

Rockford Road Roundabout

On State Route 190 at Rockford Road in Tulare County

06-TUL-190-Post Miles 11.31/11.51

EA 06-1A310/Project ID 0619000232

Initial Study with Proposed Negative Declaration

Volume 1 of 2



Prepared by the
State of California Department of Transportation

June 2021



General Information About This Document

What's in this document:

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has prepared this Initial Study, which examines the potential environmental impacts of alternatives being considered for the proposed project in Tulare County in California. The document explains why the project is being proposed, the alternatives being considered for the project, the existing environment that could be affected by the project, potential impacts of each of the alternatives, and proposed avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures.

What you should do:

- Please read the document. Additional copies of the document and the related technical studies are available for review at the Caltrans District 6 Office at 1352 West Olive Avenue, Fresno, CA 93728, and the Tipton Branch Library at 301 East Woods Avenue, Tipton, CA 93272. The document can also be downloaded at the following website: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/caltrans-districts-near-me/district-6>.
- Tell us what you think. If you have any comments regarding the proposed project, please send your written comments to Caltrans by the deadline. Submit comments via U.S. mail to: Trais Norris, Senior Environmental Planner, Central Region Environmental, California Department of Transportation, 2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100, Fresno, CA 93726. Submit comments via email to: trais.norris@dot.ca.gov.
- Submit comments by the deadline: September 20, 2021.

What happens next:

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 construct all or part of the project.

Printing this document: To save paper, this document has been set up for two-sided printing (to print the front and back of a page). Blank pages occur where needed throughout the document to maintain proper layout of the chapters and appendices.

For individuals with sensory disabilities, this document can be made 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: Trais Norris, Central Region Environmental, 2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100, Fresno, CA 93726; phone number (209) 601-3521 (Voice), or use the California Relay Service 1-800-735-2929 (TTY), 1-800-735-2929 (Voice), or 711.

Construct a roundabout at the intersection of State Route 190 at Rockford Road from post mile 11.31 to post mile 11.51 in Tulare County, California

**INITIAL STUDY
with Proposed Negative Declaration**

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

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Transportation
Responsible Agency: California Transportation Commission



Jennifer H. Taylor
Office Chief, Central Region
Environmental Southern
California Department of Transportation
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06/29/2021

Date

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DRAFT
Proposed Negative Declaration

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

District-County-Route-Post Mile: 06-TUL-190-PM 11.31/11.51

EA and Project Identification Number: 06-1A310 and 0619000232

Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to construct a single-lane roundabout at the intersection of State Route 190 at Rockford Road in Tulare County, California.

Determination

This proposed Negative Declaration is included to give notice to interested agencies and the public that it is Caltrans' intent to adopt a Negative Declaration for this project. This does not mean that Caltrans' decision on the project is final. This Negative Declaration is subject to change based on comments received from interested agencies and the public. Caltrans has prepared an Initial Study for this project and, pending public review, expects to determine from this study that the proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons.

The project would have no effect on aesthetics, coastal resources, wild and scenic rivers, parks and recreational facilities, forest resources, growth, community character and cohesion, water quality and stormwater runoff, environmental justice, cultural resources, geology and soils, hazardous materials, paleontological resources, hydrology and floodplains, existing and future land use, mineral resources, noise, energy, public services, recreation, tribal cultural resources, invasive species and wildfire.

The project would have no significant effect on farmland, population and housing, utilities and service systems, biology, air quality, traffic and transportation, and greenhouse gas emissions.

Jennifer H. Taylor
Office Chief, Central Region
Environmental Southern
California Department of Transportation
CEQA Lead Agency

Date

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Chapter 1 Proposed Project

1.1 Introduction

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to construct a roundabout at the intersection of State Route 190 and Rockford Road, between post miles 11.31 and 11.51. See Figure 1-1 for the project vicinity map and Figure 1-2 for the project location map. The project lies in Tulare County, about 2 miles east of the small agricultural community of Poplar.

This safety project is funded from the State Highway Operation and Protection Program 20.XX.201.010 for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. The project would improve safety and reduce accidents at this intersection over the 20-year life of the project. The project's estimated cost is \$10,570,000. Construction is expected to begin in 2024 and end in 2025.

Existing State Route 190 is a two-lane conventional highway on level terrain, except for the 3.6-mile four-lane expressway segment in the City of Porterville. This rural highway provides access for the movement of agricultural goods and regional commuters (in Poplar, Pierpoint Springs and Springville) as well as interregional traffic from State Route 65 to State Route 99.

This project is one of several projects planned for State Route 190 within Tulare County. Others include the following:

1. The Tulare Culvert Replacement project would replace or rehabilitate culverts between post miles 34.7 to 39.4. Construction could begin in the spring of 2022.
2. The Porterville Intersection Improvement project would improve intersections between post miles 13.1 to 16.6. Construction could begin in the spring of 2023.
3. The Friant-Kern Canal Siphon project would construct a canal siphon between post miles 11.90 and 11.96. Construction could begin in the fall of 2022.
4. The Poplar Drainage Repair project would rehabilitate and correct drainage between post miles 9.1 and 9.6. Construction could begin in the spring of 2022.

1.2 Purpose and Need

1.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the project is to improve safety, ease traffic congestion and reduce the number of collisions at this intersection for the life of the project.

1.2.2 Need

The intersection of State Route 190 at Rockford Road has been experiencing traffic congestion and a high number of collisions due to recent commercial and residential development in the Porterville area.

Ten accidents were recorded at the intersection during the three-year study period between 2016 and 2019. The actual fatal-plus-injury and total accident rates for the intersection are higher than the statewide average for similar intersections with comparable traffic volumes. The fatal accident rate, however, is 0.088, lower than the statewide average for similar intersections with comparable traffic volumes.

The main collision factor for the accidents was failure to yield in clear, dusk-dawn and dry road conditions.

1.3 Project Description

The project would improve safety at the intersection of State Route 190 and Rockford Road by constructing a single-lane roundabout. The roundabout would accommodate larger trucks under the Federal Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982. The roundabout would maintain existing traffic patterns with modified driveways, additional lighting, sidewalk, and splitter islands with curb and bike ramps. The central island and splitter island would be paved with rock blankets as landscaping decoration. The existing pavement within the intersection would be replaced with hot mix asphalt Type A pavement.

Figure 1-1 Project Vicinity Map

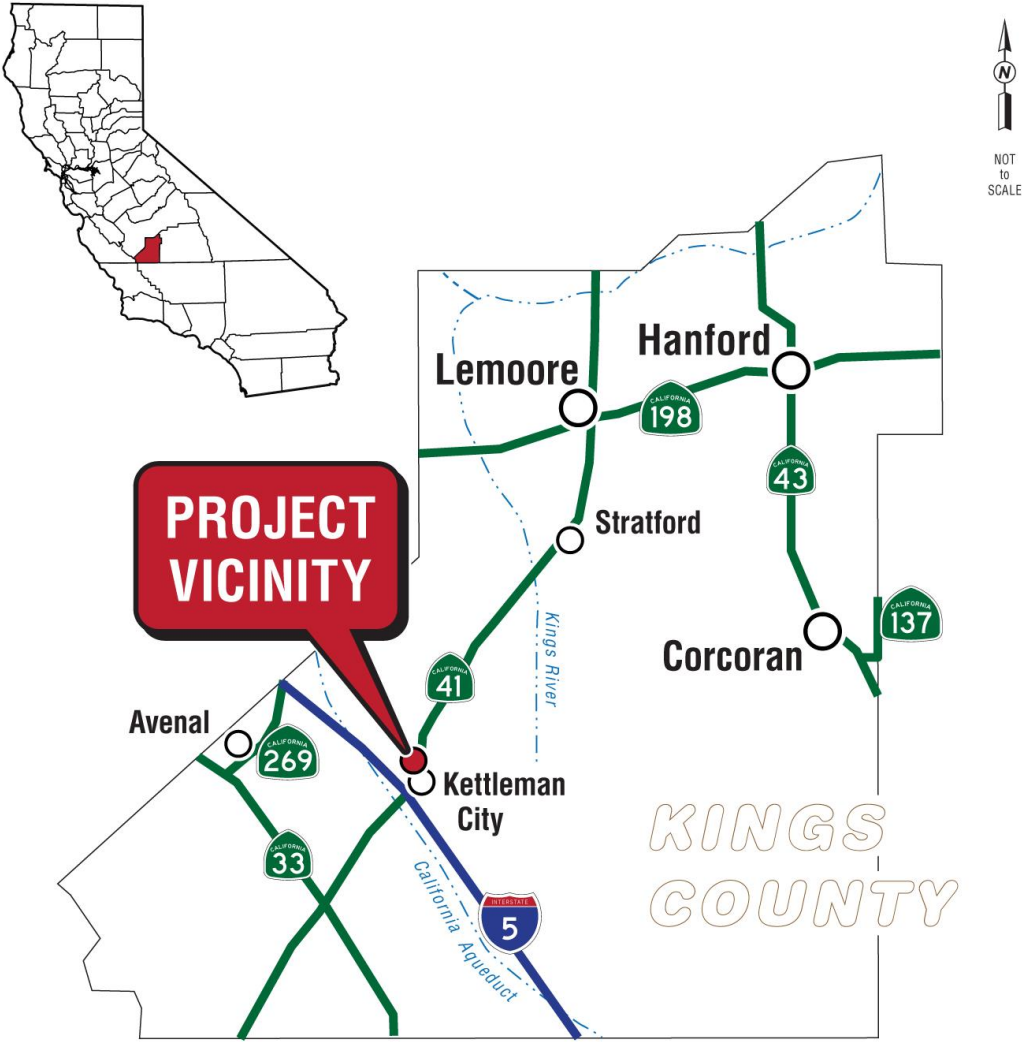
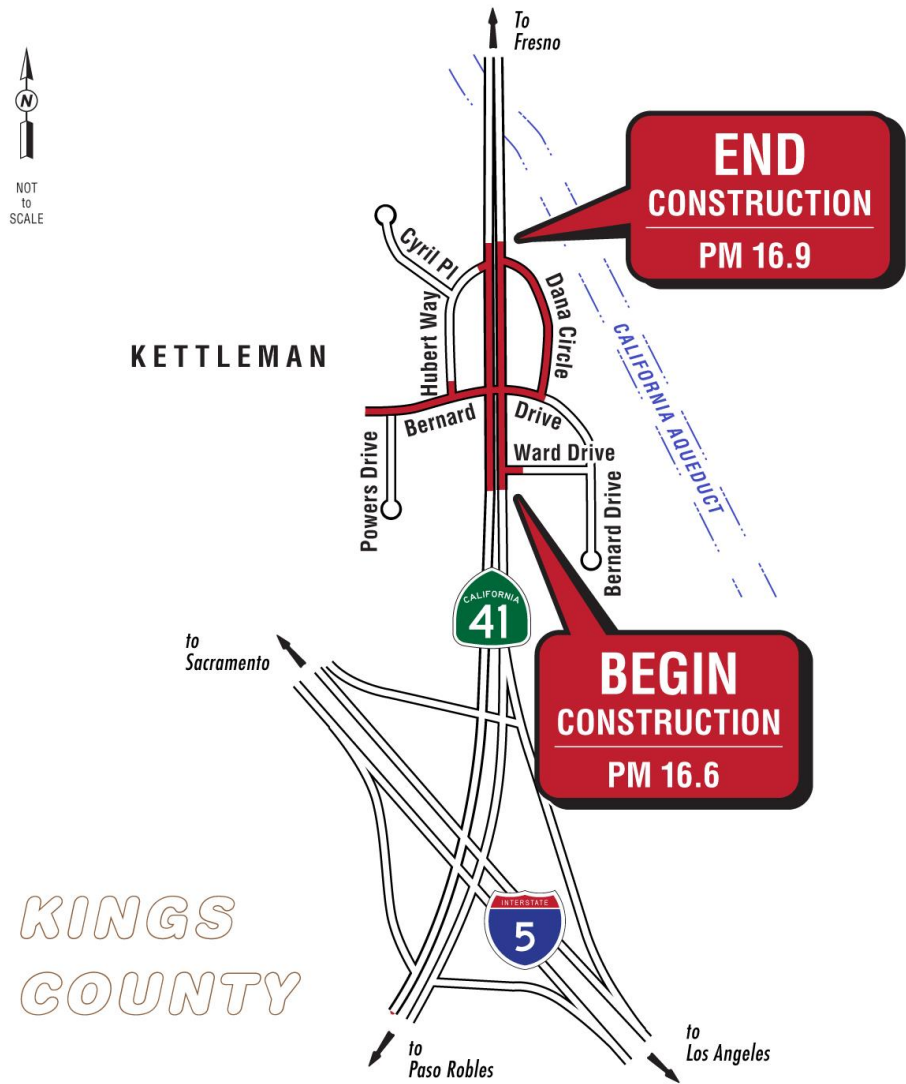


Figure 1-2 Project Location Map



1.4 Project Alternatives

Two alternatives—the Build Alternative and the No-Build Alternative—are being considered.

1.4.1 Build Alternative

This safety improvement project proposes to improve the intersection of State Route 190 at Rockford Road by constructing a roundabout at the site, thereby easing traffic congestion by introducing a traffic-calming circulation pattern. Design features may be refined or modified in a later phase due to comments received from the public and/or stakeholders during the public review process.

The project would:

- Construct a single-lane roundabout that would accommodate oversized trucks and the Surface Transportation Assistance Act standard.
- Construct a truck apron with a width of approximately 14 feet.
- Construct eight curb ramps and eight bicycle ramps compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act standards.
- Construct 250-foot-long splitter islands on the State Route 190 legs and on the Rockford Road legs, with landscaping.
- Construct ditches to convey stormwater along State Route 190 and Rockford Road.
- Construct 0.3 mile of fence.
- Add new pipe culverts crossing under the north and south sides of the State Route 190 legs.
- Add a new roundabout lighting system and install advanced warning flashing beacons at all approaches.

This project contains a number of standardized project measures that are used on most, if not all, Caltrans projects and were not developed in response to any specific environmental impact resulting from the proposed project.

1.4.2 No-Build (No-Action) Alternative

The No-Build Alternative would leave this intersection of State Route 190 as it is, without a roundabout. This alternative does not meet the purpose and need for the project to reduce the number and severity of collisions at this intersection.

1.5 Discussion of the NEPA Categorical Exclusion

This document contains information regarding compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and other state laws and regulations. Separate environmental documentation, supporting a Categorical Exclusion determination, will be in the final document prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. When needed for clarity, or as required by the California Environmental Quality Act, this document may contain references to federal laws and/or regulations (the California Environmental Quality Act, for example, requires consideration of adverse effects on species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species by the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—in other words, species protected by the Federal Endangered Species Act).

1.6 Permits and Approvals Needed

No permits, licenses, agreements, and certifications are required for project construction.

Chapter 2 CEQA Evaluation

2.1 CEQA Environmental 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 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 considered to be an integral part of the project and have been considered prior to any significance determinations documented below.

“No Impact” determinations in each section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project as well as the appropriate technical report (bound separately in Volume 2), and no further discussion is included in this document.

2.1.1 Aesthetics

Considering the information included in the Visual Impact Assessment Memo dated April 2021, the following significance determinations have been made:

Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Aesthetics
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	No Impact. No qualifying scenic resources, as defined by Section 15300.2(d) of the California Environmental Quality Act, Implementation Guidelines, would be affected by the project.

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Aesthetics
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	No Impact. Intersection improvements will add positive features to the character of the area, such as the clean lines of the roundabout geometry and the addition of rock blanket paving.
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 the site and its surroundings. A Visual Impact Assessment prepared in April 2021 determined that the project would add positive features to the character of the area, such as the clean lines of the roundabout geometry and the addition of rock blanket paving.
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 add a lighting system and install advanced warning flashing beacons at all approaches. A Visual Impact Assessment prepared in April 2021 stated the visual character of the intersection would be improved with project completion. Light and glare would not adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area.

2.1.2 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.

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Agriculture and Forest Resources
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?	Less Than Significant Impact. Additional right-of-way would be acquired from prime farmland next to the state right-of-way for the proposed roundabout. However, it is a minor right-of-way acquisition of 2.5 acres out of approximately 238 total acres of the project area or 1% of the land). The Natural Resources Conservation Service Farmland Conversion Impact Rating form was completed for the project on March 26, 2021 (see Appendix B).
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	No Impact. The project would not impact Williamson Act parcels. Partial acquisition of parcels zoned miscellaneous agricultural is required. However, the amount of right-of-way required is less than half an acre for each parcel and would not result in conflicts with existing zoning for agricultural use.
c) Conflict with existing zoning, 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. The project would not conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land because the project would upgrade an existing drainage system in the project area.
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	No Impact. There are no forests or timberlands impacted by the project.
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 project would not involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

Affected Environment

The Natural Resources Conservation Service Farmland Conversion Impact Rating form was completed for the project on March 26, 2021 (see Appendix B). According to the 2017 California Department of Conservation, Tulare County has a total of 1,250,121 acres of prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, farmland of local importance, and unique farmland. The top commodities are fruits, tree nuts, berries, cattle/calves, and milk from cows.

The proposed roundabout right-of-way acquisition area is within seven parcels and two temporary construction easements across eight assessor's parcel number properties. Of the seven parcels, four parcels (Assessor's Parcel Number 302-500-006 [former Assessor's Parcel Number 302-060-039], Assessor's Parcel Number 240-140-020 [former Assessor's Parcel Number 240-140-013], Assessor's Parcel Number 235-160-030 and Assessor's Parcel Number 240-130-030) are classified as "prime farmland" by the Department of Conservation. It is estimated that a total of 2.5 acres would be acquired for the proposed roundabout; of that, 1.76 acres from these four farmland parcels are devoted to agricultural use. Surrounding these parcels are mostly low-density rural settlements and agricultural land.

Environmental Consequences

Approximately 1.76 acres of land would be converted between these larger parcels: Assessor's Parcel Number 302-500-006 (0.6 acre), Assessor's Parcel Number 240-140-020 (0.16 acre), Assessor's Parcel Number 235-160-030 (0.72 acre) and Assessor's Parcel Number 240-130-030 (0.28 acre). These parcels sit at the intersection of Rockford Road and State Route 190. The land is not Williamson Act contract land but is designated as "prime farmland." A Natural Resources Conservation Service Farmland Conversion Impact Rating form was completed for the project on March 26, 2021 (see Appendix B). This rating form determines the relative value of farmland to be converted by using a formula that weighs farmland classification, such as how much land is in nonurban use, the size of the present farm unit compared to the average in Tulare County, the availability of onsite farm investments, storage facilities and wherever the proposed project would reduce the demand for farm support service or the viability of the farms remaining in the area. If the impact rating is 160 or greater, the project is considered to have high potential for impacts and is suitable for protection under the Farmland Protection Policy Act.

The project will acquire approximately 2.5 acres which are currently zoned for agricultural use. The conversion of farmland to transportation use cannot be avoided because farmland surrounds the project limits. According to the Farmland Conversion Impact Rating form (see Appendix B), the calculation total for the Build Alternative is 155 points. Because the impact rating for the proposed roundabout area is less than the 160-point limit, protection under the Farmland Protection Policy Act is not needed for this project. According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service findings that no alternative sites are needed, the proposed project can move forward as planned.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Land acquisition and impacts for the project would be considered minimal and would not require mitigation measures.

2.1.3 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.

Considering the information included in the Rockford Roundabout Air Quality Memorandum dated April 15, 2021, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Air Quality
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	No Impact. The project is exempt from the requirement to determine conformity per 40 Code of Federal Regulations 93.127 Table 3; intersection channelization projects are exempt from the requirement for a regional emissions analysis. The project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan for the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District.
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 is exempt from the requirement to determine conformity per 40 Code of Federal Regulations 93.127 Table 3; intersection channelization projects do not require hot-spot analysis. The project would not add travel lanes to State Route 190, and the project would not substantially increase any criteria pollutant that the area is in non-attainment for.
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	No Impact. The project is exempt from the requirement to determine conformity per 40 Code of Federal Regulations 93.127 Table 3, for intersection channelization projects. Surrounding land uses include rural settlements and agricultural lands. The project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. During construction, the contractor will be required to comply with construction mitigation methods listed in Caltrans Standards Specifications, Section 14-9.02 “Air Pollution Control” and Section 10-5 “Dust Control,” and as required by local air district pollution control requirements.

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Air Quality
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	Less Than Significant Impact. There would be some temporary air pollutant emissions during construction activities such as grading, hauling, excavation and various other work activities.

Affected Environment

An Air Quality Report for the project was completed in April 2021. The purpose of the report was to document the anticipated air quality effects of the proposed project and address both state and federal air quality standards with the intent to satisfy the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.

The project lies near the city of Porterville and community of Poplar in Tulare County within the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin. The San Joaquin Valley, almost 300 miles long, stretches from the Tehachapi Mountains in the south to the San Joaquin-Sacramento River Delta in the north. The Sierra Nevada Mountain Range forms the eastern boundary of the valley, while the lower coastal ranges form the boundary on the west. The climate within Tulare County is semi-arid Mediterranean. Winters tend to be cool, with a varying amount of rain, fog, and frost. Summers are long, dry, and at times very hot, with temperatures reaching over 100 degrees. Precipitation in the San Joaquin Valley ranges from 8 to 13 inches annually, with approximately 70 percent of the annual rainfall occurring between the months of December and April. The project area also experiences dense, seasonal fog, called “Tule fog,” during the winter months.

For particulate matter pollutants—broken down into particles of 2.5 micrometers and smaller (PM_{2.5}) and particles of 10 micrometers or smaller (PM₁₀)—the project area lies in a portion of the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin that is in nonattainment for PM_{2.5} and attainment/maintenance for PM₁₀. A conformity analysis to determine that the project was “Not a Project of Air Quality Concern” was conducted and submitted to the San Joaquin Valley Council of Governments’ Directors’ Association Interagency Consultation Group. The Interagency Consultation Partners concurred on April 5, 2021 that the project is “Not a Project of Air Quality Concern.” The Environmental Protection Agency concurred with this finding on April 12, 2021.

Environmental Consequences

Build Alternative—Construction Phase

During construction, short-term degradation of air quality is expected from the release of particulate emissions (airborne dust) generated by excavation, grading, hauling, and other activities related to construction. Emissions from

construction equipment powered by gasoline and diesel engines are also anticipated and would include carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, directly emitted PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀, and toxic air contaminants, such as diesel exhaust particulate matter. A temporary increase in traffic resulting from construction would create a localized increase in emissions from traffic.

Construction emissions were estimated for the Build Alternative. Construction emissions for the project were calculated using the Department of Transportation's Construction Emissions Tool (CALCET v1.1). Project construction is expected to generate approximately 1,790 tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) during the 100 working days (less than the 264 working days per 1 year) duration.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Caltrans Standard Specifications pertaining to dust control and dust palliative requirements are a required part of all construction contracts and should effectively reduce and control emission impacts during construction. The provisions of Caltrans Standard Specifications, Section 14-9.02 "Air Pollution Control" and Section 10-5 "Dust Control," require the contractor to comply with the air pollution control rules, ordinances, regulations and statutes that apply to work performed under the contract, including those provided in Government Code Section 11017.

In addition, the project would include a construction equipment emission reduction program to encourage or require the contractor to use cleaner (newer) diesel engines or retrofit older engines.

2.1.4 Biological Resources

Considering the information included in the Natural Environment Study (Minimal Impacts) dated April 2021, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Biological Resources
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, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or NOAA Fisheries?	Less Than Significant Impact. The project may affect the Swainson's hawk (<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>), which is state listed as threatened.

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Biological Resources
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?	No Impact. The project area does not contain vernal pools, or other sensitive natural community.
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 are no state or federally protected wetlands in the project area. The sole aquatic feature within the project area is Poplar West Pipeline at post mile 11.4. The pipeline is a non-jurisdictional irrigation feature that feeds into various agricultural fields. It has no connection to Waters of the State or U.S.
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 California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project source shows no impact or interference on native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, and no potential to impede on the use of native wildlife nursery sites in or adjacent to the project area. Therefore, there will be no Essential Fish Habitat consultation. A National Marine Fisheries Service species list was not generated because the project area is outside of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries' jurisdiction.
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	No Impact. The project does not conflict with any local policy or ordinance protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance.
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 does not conflict with the provisions of any Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan.

Affected Environment

A Natural Environment Study (Minimal Impacts) was prepared for the project to determine to what extent the project may affect threatened, endangered, candidate, or sensitive species. This section focuses on the issues covered in the Natural Environment Study (Minimal Impacts) prepared for the project in April 2021 and describes a special-status species—the Swainson’s hawk—that may occur or have the potential to occur within the project limits.

Special-status animals are considered of “special concern” based on (1) federal, state, or local laws regulating their development; (2) limited distributions; and/or (3) the habitat requirements of special-status animals occurring onsite. Suitable habitat for the Swainson’s hawk was found within the project limits.

Swainson’s Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)

The Swainson’s hawk is state listed as threatened and is protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Swainson’s hawks are broad-winged hawks; the female is slightly larger than the male, but both have similar feathers. During summer, the Swainson’s hawk is found in California’s Central Valley. In winter, the hawk is in South America.

Swainson’s hawks hunt for food in grasslands, agricultural fields and livestock pastures. Their main food sources are mice, gophers, ground squirrels, rabbits, large insects, reptiles, amphibians, and small birds. Swainson’s hawks generally rest in trees but they will rest on the ground if no trees are present.

This hawk breeds in open stands of juniper-sage flats, riparian areas and oak savannahs in the Central Valley. Breeding areas are normally close to food sources. The Swainson’s hawk can also nest in landscape trees near human structures and sometimes in orchards. Breeding occurs from late March to late August, with peak activity in late May or July. Swainson’s hawks produce two to four eggs in the nest; eggs take 25 to 28 days to hatch.

Habitat types in the project area include scattered trees, large shrubs as well as agricultural areas. Two site visits were made on June 5, 2020, and August 13, 2020; no nests or Swainson’s hawks were seen. Also, a California Natural Diversity Database query found no occurrences of Swainson’s hawks in or around the project area. However, open fields that could provide a food source for Swainson’s hawks are present and so are suitable nesting trees.

Environmental Consequences

Swainson’s Hawk

The project would result in permanent impacts to about 2.5 acres of open fields or agricultural areas that may provide foraging habitat for the Swainson’s hawk. Tree removal is expected for the project, and the project area contains suitable nesting trees for the Swainson’s hawk. However, open fields adjacent to

State Route 190 contain very low-quality foraging habitat and noise disturbance from the nearby active highway may cause Swainson's hawk to avoid the project area. The large shrubs would be surveyed for nesting raptors during the appropriate season prior to construction, and any nests found would be avoided per the minimization efforts described below.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Swainson's Hawk

While the likelihood that Swainson's hawks would be found in the project area is low, if Swainson's hawks were to nest within 600 feet of the project area, a no-work buffer would be implemented to avoid and minimize the potential for impacts to the species. If nests are found farther than 600 feet from the project area, any noise or disturbance from construction would have no greater impact to a Swainson's hawk than the current disturbances from vehicle traffic at the site of proposed work.

Caltrans proposes the following avoidance and minimization efforts to ensure the project would not result in measurable impacts to this species:

- Preconstruction surveys will be completed according to "Recommended Timing and Methodology For Swainson's Hawk Nesting Surveys in California's Central Valley" (May 31, 2001) during nesting season (February 1 to September 30) the year prior to groundbreaking activities to ensure no nesting Swainson's hawks will be affected if construction is to occur during the nesting season.
- A Worker Environmental Awareness Training (WEAT) will be administered by a qualified biologist to any personnel working onsite, covering the biology and life history of the Swainson's hawk and the penalties for take of the species if discovered.
- If nesting Swainson's hawks are observed onsite, then the nest site will be designated an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA), with a buffer zone of 600 feet until it has been determined that the young have fledged out of the nest.
- A biologist will be present to monitor the active nest during construction activities.
- A special provision for migratory birds will be included to ensure that no potential nesting migratory birds are affected during construction activities.
- Removal of any trees within the project area should be done outside of the nesting season; however, if a tree within the project area needs to be removed during the nesting season, a qualified biologist will inspect the tree prior to removal to ensure that no nests are present.

2.1.5 Cultural Resources

Considering the information included in the Archaeological Survey Report dated February 2021, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Cultural Resources
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	No Impact. Background research and identification efforts revealed two historic-era resources recorded outside of the project area, but no archaeological resources in the project area that would be affected by the project. A survey for archaeological resources was completed in February 2021.
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	No Impact. No archaeological resources are present in the project area, and research efforts did not find any recorded archaeological resources in the area that would be affected by the project.
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	No Impact. The project would not disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries. It is Caltrans' policy to avoid cultural resources whenever possible. If buried cultural material is encountered during construction, it is Caltrans' policy that work stop in that area until a qualified archaeologist can evaluate the nature and significance of the find. If human remains are discovered, State Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 states that further disturbances and activities must stop in any area or nearby area suspected to overlie remains, and the local coroner must be contacted. Per California Public Resources Section 5097.98, if the remains are thought to be Native American, the coroner would notify the California Native American Heritage Commission, which would then notify the most likely descendent.

2.1.6 Energy

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Energy
a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during project construction or operation?	No Impact. The project would not add travel lanes on State Route 190 that would increase roadway capacity or build structures that would require substantial direct or indirect energy use. The project would result in direct energy use during construction for onsite construction equipment. The project would not introduce any new activities that would significantly impact or increase energy use.
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	No Impact. The project would result in temporary energy use during construction for the operation of onsite equipment. The project would not conflict with or obstruct any state or local plans for renewable energy or energy efficiency.

2.1.7 Geology and Soils

Considering the information included in the Paleontological Identification Report dated June 2020 and the California Geological Survey, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils
<p>a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:</p> <p>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.</p>	No Impact. The project would not expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving rupture of a known earthquake fault. The project is not in a known earthquake fault area. (California Geological Survey, Interactive Map)

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	No Impact. Strong seismic ground shaking is not anticipated because the project is not in a known earthquake fault area. (U.S. Geological Survey U.S. Quaternary Faults interactive map)
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	No Impact. The project is in an area with low potential for seismically related ground failure, including liquefaction, because the project area does not contain soil that is prone to liquefaction or seismic-related ground failure.
iv) Landslides?	No Impact. The project area would not be subject to landslides because of the generally flat topography and because the project would not involve large cuts and fills or steep excavation.
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	No Impact. Construction of the project would not result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil because the project will include appropriate Best Management Practices to prevent soil erosion or loss of topsoil.
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 onsite or offsite landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?	No Impact. Construction of the project, which entails mostly operational improvements on an existing facility, would not cause the area to become unstable, or cause landslides, lateral spreading, or collapse, or cause subsidence. The soil in the project area is not subject to liquefaction.
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?	No Impact. The project would lie on artificial fill, well-drained clays, loam, and bedrock containing weathered sandstone and feldspar. The project is not located on a geologic unit that is unstable, nor is it located on an expansive soil.
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	No Impact. The project would not involve the installation of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems; therefore, there would be no impact.

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	<p>No Impact. The project area is west of Porterville within the Great Valley of California geomorphic province. Sediments underlying the project area consist of alluvial fan deposits attributed to the late Pleistocene age Modesto Formation. A high potential paleontological resource underlies the project area. However, the proposed excavations would be limited to shallow soils. There would be no impacts to sensitive paleontological resources or unique geologic features within the project area.</p>

2.1.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Considering the information included in the Climate Change Report and Air Quality Memorandum dated April 2021, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Greenhouse Gas Emissions
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	<p>Less Than Significant Impact. The project would not generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment. Greenhouse gas emissions impacts of operational improvements projects such as this are considered less than significant under the California Environmental Quality Act because there would be no increase in operational emissions. While some greenhouse gas emissions during the construction period would be unavoidable, with implementation of standard measures or Best Management Practices designed to reduce or eliminate emissions as part of the project, the impact would be less than significant.</p>

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Greenhouse Gas Emissions
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	Less Than Significant Impact. The project would not conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases.

Affected Environment

The project lies at the intersection of State Route 190 and Rockford Road, west of the City of Porterville in Tulare County. State Route 190 is a rural highway that provides access for the movement of agricultural goods and regional commuters (from Poplar, Pierpoint Springs and Springville) as well as interregional traffic from State Route 65 to State Route 99. The project area is in flat terrain, in a rural area with mostly agricultural and small commercial activities. Land uses designated for the area are rural residential, with a limited commercial zone.

Environmental Consequences

Construction greenhouse gas emissions would result from material processing, onsite construction equipment, and traffic delays due to construction. These emissions would be produced at different levels throughout the construction phase; their frequency and occurrence can be reduced through innovations in plans and specifications and by implementing better traffic management during construction phases.

In addition, with innovations such as longer pavement life, improved traffic management plans, and changes in materials, the greenhouse gas emissions produced during construction can be offset to some degree by longer intervals between maintenance and rehabilitation activities.

Per Caltrans protocol, carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions generated from construction equipment (which are used to gauge impacts to climate change) were estimated using the Caltrans Construction Emissions Tool (CALCET). The estimated carbon dioxide construction emissions are 1,790 U.S. tons over a 100-day work period.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

While the project would result in greenhouse gas emissions during construction, it is anticipated that the project would not result in any increase in operational greenhouse gas emissions. The project does not conflict with any applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases. With the implementation of construction greenhouse gas reduction measures, the impacts would be less than significant.

Caltrans Specification 14.9.02, Air Pollution Control, requires contractors to comply with all air pollution control rules, regulations, ordinances, and statutes. Measures that reduce construction vehicle emissions also help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The following greenhouse gas reduction measures will be implemented for the project:

Project-Level Measures to be Implemented to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions Related to Construction Activities

- Schedule truck trips outside of peak morning and evening commute hours.
- Reduce construction waste. For example, re-use or recycle construction and demolition waste (reduces consumption of raw materials, reducing landfill waste, and encourages cost savings).
- Reduce construction water consumption of potable water.
- Maximize improved fuel efficiency from construction equipment, such as 1) maintain equipment in proper working condition; 2) use right-size equipment for the job; 3) use equipment with new technologies.
- Supplement existing construction environmental training with information regarding methods to reduce greenhouse gas emissions related to construction.
- Use long-life pavement to minimize life-cycle costs by designing long-lasting pavement structures.
- Detour traffic using nearby state route to avoid lane closure during construction.

Project-Level Measures to be Implemented to Reduce Operational Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- Incorporate Complete Streets components.
- Install solar to supply power to highway facility components.
- Design and install long-life pavement structures to minimize life-cycle costs.
- Use local infiltration to reduce energy costs related to conveying and treating storm water through municipal systems.
- Use native and drought-tolerant plants in roundabout and splitter island landscaping to reduce need for irrigation.

- Promote and encourage use of solar-powered equipment when feasible. Partially, solar can be used for roundabout warning beacons.

2.1.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Considering the information included in the Initial Site Assessment dated August 2020, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	<p>No Impact. In the project area, aerially deposited lead exists along the unpaved shoulders and medians of roadways due to emissions from vehicles powered by leaded gasoline. However, excess soils requiring offsite disposal/relinquishment are not anticipated and, as a result, a project-specific aerially deposited lead study would not be required. Standard Special Provision 7-1.02K (6)(j)(iii) is required if there is ground disturbance of unregulated earth material containing lead. Standard Special Provision 14-11.14 is required if treated wood waste will be generated during the project. Standard Special Provision 14-11.12 is required for proper management of hazardous waste residue (if yellow striping will be removed separately). Residue from removal of yellow thermoplastic pavement marking and/or yellow painted traffic stripe may contain lead chromate. Residue produced from the separate removal of any yellow thermoplastic pavement marking and/or yellow painted traffic stripe may contain heavy metals in concentrations that exceed thresholds established by the Health and Safety Code and 22 California Code of Regulations. Standard Special Provisions 36-4 and/or 84-9.03B would be required for work involving residue from grinding and cold-planing that contains lead from paint and thermoplastic and/or white, black, or new yellow paint/striping/ markings that are removed separately.</p>

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials
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. With implementation of applicable standard special provisions and/or non-standard special provisions addressing proper handling and disposal of aerially deposited lead, asbestos-containing materials, lead-based paint, and treated wood waste, the project would not cause an impact to the public. Also, with these provisions in place, the project would not create a hazard or hazardous waste impact to the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment.
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. There is no school within one-quarter mile of the proposed project. A public school (Rockford Road Elementary School) sits three-quarters of a mile north of the project area. The project would not involve the transport or use of hazardous materials, substances or waste. The contractor will be required to comply with Caltrans standard specifications as well as the Regional Air Quality Board regulations to limit the amount of hazardous emissions emitted during construction. Therefore, there would be no impacts related to the emission or handling of hazardous materials near a school.
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 is not on a site that is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5.
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 would not result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area because there is no airport within 2 miles of the project. The closest public airport is the Porterville Municipal Airport, approximately 4.8 miles from the project area.
f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	No Impact. The project would not impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials
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 is not in a high fire hazard severity zone in the Local Responsibility Areas, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection online map. There is the potential that construction activities could create an unintended fire. However, the project would use adequate precautions to prevent fire incidents during construction as part of the code of safe practices.

2.1.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

Considering the information included in the Water Compliance Memorandum dated January 2021, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hydrology and Water Quality
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?	No Impact. With the implementation of Best Management Practices and standard specifications, the project would not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or degrade water quality. Adherence to construction provisions and precautions described in the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit would be upheld.
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. Construction or operation of the project would not impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin because the project would not use groundwater or interfere with groundwater recharge.

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hydrology and Water Quality
<p>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:</p> <p>(i) result in substantial erosion or siltation onsite or offsite;</p>	<p>No Impact. Soils within the study area are composed of very well-drained alluvium with slow subsoil permeability and low potential for erosion. This soil tends to be evident in gently sloping environments. (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service)</p> <p>Construction of the project would not result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil because the project would include appropriate Best Management Practices to prevent soil erosion or loss of topsoil.</p>
<p>(ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding onsite or offsite;</p>	<p>No Impact. The project would moderately increase the impervious surface area, causing additional volume and velocity of flow to the side of the roadway. However, the project would reduce the amount of surface runoff by constructing ditches along State Route 190 and Rockford Road to infiltrate prior to discharge to the new pipe culverts crossing under the north and south sides of the State Route 190 legs.</p>
<p>(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?</p>	<p>No Impact. The project would not 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. The project would construct ditches along State Route 190 and Rockford Road as well as add new pipe culverts crossing under the north and south sides of the State Route 190 legs to facilitate any excess runoff water.</p>
<p>(iv) impede or redirect flood flows?</p>	<p>No Impact. The project would not alter the course of any channel or alter drainage patterns within the project area.</p>
<p>d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?</p>	<p>No Impact. Because the project area is flat and ruderal and surrounded entirely by agriculture with well-drained soils, it would not be possible for construction of the project to cause inundation of an area by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow.</p>

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hydrology and Water Quality
e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	No Impact. The project would not conflict with or obstruct the implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan. Water quality during construction would be protected by the provisions described in the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit.

2.1.11 Land Use and Planning

Considering the information included in the Transportation Concept Report for State Route 190 dated October 2015, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Land Use and Planning
a) Physically divide an established community?	No Impact. This is a safety and traffic operation project that would make improvements at the existing intersection of State Route 190 and Rockford Road. The project would not physically divide an established community.
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. The project would not 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.

2.1.12 Mineral Resources

Considering the information included in the 2030 Update of the Tulare County General Plan dated August 2012, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Mineral Resources
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. The project would not 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. The project is not in land that is classified as a Mineral Resource Zone according to the State Geologist. (California Department of Conservation Mineral Land Classification Interactive Map, January 2020)
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 would not 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. The project is not within a locally important mineral resource recovery site. (Mineral Resources-Surface Mining, Tulare County General Plan Update 2030)

2.1.13 Noise

Considering the information included in the Traffic Noise Assessment dated March 2021, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project result in:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Noise
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 is not expected to generate noise levels in excess of noise standards. Temporary noise impacts during construction in the rural setting would be minimized by Caltrans Standard Specification Section 14-8.02 Noise Control.
b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	No Impact. The project would not generate excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels. As directed by Caltrans, the contractor would implement the appropriate additional noise mitigation measures, such as all equipment will have sound-control devices that are no less effective than those provided on the original equipment.

Question—Would the project result in:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Noise
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 within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan; therefore, the project would not expose people residing or working in the project areas to excessive noise levels.

2.1.14 Population and Housing

Considering the information included in the Community of Poplar-Cotton Center General Plan portion of the Tulare County General Plan Update 2030, and the Caltrans Project Initiation Report dated January 2020, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Population and Housing
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. The project would not induce substantial unplanned population growth in the area, either directly or indirectly, because the project would not add capacity or extend roads or other infrastructure.
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	No Impact. The project would not displace existing residents or housing. It would acquire partial land acquisitions and some temporary construction easements, but the total acquisitions would be minor.

Affected Environment

A Right-of-Way Data Sheet was completed for the project in October 2020. For State Route 190 and Rockford Road near Porterville in Tulare County, most of the land within the project limits sits in areas of mostly agricultural land use with some residences.

Environmental Consequences

Within the project area, the project would need additional right-of-way to construct a single-lane roundabout. The project would require seven partial acquisitions and two temporary construction easements. In that group, one parcel (Assessor's Parcel Number 240-140-013) has both a right-of-way acquisition and a temporary construction easement required.

For the seven partial acquisitions, approximately 0.06 acre is needed from Assessor's Parcel Number 302-060-039, 0.05 acre from Assessor's Parcel Number 302-070-039, 0.16 acre from Assessor's Parcel Number 302-070-014, 0.03 acre from Assessor's Parcel Number 240-140-013, and approximately 0.21 acre from Assessor's Parcel Number 236-160-030. For the two temporary construction easements, 0.04 acre is needed from Assessor's Parcel Number 236-160-019 and 0.13 acre from Assessor's Parcel Number 240-0130-030. The utility easement acquisitions total 1.65 acres. The total right-of-way acquisition (right-of-way, construction easement and utility easement) for the proposed roundabout is 2.5 acres. Land use for these acquired parcels are designated miscellaneous agricultural.

Caltrans right-of-way agents would work directly with property owners per the requirements of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are proposed.

2.1.15 Public Services

Considering the information included in the Poplar-Cotton Center Community Plan 2018 Update, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Public Services
<p>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:</p> <p>Fire protection?</p>	<p>No Impact. Prior to construction, the Caltrans resident engineer and the contractor would work together for any necessary lane closures and use proper traffic control devices throughout the duration of the project per Caltrans Standard Specifications. Approval of a Traffic Management Plan would also provide adequate traffic access for all businesses and residences. The project would not substantially impact public response services such as fire protection within the project area because there would be a temporary detour accessible via Avenue 152.</p>
<p>Police protection?</p>	<p>No Impact. All traffic and public services are advised to take the Avenue 152 detour around construction.</p>
<p>Schools?</p>	<p>No Impact. All traffic and public services are advised to take Avenue 152 as a detour around construction. No schools sit within the project area.</p>

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Public Services
Parks?	No Impact. All traffic and public services are advised to take Avenue 152 as a detour around construction. No parks sit within the project area.
Other public facilities?	No Impact. All traffic and public services are advised to take Avenue 152 as a detour around construction. No public facilities are within the project area.

2.1.16 Recreation

Considering the information included in the Poplar-Cotton Center Community Plan 2018 Update, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	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 purpose of the project is to improve the flow of traffic in the project area. The project would not 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 park or recreational facility would be impacted because of the project.
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. The project does not include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

2.1.17 Transportation

Considering the information included in the Poplar-Cotton Center Community Plan 2018 Update and the Caltrans Project Initiation Report dated January 2020, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Transportation
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 any applicable plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities. Rather, the project would enhance safe operation of the highway system for motorists, bicyclists, and emergency responders.
b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	No Impact. The project would not conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b) because it is an operational improvement project, so it will not have an impact on vehicle miles traveled.
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 design addresses existing operational deficiencies in the project area. The proposed roundabout would accommodate oversized trucks and vehicles, including farm equipment.
d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	No Impact. The project would have no long-term impacts to access. All traffic would use Avenue 152 as a detour, and emergency access would always be accommodated.

2.1.18 Tribal Cultural Resources

Considering the information included in the Archaeological Survey Report dated February 2021, the following significance determinations have been made:

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:

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Tribal Cultural Resources
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. No resources in the project area are 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).
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 Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.	No Impact. Caltrans consulted the California Native American Heritage Commission to identify tribes that are present in geographic areas in and near the project area. Letters were then sent to tribal representatives in June-July 2020; a second tribal letter was sent in October 2020. Letters were sent to determine if any cultural properties were known to exist within or next to the project areas. No responses have been received to date. Prior field reviews and pedestrian surveys yielded no archaeological resources within the project locations.

2.1.19 Utilities and Service Systems

Considering the information included in the Project Initiation Report dated January 2020, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Utilities and Service Systems
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 would not result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities.
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 project would not impact water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development.

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Utilities and Service Systems
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 would not result in the discharge of wastewater or require any additional capacity of wastewater treatment.
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. The project would not generate large amounts of solid waste. The construction contractor would be responsible for controlling and disposing of solid waste in accordance with federal, state and local statutes and regulations.
e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	No Impact. The project would not generate large amounts of solid waste. The construction contractor would be responsible for controlling and disposing of solid waste in accordance with federal, state and local statutes and regulations.

2.1.20 Wildfire

Considering the information included in the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection online Fire Hazard Severity Zones Maps dated November 2008, the following significance determinations have been made:

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

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Wildfire
a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	No Impact. This project is not within a very high fire hazard severity zone.
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. This project is not within a very high fire hazard severity zone.

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Wildfire
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. This project is not within a very high fire hazard severity zone.
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. The project is not within a very high fire hazard severity zone. The scope of work for the project would not expose people or structures to downslope or downstream flooding or landslides from runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes. There is the potential that construction activities could create an unintended fire. However, the contractor would use adequate precautions and procedures as outlined in the contract's standard specifications to prevent and extinguish fire incidents during construction.

2.1.21 Mandatory Findings of Significance

Question:	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. The project does not have the potential to 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 major periods of California history or prehistory. (Natural Environment Study, Minimal Impacts, April 2021 and Caltrans Second Supplemental Historic Property Survey Report, February 2021)

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Mandatory Findings of Significance
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. The project would not have a negative effect on current projects nearby or future projects; rather, it would provide additional operational improvements at the State Route 190 and Rockford Road intersection.
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 any environmental impacts that would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings. The project areas are mostly rural with some light commercial and residential uses.

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
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www.dot.ca.gov



Making Conservation
a California Way of Life.

August 2020

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."*

Caltrans will make every effort to ensure nondiscrimination in all of its services, programs and activities, whether they are federally funded or not, and that services and benefits are fairly distributed to all people, regardless of race, color, or national origin. In addition, Caltrans will facilitate meaningful participation in the transportation planning process in a nondiscriminatory manner.

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/civil-rights/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 Civil Rights, at 1823 14th Street, MS-79, Sacramento, CA 95811; (916) 324-8379 (TTY 711); or at [<Title.VI@dot.ca.gov>](mailto:Title.VI@dot.ca.gov).

Original signed by
Toks Omishakin
Director

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

Appendix B Farmland Conversion Impact

U.S. Department of Agriculture						
FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING						
PART I (To be completed by Federal Agency)			Date Of Land Evaluation Request: 3/26/2021			
Name of Project: Rockford Roundabout			Federal Agency Involved: FHWA			
Proposed Land Use: Transportation			County and State: Tulare, California			
PART II (To be completed by NRCS)			Date Request Received By NRCS: 4/1/2021		Person Completing Form: Luis Alvarez	
Does the site contain Prime, Unique, Statewide or Local Important Farmland? (If no, the FPPA does not apply - do not complete additional parts of this form)			YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	Acres Irrigated: 568,184	Average Farm Size: 299 acres
Major Crop(s): Alfalfa-Hay, Cotton, Orchards	Farmable Land In Govt. Jurisdiction Acres: 851,527% 27.4		Amount of Farmland As Defined in FPPA Acres: 971,73% 31.3			
Name of Land Evaluation System Used: CA Revised Storie Index	Name of State or Local Site Assessment System: None		Date Land Evaluation Returned by NRCS: 4/8/2021			
PART III (To be completed by Federal Agency)			Alternative Site Rating			
			Site A	Site B	Site C	Site D
A. Total Acres To Be Converted Directly			2.5			
B. Total Acres To Be Converted Indirectly			0			
C. Total Acres In Site			2.5			
PART IV (To be completed by NRCS) Land Evaluation Information						
A. Total Acres Prime And Unique Farmland			2.5			
B. Total Acres Statewide Important or Local Important Farmland			0			
C. Percentage Of Farmland in County Or Local Govt. Unit To Be Converted			0.0003			
D. Percentage Of Farmland in Govt. Jurisdiction With Same Or Higher Relative Value			4.71			
PART V (To be completed by NRCS) Land Evaluation Criterion Relative Value of Farmland To Be Converted (Scale of 0 to 100 Points)			90			
PART VI (To be completed by Federal Agency) Site Assessment Criteria (Criteria are explained in 7 CFR 658.5 b. For Corridor project use form NRCS-CPA-106)			Maximum Points	Site A	Site B	Site C
1. Area In Non-urban Use			(15)	10		
2. Perimeter In Non-urban Use			(10)	3		
3. Percent Of Site Being Farmed			(20)	12		
4. Protection Provided By State and Local Government			(20)	20		
5. Distance From Urban Built-up Area			(15)	4		
6. Distance To Urban Support Services			(15)	4		
7. Size Of Present Farm Unit Compared To Average			(10)	2		
8. Creation Of Non-farmable Farmland			(10)	2		
9. Availability Of Farm Support Services			(5)	3		
10. On-Farm Investments			(20)	5		
11. Effects Of Conversion On Farm Support Services			(10)	0		
12. Compatibility With Existing Agricultural Use			(10)	0		
TOTAL SITE ASSESSMENT POINTS			160	65	0	0
PART VII (To be completed by Federal Agency)						
Relative Value Of Farmland (From Part V)			100	90	0	0
Total Site Assessment (From Part VI above or local site assessment)			160	65	0	0
TOTAL POINTS (Total of above 2 lines)			260	155	0	0
Site Selected: Build Alternative			Date Of Selection: 3/26/2021		Was A Local Site Assessment Used? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Reason For Selection: Build Alternative (Site A) is being selected because it meets the project purpose and need. Official approval of Build Alternative will occur upon the final environmental document in late 2021 or early 2022.						
Name of Federal agency representative completing this form: Phong Duong						Date: 3/26/2021

(See Instructions on reverse side)

Form AD-1006 (03-02)

List of Technical Studies Bound Separately (Volume 2)

Air Quality Report
Noise Study Report
Water Quality Report
Natural Environment Study-Minimal Impacts
Floodplain Evaluation
Archaeological Survey Report
Hazardous Waste Reports
• Initial Site Assessment
Visual Impact Assessment
Paleontological Identification Report
Climate Change

To obtain a copy of one or more of these technical studies/reports or the Initial Study, please send your request to:

Trais Norris, Senior Environmental Planner
Central Region Environmental
California Department of Transportation
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726

Or send your request via email to: trais.norris@dot.ca.gov
Or call Trais Norris at: (209) 601-3521

Please provide the following information in your request:

Rockford Road Roundabout
On State Route 190 at Rockford Road
06-TUL-190-PM 11.31/11.51
EA: 06-1A310/Project ID: 0619000232