts as needed.
- Replacement of driveway culverts to convey drainage flows to the roadside ditches, as warranted.
- Minor shifting of the vertical profile and horizontal alignment as needed.
- Modification of existing driveways along the corridor, where needed, to conform to the widened highway.

- Relocation of utilities.

Unique Features of Build Alternatives

Alternative 1

Alternative 1 proposes the addition of a 14-foot-wide paved median, striped as a continuous TWLTL. This TWLTL would create a refuge for drivers turning left in and out of traffic. At county-maintained roads and certain agriculture-related businesses, the TWLTL would be striped as a left-turn lane.

Alternative 2

Alternative 2 would separate traffic with a paved 14-foot wide median containing a concrete barrier. Vehicles entering the highway from homes and businesses could only turn right onto SR 70. There would be median openings at major county road intersections with left- and U-turn lanes.

Probable Environmental Effects

The proposed project is expected to result in temporary and permanent environmental effects. The draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment will determine what resources would be affected, the level of significance, and feasible measures to reduce impacts. Probable environmental effects of the proposed project are outlined below.

Aesthetics

The proposed project could degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings, however the impacts are not expected to be substantial.

During the environmental phase of the project, Caltrans will identify all feasible measures to avoid and minimize impacts to visual resources.

Agricultural and Forest Resources

The proposed project is expected to require conversion of prime farmland, unique farmland and/or farmland of statewide importance to non-agriculture use pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Department of Conservation. During the environmental phase of the project, Caltrans will identify all feasible measure to avoid impacts to farmlands.

Air Quality

The proposed project is expected to result in temporary short-term air quality impacts from construction activities; however, these impacts will be minimized with incorporation of minimization measures. During the environmental phase, Caltrans will analyze project impacts to air quality including criteria pollutants and operational air quality.

Biological Resources

The proposed project may result in impacts to biological resources. During the environmental phase of the project, potential impacts on special-status plant and animal species and associated

critical habitat will be conducted as well as analysis of potential effects on riparian vegetation and Waters of the State/United States.

Cultural and Paleontological Resources

There is potential for Cultural Resources to be located within the project area. Analysis of the design will be conducted during the environmental phase to determine the potential impacts to these resources.

There is potential for Paleontological resources to be located within the project area. Analysis of the design will be conducted during the environmental phase to determine the potential impacts to Paleontological resources.

Geology and Soils

No impacts anticipated.

Hazards/Hazardous Materials

There is potential for hazards/hazardous materials to be located within the project area. During the environmental phase of the project, analysis will be conducted to determine potential impacts.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Due to the anticipated quantity of soil disturbance during construction, the project will be regulated under the Construction General Permit (CGP). The CGP contains specific requirements meant to address potential erosion, sedimentation, and the transportation of potential pollutants to receiving waters. In accordance with the CGP, it is anticipated that field Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be implemented, monitored, and evaluated to the maximum extent practicable to reduce or prevent potential impacts to water bodies within the project limits.

Analysis will be conducted during the environmental phase to evaluate water quality impacts or degradation to receiving waters to occur as a result of project activities.

Land Use/Planning

The proposed project would not conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of any agencies with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

Mineral Resources

No impacts anticipated.

Noise

The proposed project could result in exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance or applicable standards of other agencies. Analysis will be conducted during the environmental phase to evaluate the potential noise impacts

Population/Housing

The proposed project could displace existing housing. During the environmental phase of the project, Caltrans will identify all feasible measures to avoid and minimize impacts to housing.

Greenhouse Gases

The project may contribute to CO₂ emissions. During the environmental phase of the project, analysis will be conducted to evaluate impacts to CO₂ emissions.

Public Services

No Impacts Anticipated.

Recreation

No Impacts Anticipated.

Transportation/Traffic

The project is not anticipated to conflict with any applicable plan, ordinance or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system, or conflict with an applicable congestion management program or conflict with adopted policies, plans or programs regarding public transit, bicycle or pedestrian facilities, or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities.

Utilities/Service Systems

The proposed project could require the relocation of existing facilities; including, but not limited to gas, electric and fiber optic. Through the design of the project, Caltrans will identify feasible measures to avoid and minimize impacts to utilities and service systems.

Tribal Cultural Resources

No impacts anticipated.

Wildfire

No impacts anticipated.

Energy

The project may result in impacts to energy resources during project construction and/or operation. Analysis will be conducted during the environmental phase of the project to evaluate impacts to Energy.