



Notice of Preparation

Date: April 3, 2020
To: Office of Planning and Research, Responsible and Trustee Agencies, and Interested Parties
From: City of Fremont, Planning Division
Subject: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Morrison Canyon Road Traffic Safety Project (PWC8981)

The City of Fremont (City) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the City-sponsored project described below. We request comments from the public and public agencies regarding the scope and content of the EIR.

Pursuant to Section 15060(d) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, the City's preliminary review of the proposed project indicates that an EIR will be required for the project and accordingly, the City is moving directly to preparation of an EIR, omitting preparation of an Initial Study.

Project Title: Morrison Canyon Road Traffic Safety Project

Project Applicant: City of Fremont, Public Works Department

Project Location: As shown in the Project Area Map, (**Attachment 1**), the proposed project would include the approximately 0.8-mile portion of Morrison Canyon Road in the City of Fremont (Niles Quadrangle, Township 4S, Range 1W, Sections 22 and 23), located immediately east of the intersection of Morrison Canyon Road and Ridge Terrace ("Proposed Western/Bottom Closure") to a location immediately west of the intersection of Morrison Canyon Road and Vargas Road ("Proposed Eastern/Top Closure").

Existing Conditions: Morrison Canyon Road (the Road) is a one-lane, bi-directional road that connects Mission Boulevard to Vargas Road. The Road primarily provides access to the rural hillside properties in the Morrison Canyon and Vargas Road areas. The roadway has been historically a dirt/gravel trail that has received a chip seal maintenance treatment over the years, as necessary. In the project area, the Road is a winding, approximately nine-foot wide road at its narrowest point. The Road cuts through steep slopes that have often resulted in closures due to erosion and landslides.

Bi-directional automobile traffic has recently increased along the Road and associated routes, as weekday commuters have sought to avoid traffic along Interstate 680 and/or Mission Boulevard. Given the narrow, winding nature of the Road, this increase in automobile trips has contributed to a considerable increase in two-way vehicle conflicts, especially because many sections lack width for two cars to pass by each other, often requiring one vehicle to reverse to make space. The increased automobile traffic also presents additional safety concerns for pedestrians and bicyclists, who frequent the Road to access Vargas Plateau Regional Park, which is accessible from a location east of Vargas Road.

On October 16, 2018, the City of Fremont approved a temporary closure of the Road, which became effective November 17, 2018. The temporary closure includes signage and barricades indicating the roadway access restrictions, and allows continued access for emergency response vehicles, emergency access for local residents within the rural hill area, and non-vehicular uses (pedestrian and bicycle). This temporary closure, which is currently active, is achieved through the use of flexible plastic barricades that are mountable by most automobiles and navigable for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The City has preliminarily identified the following objectives for the temporary closure:

- 1) Eliminate the use of Morrison Canyon Road and Vargas Road as a commuter traffic route.

- 2) Retain Morrison Canyon Road as route for emergency vehicle access to serve the hillside community. It is noted that the “lower” portion of Morrison Canyon Road needs to be retained to serve properties with driveway access at Ridge Terrace.
- 3) Substantially eliminate the occurrence of two-way traffic on Morrison Canyon Road.

Project Description: The City is proposing to permanently close to private automobile use the above noted 0.8 miles of Morrison Canyon Road, from the Proposed Western/Bottom Closure to the Proposed Eastern/Top Closure (in other words, from the intersection of the Road and Ridge Terrace to where the Road intersects Vargas Road.

The proposed project would permanently enact the temporary closure conditions described above, which are active as of October 16, 2018. However, the proposed project will be analyzed against an assumed baseline of roadway conditions prior to the October 16, 2018 temporary closure.

The closure would be implemented through a series of flexible delineators or bollards, the same or similar to the barriers currently utilized. One or more additional advanced warning signs and flashing beacons would be added along the Road. Since the barriers are mountable, emergency movement/access would not be hindered. In addition, the Road would remain open to pedestrian and bicycle uses because the barriers would be passable by pedestrians and bicyclists.

All improvements are anticipated to occur within the existing public right-of-way.

Potential Environmental Effects: The Draft EIR will address all of the following topic areas from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines.

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| Aesthetics | Agriculture and Forestry Resources | Air Quality |
| Biological Resources | Cultural Resources | Energy |
| Geology and Soils | Greenhouse Gas Emissions | Hazards and Hazardous Materials |
| Hydrology and Water Quality | Land Use and Planning | Mineral Resources |
| Noise | Population and Housing | Public Services |
| Recreation | Transportation | Tribal Cultural Resources |
| Utilities and Service Systems | Wildfire | Mandatory Findings of Significance |

As required by CEQA, the EIR will also include identification and consideration of alternatives to the proposed project, including a No Action/No Project Alternative.

Due to time limits mandated by CEQA, all comments and responses must be submitted and postmarked no later than thirty (30) days following issuance of this Notice of Preparation. Please send all comments and responses in writing by email or letter to the following address:

City of Fremont, Planning Division
 Attn: Bill Roth, Senior Planner
 39550 Liberty Street, P.O. Box 5006
 Fremont, CA 94537
 Email: broth@fremont.gov

If you have any questions regarding the Morrison Canyon Traffic Safety Project, or about the information provided in this NOP, please contact Bill Roth via the email address listed above, or at (510) 494-4450.

Signature (Lead Agency): Bill Roth

Attachments:
Attachment 1: Project Area Map

Attachment 1

Project Area Map