

Metal Beam Guardrail Upgrades Within Stanislaus and Tuolumne Counties Along State Routes 108, 120, and 49

Stanislaus and Tuolumne Counties

10-STA SR 108- PM 28.5 to PM 33.4, SR 120- PM 12.22; TUO SR 108- PM 1.28 to PM 53.03, SR 120- PM 6.01 to PM 11.29, SR 49- PM 17.6
EA 10-1C400/Project ID 10-1700-0025

Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration



Prepared by the
State of California Department of Transportation

June 2020



General Information About This Document

Please read this Initial Study. Additional copies of this document are available for review at the Caltrans district office at 1976 East Doctor Martin Luther King Junior Boulevard.

The proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study is accessible online on the Caltrans District 10 Website at <https://dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-10>. If you would like a printed version or CD of this document to be sent to your home address, please contact C. Scott Guidi at 209-990-5719 or email him at Scott.Guidi@dot.ca.gov. Please send your written comments by the deadline to:

Scott Guidi, Branch Chief
Northern San Joaquin Valley Environmental Management Branch 2
California Department of Transportation
1976 East Doctor Martin Luther King Junior Boulevard
Stockton, California 95205

Submit comments via email to: scott.guidi@dot.ca.gov.

Submit comments by the deadline: August 7, 2020.

After comments are received from the public and reviewing agencies, Caltrans may: 1) give environmental approval to the proposed project, 2) do additional environmental studies, or 3) abandon the project. If the project is given environmental approval and funding is appropriated, Caltrans could design and build all or part of the project.

For individuals with sensory disabilities, this document is available in Braille, in large print, on audiocassette, or on computer disk. To obtain a copy in one of these alternate formats, please write to or call Caltrans, Attention: Scott Guidi, 1976 East Charter Way, Stockton, California 95205; (209) 990-5719, or use California Relay Service 1 (800) 735-2929 (TTY), 1 (800) 735-2929 (Voice), or 711.

10-STA SR 108- PM 28.5 to PM 33.4, SR 120- PM 12.22; TUO SR 108- PM
1.28 to PM 53.03, SR 120- PM, 6.01 to PM 11.29, SR 49 -PM 17.6
10-1C400 / 10-1700-0025

Metal beam guardrail upgrade along State Route 108 in Stanislaus County
and along State Route 120 and State Route 49 within Tuolumne County at
STA SR 108- PM 28.5 to PM 33.4, SR 120- PM 12.22; TUO SR 108- PM 1.28
to PM 53.03, SR 120- PM 6.01 to PM 11.29, SR 49- PM 17.6

**INITIAL STUDY
with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration**

Submitted Pursuant to: (State) Division 13, California Public Resources Code

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Transportation

Philip Vallejo

Philip Vallejo
Environmental Office Chief, North
California Department of Transportation
CEQA Lead Agency

5/18/2020

Date

DRAFT Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to upgrade existing metal beam guardrails to the Midwest Guardrail System to meet the current standards. Upgrades would be constructed in various locations in Stanislaus County along State Route 108 from post mile 28.5 to post mile 33.4 and State Route 120 at post mile 12.22, and various locations within Tuolumne County along State Route 108 from post mile 1.28 to post mile 53.03, State Route 120 from post mile 6.01 to post mile 11.29, and State Route 49 at post mile 17.6.

Determination

This proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration is included to give notice to interested agencies and the public that it is Caltrans' intent to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration for this project. This does not mean that Caltrans' decision on the project is final. This Mitigated Negative Declaration is subject to change based on comments received by interested agencies and the public.

Caltrans has prepared an Initial Study for this project and, following public review, has determined from this study that the project would not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons.

The project would have no effect on: aesthetics, agriculture and forest resources, air quality, cultural resources, energy, geology and soils, 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, or wildfire.

The project would have no significant effect on greenhouse gas.

The project would have no significant adverse effect on biological resources such as riparian habitat and valley elderberry longhorn beetle habitat because the following measures would reduce potential effects to insignificant:

- Various avoidance and minimization measures such as surveys, erosion control measures, and preconstruction training would be implemented for threatened and endangered species.
- The purchase of off-site mitigation credits and perform on-site or off-site restoration.

Philip Vallejo
Environmental Office Chief, North
Central Region Environmental
California Department of Transportation

Date

Section 1 Project Description and Background

1.1 Project Title

Metal Beam Guardrail Upgrade within the Counties of Stanislaus and Tuolumne along State Routes 108, 120, and 49

1.2 Project Locations

The proposed project would occur in Stanislaus County along State Route 108 from post mile 28.5 to post mile 33.4, and along State Route 120 at post mile 12.22; in Tuolumne County along State Route 108 between post mile 1.28 and post mile 53.03; along State Route 120 at post mile 6.01 and post mile 11.29; and along State Route 49 in Tuolumne County at post mile 17.6. See Figure 1 and Figure 2 for maps of the project area and project locations.

Figure 1. Project Vicinity Map

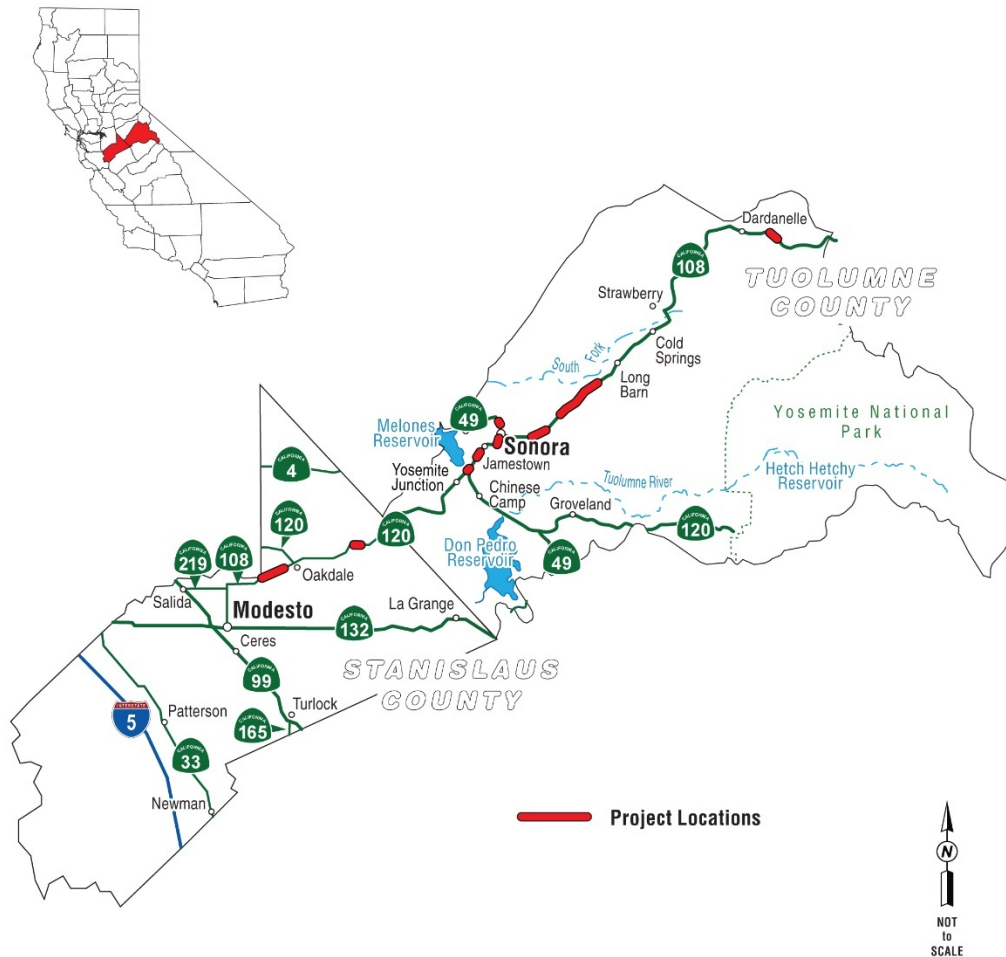


Figure 2. Project Location Map



1.3 Description of Project

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to upgrade existing metal beam guardrails to the Midwest Guardrail System to meet the current standards. The project aligns and meets the objectives of the Caltrans Highway Safety Implementation guidelines. These upgrades would be constructed in various locations in Stanislaus County along State Route 108 between post mile 28.5 and post mile 33.4 and along State Route 120 Post Mile 12.22; within Tuolumne County along State Route 108 between post mile 1.28 and post mile 53.03; along State Route 120 at post mile 6.01 and post mile 11.29; and along State Route 49 in at post mile 17.6. The project is needed to reduce the severity of collisions and roadway departure crashes.

Proposed construction activities would be limited to the disturbed road shoulders and pullouts within Caltrans right-of-way. After completion of construction activities, temporarily disturbed areas would be restored to pre-project conditions. The following summarizes the planned work for each location:

Location 1: Stanislaus County State Route 108 Post Mile 28.5

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail
- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 2: Stanislaus County State Route 108 Post Mile 29.9

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail
- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 3: Stanislaus County State Route 108 Post Mile 30.5

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail
- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 4: Stanislaus County State Route 108 Post Mile 32.1

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail
- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 5: Stanislaus County State Route 108 Post Mile 33.3

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail
- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 6: Stanislaus County State Route 108 Post Mile 33.4

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail
- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 7: Stanislaus County State Route 120 Post Mile 12.22

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail
- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 8: Tuolumne County State Route 120 Post Mile 6.01

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail
- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 9: Tuolumne County State Route 120 Post Mile 11.29

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail
- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 10: Tuolumne County State Route 108 Post Mile 1.28

- Replacing flared Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 11: Tuolumne County State Route 108 Post Mile 0.97

- Replacing two flared terminal systems with two in line terminal systems
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 12: Tuolumne County State Route 108 Post Mile 2.02

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail

- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 13: Tuolumne County State Route 108 Post Mile 2.20

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail
- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 14: Tuolumne County State Route 108 Post Mile 2.78

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail
- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 15: Tuolumne County State Route 108 Post Mile 3.45

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail
- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 16: Tuolumne County State Route 108 Post Mile 4.50

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail
- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 17: Tuolumne County State Route 108 Post Mile 5.07

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail
- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 18: Tuolumne County State Route 108 Post Mile 7.81

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail
- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 19: Tuolumne County State Route 108 Post Mile 11.3

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail
- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 20: Tuolumne County State Route 108 Post Mile 11.8

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail
- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 21: Tuolumne County State Route 108 Post Mile 15.5

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail
- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

Location 22: Tuolumne County State Route 108 Post Mile 53.03

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail
- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used
- Construct standard end block extension to connect the Midwest Guardrail System to the bridge rail

Location 23: Tuolumne County State Route 49 Post Mile 17.6

- Removing existing metal beam guardrail
- Replacing with Midwest Guardrail System
- Drilling or pile driving equipment will be used

1.3.1 Build Alternative

The existing metal beam guardrails will be removed at 23 identified locations in Stanislaus and Tuolumne Counties along State Routes 108, 120 and 49. Twenty-one locations will have the existing metal beam guardrail system replaced with the Midwest guardrail system. Location 10 will replace the flared Midwest guardrail system. Location 11 will replace the two flared terminal systems with two in-line terminal systems.

1.3.2 No-Build (No-Action) Alternative

If no action is taken and the project is not built, the metal beam guardrails at each project location would continue to be obsolete and not meet Midwest Guardrail System current standards.

1.4 Surrounding Land Uses and Setting

The project locations range from the town of McHenry in Stanislaus County to the town of Dardanelle in Tuolumne County. The project area is primarily rural and consists of native and nonnative plant species, dirt, and pavement, as well as several ephemeral and intermittent drainages flowing through cross culverts under the paved way. Project locations 1 through 7 are within the Central Valley, project locations 8 through 18 and 23 are in the Sierra foothills, and project locations 19 through 22 are in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The project area's physical conditions vary greatly based on their geographic locations. The description of physical conditions is divided into the valley, foothill, and mountain regions. Adjacent habitats consist of woody riparian vegetation, native and nonnative grasslands, and wetlands (Natural Environment Study, December 2019).

1.5 Other Public Agencies Whose Approval is Required

Table 1 Permits and Approvals Required for the Project

Agency	Permit/Approval	Status
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	California Fish and Game Code Section 1602: Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement	Application for the 1600 permit would be submitted during Plans, Specifications, and Estimates phase of the project.
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Endangered Species Act Section 7: Biological Opinion or Letter of Concurrence	Formal Consultation would be completed prior to the completion of the final environmental document.
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board	Clean Water Act Section 402: National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit	Application for the permit would be submitted during Plans, Specifications, and Estimates phase of the project.

Section 2 CEQA Environmental Checklist

2.1 **CEQA Checklist**

This checklist identifies physical, biological, social, and economic factors that might be affected by the proposed project. Potential impact determinations include Significant and Unavoidable Impact, Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated, Less Than Significant Impact, and No Impact. In many cases, background studies performed in connection with a project will indicate that there are no impacts to a particular resource. A No Impact answer reflects this determination. The words “significant” and “significance” used throughout the following checklist are related to California Environmental Quality Act (known as CEQA) impacts, not National Environmental Policy Act (known as NEPA) impacts. The questions in this checklist are intended to encourage the thoughtful assessment of impacts and do not represent thresholds of significance.

Project features, which can include both design elements of the project, and standardized measures that are applied to all or most Caltrans projects such as best management practices and measures included in the Standard Plans and Specifications or as Standard Special Provisions, are an integral part of the project and have been considered prior to any significance determinations documented below.

2.1.1 **Aesthetics**

CEQA Significance Determinations for Aesthetics

Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:

a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

No Impact—The proposed project work areas are not eligible as scenic highway resources per the database of listed eligible California State Scenic Highways. The project work would not result in substantial adverse impacts to scenic resources. (Scenic Resource Evaluation, 2019).

b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

No Impact—The project would not substantially damage scenic resources, including trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a scenic highway. (Scenic Resource Evaluation, 2019).

c) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from a publicly accessible vantage point.) If the

project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

No Impact—The project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views, nor would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality. (Scenic Resource Evaluation, 2019).

d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

No Impact—The project would not create a new source of light or glare that would adversely affect views.

2.1.2 Agriculture and Forest Resources

CEQA Significance Determinations for Agriculture and Forest Resources

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment Project; and the forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board.

Would the project:

a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

No Impact—The project locations are not on Prime, Unique, or Statewide farmland. All project locations are located within Caltrans right-of-way.

b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?

No Impact—Land directly next to the highways at all 23 project locations is not in active agricultural use and is not under Williamson Act contract.

c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?

No Impact—No right-of-way is being acquired for this project, therefore would not conflict with existing zoning regulations.

d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

No Impact—The project would not result in the loss of forest land or convert any forest land to non-forest.

e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

No Impact—The proposed work would only include improvement or upgrade of existing facilities. This would not encourage any additional land conversion or rezoning or agricultural or forest land.

2.1.3 Air Quality

CEQA Significance Determinations for Air Quality

Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations.

Would the project:

a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

No Impact—The project would not conflict with or obstruct with any applicable air quality plan. Construction emissions, including construction equipment exhaust and windblown dust, would be managed in the construction contract per the provisions of Caltrans Standard Specifications, Section 14-9.02, “Air Pollution Control” and Section 10-5, “Dust Control.” (Air Study, November 2019)

b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?

No Impact—The project would not result in cumulatively considerable increases in any criteria pollutants, because the project is not capacity-increasing and any temporary construction emissions would be minimized per Caltrans Standard Specifications. (Air Study, November 2019)

c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

No Impact—The project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. Construction related impacts would be minimized per the standard specifications 14-9.02, “Air Pollution Control” and 10-5, “Dust Control” and best management practices. (Air Study, November 2019)

d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

No Impact—The project would not produce emissions that would adversely affect a substantial number of people. Construction related impacts would be minimized with standard specifications 14-9.02, “Air Pollutions Control” and 10-5, “Dust Control.” (Air Study, November 2019)

2.1.4 Biological Resources

CEQA Significance Determinations for Biological Resources

A detailed discussion on the impacts to biological resources caused by the construction of the proposed project is provided in the December 2019 Natural Environment Study. Furthermore, please refer to Appendix B for further information on the avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures.

Would the project:

a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

a) Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated—Valley elderberry longhorn beetles may occur in the project vicinity. Consultant biologists surveyed for the valley elderberry and identified potential habitat at locations 5, 6, 7, and 10. There are no California Natural Diversity Database occurrences for valley elderberry longhorn beetles within the project area.

The Implementation of worker environmental awareness training and incorporation of the following avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures would ensure construction activities would avoid or minimize impacts to the valley elderberry longhorn beetles and their habitat to less a than significant impact:

- **BIO 1**—Compensate for permanent impacts to valley elderberry longhorn beetle habitat
- **BIO 2**—Avoid and minimize impacts on valley elderberry longhorn beetles through establishment of fencing, avoidance areas, erosion control and revegetation measures, appropriate timing of construction activities,

proper trimming and mowing protocols, and restricted use of chemicals (see Appendix B).

A detailed discussion of the avoidance, minimization, and mitigation mentioned above measures is provided in Appendix B.

i) Less Than Significant Impact—Burrowing owls, Swainson's hawks, northern goshawks, bald eagles, great gray owls, and California spotted owls were surveyed by a consultant biologist and may occur in the project vicinity.

Burrowing owl—The project falls within the range of the burrowing owl. Burrowing Owl surveys were conducted between April and October 2019. No burrowing owls were observed during these field surveys. However, to ensure that the project would have no significant adverse effect on burrowing owls, Caltrans would include construction standard specifications that address environmentally sensitive areas (14-1.01), bird protection (14-6.03), contractor-supplied biologists (14-6.03D), and that implement worker environmental awareness training. A detailed discussion of these avoidance and minimization measures is provided in Appendix B.

Swainson's hawk—Project activities are not expected to remove or otherwise disturb any potential nest sites due to nesting habitat not being present within the permanent and temporary impact area. If nests were to occur within one half mile of the project, construction disturbance, like increased noise or human activity and presence during the breeding season, may result in nest abandonment and loss of eggs or young.

To ensure that the project would have no significant adverse effect on Swainson's Hawks, Caltrans would include construction standard specifications that address environmentally sensitive areas (14-1.01), bird protection (14-6.03), contractor-supplied biologists (14-6.03D), and that implement worker awareness training. A detailed discussion of these avoidance and minimization measures is provided in Appendix B.

Northern goshawk—Project locations 21 and 22 may support suitable nesting and foraging habitat for the northern goshawk. The California Natural Diversity Database identifies northern goshawk occurrences about 1 mile north of location 21, and 1.5 miles southeast from location 22. All remaining locations were determined as unsuitable for nesting and foraging habitat. Field surveys for Northern goshawks were conducted from April to October 2019. No northern goshawks were observed at any location.

To ensure that the project would have no significant adverse effect on northern goshawks, Caltrans will include construction standard specifications that address environmentally sensitive areas (14-1.01), bird protection (14-6.03), contractor-supplied biologists (14-6.03D), and that implement worker

environmental awareness training. A detailed discussion of these avoidance and minimization measures is provided in Appendix B.

Bald eagle—The project area is located within the current nesting range for bald eagles. Per the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's California Natural Diversity Database, the closest bald eagle nesting territory is 2.5 miles east of project location 10. Bald eagles were not observed during the field surveys conducted between April and October 2019.

To ensure that the project would have no significant adverse effect on the bald eagle, Caltrans will include construction standard specifications that address environmentally sensitive areas (14-1.01), bird protection (14-6.03), contractor-supplied biologists (14-6.03D), and that implement worker environmental awareness training. A detailed discussion of these avoidance and minimization measures is provided in Appendix B.

Great gray owl—Locations 16 through 22 are within the great gray owl's elevational range in the Sierra Nevada foothills. No focused great gray owl surveys were conducted for this project and when performing raptor surveys, no large stick nests were observed in trees within or with line of sight from the project location areas.

To ensure that the project would have no significant adverse effect on the great gray owl, Caltrans will include construction standard specifications that address environmentally sensitive areas (14-1.01), bird protection (14-6.03), contractor-supplied biologists (14-6.03D), and that implement worker environmental awareness training. A detailed discussion of these avoidance and minimization measures is provided in Appendix B.

California spotted owl—All locations are within the current range of California spotted owl. None of the locations overlap with any known California spotted owl protected activity centers. Trees within the locations do not provide suitable nest structure for California spotted owls, however, forested habitats next to the locations may support suitable nesting and foraging habitat.

To ensure that the project would have no significant adverse effect on California spotted owls, Caltrans will include construction standard specifications that address environmentally sensitive areas (14-1.01), bird protection (14-6.03), contractor-supplied biologists (14-6.03D), and that implement worker environmental awareness training. A detailed discussion of these avoidance and minimization measures is provided in Appendix B.

ii) Less Than Significant—California tiger salamanders, California red-legged frogs, foothill yellow-legged frogs, and Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frogs were surveyed in the project area by a consultant biologist and may occur in the project vicinity.

California tiger salamander—The project would not impact suitable upland habitat for California tiger salamanders because the proposed guardrail replacement activities would occur within disturbed roadside grassland and ruderal areas that do not contain mammal burrows suitable for California tiger salamanders. Direct impacts on potential aquatic breeding habitat for California tiger salamanders are not expected because there is no suitable habitat in the project area and project activities are more than 50 feet away from any potential aquatic breeding habitat.

The project would have no significant adverse effect on California tiger salamanders. The proposed project would follow construction standard specifications that address environmentally sensitive areas (14-1.01), contractor-supplied biologists (14-6.03D), and that conduct worker environmental awareness training, implement BIO 3—Protect Water Quality, and prevent erosion and sedimentation in aquatic habitat. A detailed discussion of these avoidance and minimization measures is provided in Appendix B.

California red-legged frog—The project would not impact suitable upland habitat for California red-legged frogs because the proposed guardrail replacement activities would occur within disturbed roadside grassland and ruderal areas that do not contain mammal burrows suitable for California red-legged frogs. Direct impacts to potential aquatic breeding habitat for California red-legged frogs are not expected because there is no suitable habitat in the project area, and project activities are more than 50 feet away from any potential aquatic breeding habitat.

The project would have no significant adverse effect on California red-legged frogs. The proposed project would follow construction standard specifications that address environmentally sensitive areas (14-1.01), contractor-supplied biologists (14-6.03D), and that conduct worker environmental awareness training and implement BIO 3—Protect Water Quality and prevent erosion and sedimentation in aquatic habitat. A detailed discussion of these avoidance and minimization measures is provided in Appendix B.

Foothill yellow-legged frog—The project would not impact suitable upland habitat for foothill yellow-legged frogs because the proposed guardrail replacement activities would occur within disturbed roadside grassland and ruderal areas that do not contain mammal burrows suitable for foothill yellow-legged frogs. Direct impacts to potential aquatic breeding habitat for foothill yellow-legged frogs are not expected because no impacts to Mountain Pass Creek at location 9 and Eagle Creek at location 22 are proposed within the project areas.

The project would have no significant adverse effect on Foothill yellow-legged frogs. The proposed project would follow construction standard specifications that address environmentally sensitive areas (14-1.01), contractor-supplied

biologists (14-6.03D), and that conduct worker environmental awareness training and implement BIO 3—Protect Water Quality and prevent erosion and sedimentation in aquatic habitat. A detailed discussion of these avoidance and minimization measures is provided in Appendix B.

Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog—The project will not impact Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frogs because none of the locations support suitable habitat for the species (Natural Environmental Study, December 2019).

b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

b) Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated—Riparian habitat in the project area occurs along the banks, above the ordinary high-water mark of the Stanislaus River, Blitz Creek, Mountain Pass Creek, Eagle Creek, and Sonora Creek. The project area's riparian habitat primarily supports a vegetation community of valley oak, interior live oak, Ponderosa pine, and willows. Implementation of the proposed project may require pruning or removal of small trees within the riparian habitat to access temporary work areas and to remove and install 23 metal beam guardrails.

The project would have no significant adverse effect on riparian habitat or other natural communities identified by a regulating agency because the proposed project would follow construction standard specifications that address environmentally sensitive areas (14-1.01), bird protection (14-6.03), contractor-supplied biologists (14-6.03D), and that conduct environmental awareness training and implement the avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures listed below:

- **BIO 3**—Protect water quality and prevent erosion and sedimentation in perennial stream habitat
- **BIO 4**—Compensate for loss of riparian woodland
- **BIO 5**—Avoid and minimize potential disturbance of woody vegetation

A detailed discussion of the avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures mentioned above is provided in Appendix B.

c) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

No Impact—There were no federally protected wetlands identified within the project area. A survey of the project area identified two perennial streams, one intermittent stream, five ephemeral drainages and three irrigation canals which were mapped as potential non-wetland waters of the United States

under the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' jurisdiction. Construction activities associated with the replacement of existing guardrails are not expected to impact non-wetland waters because all ground disturbance would occur outside the ordinary high-water mark of the aquatic resources. No impacts to non-wetland waters are expected.

d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

No Impact—The project area does not contain any Essential Fish Habitat and would not build or impose any new barriers to wildlife or fish movement. Work would be performed during the dry or low-flow period when the ephemeral or intermittent creeks would be inaccessible to fish for movement or nursery sites. There would be minimal vegetation and ground disturbance due to the nature of the work, and no impacts are expected to wildlife corridors (Natural Environmental Study, December 2019).

e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

No Impact—The project would not be in violation of local policies or ordinances because no significant impacts are expected to sensitive wildlife, fish, or plant species, and vegetation and tree removal would be kept to a minimum per Caltrans best management practices. Disturbed areas would be restored or revegetated on-site per the construction contract, which would be prepared in compliance with the goals and policies related to biological resources in local plans. (Natural Environmental Study, December 2019)

f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

No Impact—The project would not conflict with any applicable habitat or natural community conservation plans because all avoidance and minimization measures included in the construction contract would be compliant with local and regional resource plans (Natural Environmental Study, December 2019).

2.1.5 Cultural Resources

CEQA Significance Determinations for Cultural Resources

Would the project:

a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?

No impact—All project locations were assessed, and no cultural resources were identified within or immediately next to the 23 site-specific project locations per Section 106. (Section 106 Compliance-Cultural Screened Undertaking Memo, 2019)

b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?

No impact—All project locations were assessed, and no cultural resources were identified within or immediately next to the 23 site-specific project locations per Section 106. (Section 106 Compliance -Cultural Screened Undertaking Memo, 2019)

c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?

No impact—All project locations were assessed, and no cultural resources were identified within or immediately next to the 23 site-specific project locations per Section 106. (Section 106 Compliance -Cultural Screened Undertaking Memo, 2019)

2.1.6 Energy

CEQA Significance Determinations for Energy

Would the project:

a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?

No Impact—Caltrans standard conditions and best management practices to avoid wasteful use of energy would be implemented during construction. This includes measures to avoid fuel waste by scheduling truck trips outside of peak morning and evening commute hours, avoiding equipment idling for more than five minutes where feasible, and maintaining equipment in proper working condition. (Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Analysis, January 2020)

b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

No Impact—The project would not conflict with or obstruct any state or local plans for renewable energy or energy efficiency because the work would not involve installing new facilities that consume energy. Construction activities would be conducted in a manner to conserve energy and avoid fuel waste per Caltrans best management practices. (Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Analysis, January 2020)

2.1.7 Geology and Soils

CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils

Would the project:

a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:

i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42?

No Impact—The project is not located near any fault zones and would not involve ground disturbance beyond 6 feet of depth. (Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map, December 2019)

ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?

No Impact—The project would involve only minimal ground disturbance to replace existing guardrails in previously disturbed soil.

iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

No Impact—The project would not cause enough ground shaking to cause liquefaction or ground failure.

iv) Landslides?

No Impact—The project would not involve heavy ground disturbance or shaking on steeply sloped surfaces that would cause landslides

b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

No Impact—Because the proposed work would be to improve existing facilities at or near-surface level, no substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil is expected. No excess soil would be generated, and all soil would be kept on-site.

c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?

No Impact—The project is not located on unstable soils nor will it cause on-site or off-site soil disturbance, because the proposed work is to replace or improve existing features.

d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?

No Impact—The project is not located on expansive soil and would only involve improvements to extant facilities on previously disturbed soil.

e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?

No Impact—Wastewater would not be produced by project activities, because the work would only involve minor improvements and rehabilitation of existing facilities.

f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

No Impact—The project would only involve minor soil disturbance and would not disturb the original ground for most of the project length. Where small amounts of soil disturbance would be necessary to replace or install guardrail posts, no unique paleontological or geologic features were on record. (Paleontological Resource Memo, December 2019)

2.1.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

CEQA Significance Determinations for Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Would the project:

a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

Less Than Significant—The project is non-capacity increasing and is not expected to alter highway usage patterns. As such, it would not produce any operational greenhouse gas emissions. Construction for this project would produce an estimated 77 US tons of carbon dioxide over a three-month work period. To minimize the impacts from these temporary emissions, Caltrans standard conditions and best management practices would be implemented. This would include measures to avoid idling construction equipment for more than five minutes when feasible, schedule truck trips outside of peak commute hours, reduce construction waste and maximize the use of recycled materials, and encourage improved equipment fuel efficiency. (Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Analysis, January 2020)

b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

Less Than Significant—The project is not expected to conflict with any applicable greenhouse gas reduction plan, policy or regulation. In compliance with Caltrans policy and Executive Order B-30-15, the project would incorporate the above-listed measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the project in pursuit of statewide and agency goals. (Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Analysis, January 2020)

2.1.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Would the project:

a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?

No Impact—The project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the transportation of, use or disposal of hazardous materials. (Initial Site Assessment, November 2019)

b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?

No Impact—The proposed work is unlikely to disturb any hazardous materials. The construction contract would include Caltrans Standard Special Provisions to manage lead and wood waste, as well as a lead compliance plan to minimize any risk of accidental release of hazardous materials into the environment. (Initial Site Assessment, November 2019)

c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?

No Impact—The project would not involve the release of hazardous materials within 0.25 mile of an existing or proposed school because no excess soil would be generated, and all hazardous materials would be managed securely per the lead compliance plan included in the construction contract. (Initial Site Assessment, November 2019)

d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?

No Impact—The project area does not include any leaking underground storage tanks or hazardous materials sites (Initial Site Assessment, November 2019).

e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?

No Impact—The project area is not managed under an airport land use plan, and the work would not result in a safety hazard or excessive noise impacts for residents within 2 miles of a public airport.

f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

No Impact—The project would not impair emergency response or evacuation plans in the project vicinity, and any road closures or detours would be coordinated with emergency response personnel to ensure minimal interruption to services.

g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?

No Impact—The project area is within the moderate to high fire hazard severity zones as cataloged in the 2007 California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Hazard Severity Zones in the State Responsibility Area map for Mariposa County. However, the construction contract would include Caltrans standard best management practices to ensure that the work would minimize any fire risks during construction, including measures to prevent smoking and other potential fire risks on-site.

2.1.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

CEQA Significance Determinations for Hydrology and Water Quality

Would the project:

a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?

No Impact—No water quality or waste discharge requirements would be violated as a result of this project. Any waste produced during construction would be safely stored and managed per Caltrans standard conditions and best management practices. Clean Water Act Sections 401 and 404 permit consultation would be performed with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Regional Water Quality Control Board to ensure compliance with water quality standards during construction (Water Quality Study, November 2019).

b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

No Impact—The project is not anticipated to have any long term impact on water quality or interfere with groundwater recharge. (Water Quality Study, November 2019)

c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:

i) Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;

No Impact—Because the project would be upgrading the existing metal beam guardrails, it would not result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site. (Water Quality Study, November 2019)

ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site;

No Impact—The project would be upgrading the existing metal beam guardrails and would not increase the flood risk from surface runoff. (Water Quality Study, November 2019)

iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or

No Impact—Because the project involves no construction of new facilities that would serve as sources or contributors to runoff, no adverse effects on drainage capacity are expected. (Water Quality Study, November 2019)

iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?

No Impact—The project would be upgrading the existing metal beam guardrails. As such, the project would not impede or redirect flood flows. (Water Quality Study, November 2019)

d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

No Impact—The project would not risk the release of pollutants if inundated, because it only proposes to rehabilitate existing infrastructure in the area. No hazardous materials or pollutants are being introduced during construction that would constitute a pollution risk in the event of a flood. (Initial Site Assessment, November 2019)

e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

No Impact—The project would not conflict or obstruct any water quality control plan or groundwater management plan, because it would not cause any increase in demand for water. The nature of the work would be to improve existing infrastructure and would not construct new facilities or pavement that may inhibit groundwater recharge. (Water Quality Study, November 2019)

2.1.11 Land Use and Planning

CEQA Significance Determinations for Land Use and Planning

Would the project:

a) Physically divide an established community?

No Impact—This project would not divide an established community because the work would only involve improving or rehabilitating existing facilities. One-way traffic control would also be implemented to minimize barriers to traffic during the construction period. (Stanislaus County General Plan, August 2016 and Tuolumne County General Plan December 2018)

b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?

No Impact—No significant impacts would be caused by conflicts with existing land use plans, policies, or regulations.

2.1.12 Mineral Resources

CEQA Significance Determinations for Mineral Resources

Would the project:

a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?

No Impact—There are no known valuable mineral resources in the project area that would be potentially made unavailable by the repair, rehabilitation, and replacement work proposed for the project. (Department of Conservation Maps: Minerals and Resources 2019)

b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?

No Impact—The project is located on Caltrans right-of-way and therefore, would not impact any important mineral resource site.

2.1.13 Noise

CEQA Significance Determinations for Noise

Would the project result in:

a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?

No Impact—The project would generate only short-term, intermittent construction noise in the area. Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-8.02, “Noise Control” would be implemented in the construction contract to minimize noise in compliance with local, state, and federal regulation. (Noise Study, November 2019)

b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

No Impact—Construction of the project would not cause excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels.

c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

No Impact—The project is not located within 2 miles of an airport or within an area with an applicable airport land use plan.

2.1.14 Population and Housing

CEQA Significance Determinations for Population and Housing

Would the project:

a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?

No Impact—It is not expected that this work would have any substantial impact on local population growth.

b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

No Impact—This project would not involve any acquisition of housing or displacement of residents, because the work would only involve improvements to existing infrastructure.

2.1.15 Public Services

CEQA Significance Determinations for Public Services

a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:

Fire protection?

Police protection?

Schools?

Parks?

Other public facilities?

No Impact—The proposed work would not significantly impede or impact public services in the project area. Construction area signs would be posted to alert the public in advance of any lane closures, and one-way traffic control would be used to avoid full road closures. Emergency service providers such as firefighters and police would also be notified in advance of Caltrans traffic control plans to ensure they can plan routes and avoid interruption of their response time.

2.1.16 Recreation

CEQA Significance Determinations for Recreation

a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?

No Impact—The project is not expected to significantly affect demand for or use of recreational facilities in the surrounding area because the proposed work is only intended to provide minor improvements to existing infrastructure. (Section 4(f) No Effect Memorandum, December 2019)

b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

No Impact—Because this project does not include construction or expansion of recreational facilities, it is not expected that the proposed work would have impacts on the environment in this regard. (Section 4(f) No Effect Memorandum, December 2019)

2.1.17 Transportation

CEQA Significance Determinations for Transportation

Would the project:

a) Conflict with a program plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?

No Impact—The project would not conflict with Stanislaus and Tuolumne Counties' program plans, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities. (Stanislaus County General Plan, August 2016 and Tuolumne County General Plan December 2018)

b) Conflict with or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?

Note: While public agencies may immediately apply Section 15064.3 of the updated Guidelines, statewide application is not required until July 1, 2020. In addition, uniform statewide guidance for Caltrans projects is still under development. The Project Development Team may determine the appropriate metric to use to analyze traffic impacts pursuant to section 15064.3(b). Projects for which a Notice of Preparation will be issued any time after December 28, 2018, should consider including an analysis of vehicle miles traveled/induced demand if the project has the potential to increase vehicle miles traveled (see page 20 of the Governor's Office of Planning and Research's updated SB 743 Technical Advisory), particularly if the project will be approved after July 2020.

No Impact—The project would not increase vehicle miles traveled or auto trips.

c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?

No Impact—The project would not introduce hazardous geometric design features or incompatible uses, because the scope involves rehabilitation and improvements to existing infrastructure.

d) Result in inadequate emergency access?

No Impact—The project would not result in inadequate emergency access. During construction, traffic would be reduced to one lane, with traffic control, using a temporary traffic signal.

2.1.18 Tribal Cultural Resources

CEQA Significance Determinations for Tribal Cultural Resources

Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

a) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or

No Impact—Native American consultation was performed and included Sacred Lands Search request with the Native American Heritage Commission. Results indicated negative findings of cultural sensitivity for the project limits and areas. (Section 106 Compliance -Cultural Screened Undertaking Memo, 2019)

b) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

No Impact—Within each of the 23 project locations there were no identifiable archaeological sites. (Section 106 Compliance-Cultural Screened Undertaking Memo, 2019)

2.1.19 Utilities and Service Systems

CEQA Significance Determinations for Utilities and Service Systems

Would the project:

a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?

No Impact—The project will involve upgrading metal beam guardrails to Midwest Guardrail System for all 23 project locations, and it would not require or result in relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, and thus would not cause significant environmental effects.

b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?

No Impact—The proposed project work and project area would not require external water for their operation, installation, or rehabilitation. As such, the proposed project would not require the use of water outside of existing entitlements.

c) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?

No Impact—The project is not expected to increase demand for wastewater treatment, because no new facilities are being installed that would produce additional wastewater.

d) Generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?

No Impact—No solid waste exceeding state or local standards or infrastructure capacity is expected because of this project, and Caltrans' best management practices for waste management would be included in the construction contract.

e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

No Impact—The project would comply with all applicable laws and regulations regarding solid waste because Caltrans' best management practices would be applied to guide all waste management.

2.1.20 Wildfire

CEQA Significance Determinations for Wildfire

If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:

a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

No Impact—Because emergency service providers would be consulted with Caltrans traffic control plans prior to construction to ensure minimal interruption to emergency response or evacuation, the proposed work is not expected to significantly impair any adopted emergency plans.

b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?

No Impact—Because the project scope primarily includes work on the roadway or adjacent roadway, the proposed work is not expected to pose a significant wildfire risk. Caltrans best management practices would be implemented to minimize the risk of fires starting or spreading. (California Wildfire Fire Hazard Zones Map, December 2019)

c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?

No Impact—The project does not require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure that would exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment.

d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

No Impact—Ground disturbance would be minimal for this project because most of the proposed work would be conducted in paved areas or previously disturbed soil. Negative impacts to runoff, drainage, or slope stability are not expected.

2.1.21 Mandatory Findings of Significance

CEQA Significance Determinations for Mandatory Findings of Significance

a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?

No Impact—With the implementation of avoidance and minimization measures that include best management practices, standard specifications, standard special provisions, and non-standard special provisions and mitigation measures, the proposed project will not degrade the quality of the environments; substantially reduce habitat or a fish and wildlife species; cause a fish or wildlife species to drop below self-sustaining levels; threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community; substantially reduce or restrict the

range or a rare or endangered plant or animal; or, eliminate important examples of major periods of California history or prehistory.

b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.)

No Impact—No cumulatively considerable impacts were identified for this project because the scope of work is to improve, rehabilitate, and replace existing infrastructure with no discernable additive effect to future projects.

c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

No Impact—The project would not have substantial adverse effects on human beings. All impacts would be minimized to insignificance such that they would not significantly impact the environment or people in the surrounding area.

Appendix A Title VI Policy Statement

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

Gavin Newsom, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
P.O. BOX 942873, MS-49
SACRAMENTO, CA 94273-0001
PHONE (916) 654-6130
FAX (916) 653-5776
TTY 711
www.dot.ca.gov



Making Conservation
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November 2019

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT

The California Department of Transportation, under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, ensures *"No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."*

Related federal statutes, remedies, and state law further those protections to include sex, disability, religion, sexual orientation, and age.

For information or guidance on how to file a complaint, or obtain more information regarding Title VI, please contact the Title VI Branch Manager at (916) 324-8379 or visit the following web page:

<https://dot.ca.gov/programs/business-and-economic-opportunity/title-vi>.

To obtain this information in an alternate format such as Braille or in a language other than English, please contact the California Department of Transportation, Office of Business and Economic Opportunity, at 1823 14th Street, MS-79, Sacramento, CA 95811; (916) 324-8379 (TTY 711); or at Title.VI@dot.ca.gov.

A blue ink signature of Toks Omishakin, consisting of a stylized 'T' followed by 'O' and 'A'.

Toks Omishakin
Director

"Provide a safe, sustainable, integrated and efficient transportation system to enhance California's economy and livability"

Appendix B Avoidance, Minimization and Mitigation Measures

WEAT—Conduct mandatory worker environmental awareness training for construction personnel.

Caltrans would retain a qualified biologist to conduct environmental awareness training for construction crews before project implementation. The awareness training would be provided to all construction personnel and would brief them on the need to avoid effects on sensitive biological resources (for example, riparian habitat, aquatic resources, and active bird nests) next to the work area. The education program would include a brief review of the special status species with the potential to occur in the environmentally sensitive areas (including their life history, habitat requirements, and photographs of the species). The training would identify the portions of the environmentally sensitive areas in which sensitive habitats and species may occur, as well as their legal status and protection, and applicable permit conditions. The program would cover the restrictions and guidelines that must be followed by all construction personnel to reduce or avoid effects on these species during project implementation. This would include the steps to be taken if a sensitive species is found within the construction area (in other words, notifying the Caltrans Resident Engineer or inspector who would coordinate with the designated biologist).

Construction employees would also be educated about the importance of controlling and preventing the spread of invasive plant infestations. An environmental awareness handout that describes and illustrates sensitive resources to be avoided during project construction and identifies all relevant permit conditions would be provided to each crew member. The crew foreman would be responsible for ensuring that crew members adhere to the guidelines and restrictions. Education programs would be conducted for appropriate new personnel as they are brought on the job during the construction period.

Std. Spec.-1—Environmentally Sensitive Area Fencing

Prior to construction, Caltrans and/or its contractor would install high-visibility orange construction fencing or flagging, as deemed appropriate by a qualified biologist, along the perimeter of the work area next to environmentally sensitive areas (for example, riparian vegetation, wetlands, streams, special status species habitat, and active bird nests). Where specific buffer distances are required for sensitive biological resources (for example, special status species habitats), they would be specified under the corresponding measures below. Caltrans would ensure that the final construction plans show the locations where fencing would be installed. The plans also would define the fencing installation procedure. The project proponent or contractor (at the

discretion of Caltrans) would ensure that the fencing is maintained throughout the duration of the construction period. If the fencing is removed, damaged, or otherwise compromised during the construction period, the fencing would be repaired or replaced. The project's special provisions package would provide clear language regarding acceptable fencing material and prohibited construction-related activities, vehicle operation, material and equipment storage, and other surface-disturbing activities within project location areas. All temporary fencing would be removed upon completion of construction.

Std. Spec.-2—Retain a qualified biologist to conduct periodic monitoring during construction in sensitive habitats.

Caltrans would retain a qualified biologist to conduct preconstruction surveys at the start of work at each guardrail location to clear the area for sensitive wildlife species and to identify any sensitive habitats for avoidance. The biologist would conduct periodic site visits during construction activities that involve ground disturbance (for example, vegetation removal, grading, excavation, guard rail replacement) within or next to sensitive habitats. The timing and frequency of this monitoring would be determined through coordination with Caltrans or as determined by the project permits. The purpose of the monitoring is to ensure that measures identified in this report are properly implemented to avoid and minimize effects on sensitive biological resources and to ensure that the project complies with all applicable permit requirements and agency conditions of approval. The biologist would ensure that fencing around sensitive biological resources remains in place during construction and that no construction personnel, equipment, or chemical/sediment runoff from the construction area enter any sensitive biological resource area.

Std. Spec.-3—Conduct pre-construction surveys for nesting migratory birds and raptors, including special status species, and establish protective buffers

Caltrans would retain a qualified wildlife biologist to conduct nesting bird surveys if construction would occur between February 1 and September 30. These nesting bird surveys would include a minimum of two separate surveys to look for active nests of migratory birds, including raptors. Surveys would include a search of all trees and shrubs and ruderal areas that provide suitable nesting habitat for birds within 100 feet of construction disturbance. In addition, a 0.5-mile area from the project location areas would be surveyed for nesting raptors to identify raptors that might be affected by construction disturbances, particularly special status raptors (in other words, Swainson's hawks, northern goshawks, great gray owls, bald eagles, and California spotted owls). The biologists conducting the surveys should have experience with all special status birds that could potentially nest within the survey area. In areas where access is not permitted, the surveyors would use binoculars and spotting scopes to inspect any potential nest trees, particularly large trees and snags. Surveys should occur during the height of the breeding season

(March 1 to June 1), with one survey occurring within 1 week prior to the start of construction.

As deemed necessary by Caltrans, additional surveys may be conducted during the appropriate period to document special status raptors. These surveys would include vocalization playback calls according to established survey protocols for great gray owls (Beck and Winter 2000), northern goshawks (U.S. Forest Service 2002), and California spotted owls (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2012). The need for these types of surveys would be determined by the Caltrans biologist in coordination with California Department of Fish and Wildlife during the spring/summer prior to the start of construction to inform the potential for these species to be present in or near guard rail locations. Full protocol surveys may not be warranted, and focused surveys may include a variation on the full protocol surveys. Positive detections may necessitate additional nest search surveys as determined by Caltrans.

If no special status raptor species or active nests are detected during these surveys, no additional measures are required. If an active nest is found in the survey area, a no-disturbance buffer would be established to avoid disturbance or destruction of the nest site until the end of the breeding season (September 30) or until after a qualified wildlife biologist determines that the young have fledged and moved out of the construction area (this date varies by species). The extent of these buffers would be determined by the Caltrans designated biologist in coordination with any applicable agencies (as determined by species) and would depend on the level of noise or construction disturbance taking place, line-of-sight between the nest and the disturbance, ambient levels of noise and other non-project disturbances, and other topographical or artificial barriers. Suitable buffer distances may vary between species; however, a minimum of 50 feet for song birds and 300 feet for raptors is typical.

Std. Spec.-3a—Conduct pre-construction surveys for burrowing owl and establish exclusion zones, if necessary

A qualified biologist would conduct two separate pre-construction surveys for burrowing owls no less than 14 days prior to and within 48 hours of, initiating ground-disturbing activities within suitable habitat. The preconstruction survey area would encompass the designated work area (including permanent and temporary impact areas) and a 500-foot buffer around this area where access is permitted. Areas inaccessible by foot would be surveyed using binoculars. To the maximum extent feasible (in other words, where the construction footprint can be modified), construction activities within 500 feet of active burrowing owl burrows would be avoided during the nesting season (February 1 to August 31).

If an active burrow is identified near a proposed work area and work cannot be conducted outside of the nesting season (February 1 to August 31), a qualified biologist would establish a no-activity zone that extends a minimum of 250 feet around the burrow. If burrowing owls are present at the site during the non-breeding season (September 1 through January 31), a qualified biologist would establish a no-activity zone that extends a minimum of 150 feet around the burrow.

If the designated no-activity zone for breeding or non-breeding burrowing owls cannot be established, a wildlife biologist experienced in burrowing owl behavior would evaluate site-specific conditions and, in coordination with California Department of Fish and Wildlife, recommend a smaller buffer (if possible) that still minimizes the potential to disturb the owls (and is deemed to still allow reproductive success during the breeding season). The site-specific buffer would consider the type and extent of the proposed activity occurring near the occupied burrow, the duration and timing of the activity, the sensitivity and habituation of the owls, and the dissimilarity of the proposed activity to background activities.

If burrowing owls are present within the direct disturbance area and cannot be avoided during the non-breeding season (generally September 1 through January 31), passive relocation techniques (for example, installing one-way doors at burrow entrances) would be used instead of trapping. Passive relocation also may be used during the breeding season (February 1 through August 30) if a qualified biologist, coordinating with California Department of Fish and Wildlife, determines through site surveillance that the burrow is not occupied by burrowing owl adults and/or young. Passive relocation would be accomplished by installing one-way doors (for example, modified dryer vents or other California Department of Fish and Wildlife approved method). The one-way doors would be left in place for a minimum of one week and would be monitored daily to ensure that the owls have left the burrow. The burrow would be excavated using hand tools, and a section of flexible plastic pipe (at least 3 inches in diameter) would be inserted into the burrow tunnel to maintain an escape route for any animals that may be inside the burrow during burrow excavation.

BIO 1—Compensate for permanent impacts to valley elderberry longhorn beetle habitat

Caltrans proposes to provide compensatory mitigation for the permanent disturbance of 0.12 acre of riparian habitat that supports elderberry shrubs within the range of valley elderberry longhorn beetle. Compensation will be accomplished by purchasing a total of 8.78 valley elderberry longhorn beetle credits at a service-approved conservation bank whose service area covers the project area, consistent with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's *2017 Framework for Assessing Impacts to the Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle*.

BIO 2 —Avoid and minimize impacts on valley elderberry longhorn beetles

The following measures are consistent with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's *2017 Framework for Assessing Impacts to the Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle* and are intended to be implemented where project construction activities occur within 165 feet of elderberry shrubs.

- **Fencing**—*Install Fencing and/or Flagging to Protect Sensitive Biological Resources*, all areas supporting elderberry shrubs to be avoided during construction activities would be fenced and/or flagged as close to construction limits as feasible.
- **Avoidance area**—Activities that may damage or kill an elderberry shrub (for example, trenching, guard rail removal, etc.) may need an avoidance area of at least 20 feet from the dripline, depending on the type of activity.
- **Worker education**—*Conduct Environmental Awareness Training for Construction Personnel*, a qualified biologist would provide training for all contractors, work crews, and any on-site personnel on the status of the valley elderberry longhorn beetle, its host plant and habitat, the need to avoid damaging the elderberry shrubs, and the possible penalties for noncompliance.
- **Timing**—As feasible, all activities that could occur within 165 feet of an elderberry shrub, would be conducted outside of the flight season of the valley elderberry longhorn beetle (March to July).
- **Trimming**—Trimming of elderberry shrubs may remove or destroy valley elderberry longhorn beetle eggs and/or larvae and may reduce the health and vigor of the elderberry shrub. To avoid and minimize adverse effects to the species when trimming, trimming would occur between November and February and would avoid the removal of any branches or stems that are equal to or more than 1 inch in diameter. Measures to address regular and/or large-scale maintenance (trimming) should be established in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- **Chemical Usage**—Herbicides would not be used within the dripline of an elderberry shrub. Insecticides would not be used within 100 feet of an elderberry shrub. If chemicals would be applied to the right-of-way during construction, they would be applied using a backpack sprayer or similar direct application method.
- **Mowing**—Mechanical weed removal within the dripline of the shrub would be limited to the season when adults are not active (August to February) and would avoid damaging the elderberry shrub.
- **Erosion Control and Re-vegetation**—Where erosion control measures would be implemented, hydroseeding would not be sprayed around elderberry shrubs. Disturbed areas around elderberry shrubs would be

revegetated with appropriate native plants or grasses, based on pre-project habitat conditions.

BIO 3—Protect water quality and prevent erosion and sedimentation in perennial stream habitat

Caltrans and/or its construction contractor would comply with all construction site best management practices developed from Caltrans' Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan and Water Pollution Control Program Preparation Manual (California Department of Transportation 2016) and specified in the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan, and any other permit conditions to minimize the introduction of construction-related contaminants and mobilization of sediment in aquatic resources within or downstream/downslope of the work area. These best management practices would address soil stabilization, sediment control, wind erosion control, vehicle tracking control, non-stormwater management, and waste management practices. The best management practices would be consistent with the best management practices and control practices required under the Clean Water Act.

The proposed project is subject to stormwater quality regulations established under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination permitting laws, described in Section 402 of the federal Clean Water Act. In California, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination program requires that any construction activity disturbing one or more acres comply with the statewide General Permit, as authorized by the State Water Board. The General Permit requires elimination or minimization of non-stormwater discharges from construction sites and development and implementation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan for the site. The primary elements of the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan include the following.

- Description of site characteristics—including runoff and streamflow characteristics and soil erosion hazard—and construction procedures.
- Guidelines for proper application of erosion and sediment control best management practices.
- Description of measures to prevent and control toxic materials spills.
- Description of construction site housekeeping practices.

In addition to these primary elements, the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan would specify that the extent of soil and vegetative disturbance would be minimized by control fencing or other means and that the extent of soil disturbed at any given time would be minimized. The Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan must be retained at the construction site. The best management practices would represent the best available technology that is economically achievable and are subject to review and approval by Caltrans. Caltrans would perform routine inspections of the construction area to verify

that the best management practices are properly implemented and maintained.

Caltrans would obtain a Clean Water Act 401 water quality certification from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board and a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement from California Department of Fish and Wildlife, which may contain additional best management practices and water quality measures to ensure the protection of water quality.

BIO 4—Compensate for loss of riparian woodland

Caltrans would compensate for construction-related effects and loss of riparian habitat at a minimum ratio of one acre of mitigation for every 1 acre of riparian habitat removed. Final compensation ratios would be based on site-specific information and determined through coordination with the appropriate agencies during the permitting process. Caltrans would implement on-site and, if necessary, off-site restoration measures and/or purchase mitigation bank credits to compensate for temporary and permanent losses of riparian habitat. On-site restoration would be used to the maximum extent practicable. If on-site or off-site restoration/enhancement is not feasible, Caltrans would purchase mitigation bank credits at a locally approved bank, if one is available.

- For on-site or off-site replacement plantings, Caltrans would employ a qualified restoration biologist to prepare a riparian restoration and monitoring plan that involves restoring or enhancing riparian habitat in the project location areas or elsewhere along the river channel. The restoration plan would include a site-specific plant and seed palette, planting locations, and maintenance requirements. The number of plantings would be adequate to ensure that the required mitigation ratio would be reached by the end of the monitoring period and that canopy cover and species composition requirements are met. Planted species composition would be based on native species that occur in and near the project locations' areas and would be included in the plan. Plantings would consist of cuttings taken from local plants or plants grown from local seed. As feasible, existing native vegetation from the affected sites should be harvested and maintained for replanting after construction.
- Caltrans would implement the restoration plan and maintain plantings for up to three years or until established (including weed removal, irrigation, and herbivory protection). Plantings would be monitored annually for three years or as required in the project permits. Project-specific performance standards and success criteria (for example, plant survival, vegetation cover) would be developed in coordination with resource agencies. If the success criteria are not met at the end of the monitoring period, the site would be evaluated to determine the cause, remedial measures would be implemented, and the monitoring period would be extended.

- If mitigation bank credit purchases are made, Caltrans would provide written evidence to the resource agencies that compensation has been established through the purchase of mitigation credits. The amount to be paid will be the fee that is in effect at the time the fee is paid. The mitigation will be approved by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and may be modified during the permitting process. The final compensation ratio of restored or created riparian habitat for each acre of riparian habitat removed will be approved by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to result in no net loss of riparian habitat.

BIO 5—Avoid and minimize potential disturbance of woody vegetation

Caltrans would avoid and minimize potential disturbance of woody vegetation in riparian and oak woodland communities by implementing the following measures:

- The need for tree removal would be reduced, to the most feasible extent, by adjustment of guardrail locations, within the preestablished permanent impact area to avoid trees and their root systems.
- The potential for long-term loss of woody vegetation would be minimized by trimming vegetation rather than removing entire trees or shrubs in areas where complete removal is not required. Trees or shrubs that need to be trimmed would be cut at least 1 foot above ground level to leave the root systems intact and allow for more rapid regeneration. Cutting would be limited to the minimum area necessary within the construction zone. To protect nesting birds, Caltrans would not allow pruning or removal of woody vegetation between February 1 and September 30 without preconstruction surveys. An arborist would be retained to monitor any necessary pruning or root cutting of retained trees, as necessary.
- The areas that undergo vegetative pruning and tree removal would be inspected immediately before construction, immediately after construction, and one year after construction to determine the amount of existing vegetative cover, cover that has been removed, and cover that re-sprouts. After one year, if these areas have not re-sprouted sufficiently to return the cover to the pre-project level, Caltrans would replant the areas with appropriate native species to reestablish the cover to the pre-project condition.

List of Technical Studies

Air Study (November 2019)

Air Quality Conformity Checklist (November 2019)

Climate Change/Greenhouse Gas Analysis (January 2020)

Section 106 Compliance - Cultural Screening Memorandum (December 2019)

Initial Site Assessment (November 2019)

Natural Environment Study (December 2019)

Noise Study (November 2019)

Paleontological Screening Memorandum (December 2019)

Section 4(f) No Effect Memorandum (December 2019)

Scenic Resource Evaluation (September 2019)

Water Quality Study (November 2019)

To obtain a copy of one or more of these technical studies/reports or the Initial Study, please send your request to the following email address: d10.public.info@dot.ca.gov.

Please indicate the project name and project identifying code (under the project name on the cover of this document) and specify the technical report or document you would like a copy of. Provide your name and email address or U.S. postal service mailing address (street address, city, state and zip code).