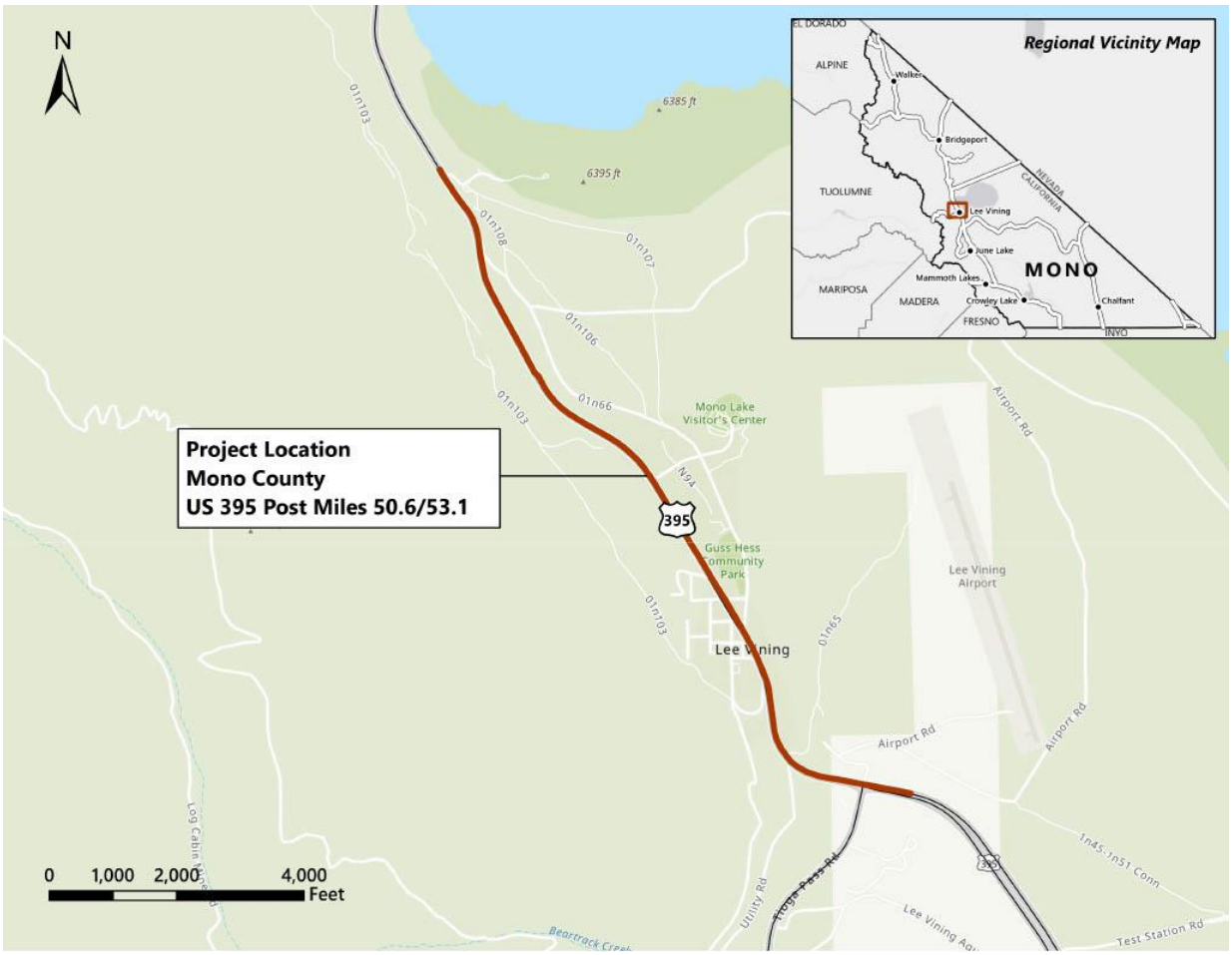
Lee Vining Rehab

Mono County, California
District 9 – MNO – 395 (postmile 50.60/53.10)
EA/Project ID: 09-37430/0918000015
State Clearinghouse Number: 2022020127

Initial Study with Negative Declaration

Volume 1 of 2



Prepared by the
State of California, Department of Transportation

April 2022

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 Mono 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.

The following appendix has been added to the document since the draft environmental document was circulated for public review and comment:

• **Appendix B** Comment Letters and Responses

Document prepared by: Ryan Spaulding, Associate Environmental Planner

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: Ryan Spaulding, Associate Environmental Planner, California Department of Transportation, 500 South Main Street, Bishop, California 93514; 760-937-1556 (Voice), or use the California Relay Service 1-800-735-2922 (Voice to TTY), 1-800-855-3000 (Spanish TTY to Voice and Voice to TTY), or 711.

State Clearinghouse Number: 2022020127
09-MNO-395-PM 50.60/53.10
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The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to rehabilitate pavement, replace sidewalks and guardrail, add or replace existing drainage facilities, and perform other work on U.S. Route 395, from postmiles 50.60 to 53.10 near the community of Lee Vining in Mono County, CA.

INITIAL STUDY
with Negative Declaration

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

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Transportation

Responsible Agencies: California Transportation Commission, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board

Kirsten Helton
Deputy District Director, Planning and Environmental
California Department of Transportation
CEQA Lead Agency

3/29/2022
Date

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Negative Declaration

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

State Clearinghouse Number: 2022020127
District-County-Route-Post Mile: 09-MNO-395-50.60/53.10
EA/Project Identification: 09-37430 / 0918000015

Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to rehabilitate pavement, replace sidewalks and guardrail, add or replace existing drainage facilities, and perform other work on U.S. Route 395, from postmiles 50.60 to 53.10 near the community of Lee Vining in Mono County, CA.

Determination

An Initial Study has been prepared by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), District 9.

On the basis of this study, it is determined that the proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

- The proposed project would have no impacts to Agriculture, Air Quality, Cultural Resources, Energy, Geology and Soils, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation, Tribal Cultural Resources, Utilities and Service Systems, and Wildfire.
- In addition, the proposed project would have less than significant impacts to Aesthetics, Biological Resources, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hydrology and Water Quality, and Noise.

Kirsten Helton
Deputy District Director, Planning and Environmental
District 9
California Department of Transportation

3/29/2022
Date

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Chapter 1 Proposed Project

1.1 Introduction

The Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to rehabilitate the entire existing pavement area and replace, repair, or construct new facilities including drainage, sidewalks, curb ramps, driveways, street lighting, landscaping, a retaining wall, and guardrail from postmiles 50.6 to 53.1. Shoulder backing (three feet in width) will be placed where there is no sidewalk adjacent to U.S. Route 395. In addition, conceptual cross-section design options have been prepared for postmiles 51.2 to 51.7 (within the community of Lee Vining). Permanent stormwater treatment facilities will be constructed outside of existing Caltrans right of way on the east side of Lee Vining.

In 2018, Caltrans District 9 Planning staff and hired consultants conducted public outreach efforts with members of the public including Lee Vining residents and business owners. Those efforts are summarized in a document titled “Lee Vining US 395 Rehab Project Public Engagement Summary” (prepared by MIG, Inc; August 2018). Public input was also recorded and summarized in the document, and the findings helped inform the Project Development Team during the Project Initiation Document phase of the project. The Public Engagement Summary, which is included in Volume Two of this Initial Study, will serve as a guide for informing the project development team’s decisions regarding project cost and scope as the project advances to the design and construction phases.

1.2 Purpose and Need

The project “purpose” is a set of objectives the project intends to meet. The project “need” is the transportation deficiency that the project was initiated to address.

1.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the project is to: Restore the facility to a state of good repair to reduce maintenance and bring fewer disruptions to the public over the life cycle of the pavement; bring pedestrian facilities and crossings up to current standards required by the Americans with Disabilities Act; address and replace drainage systems; and, provide an efficient transportation system for interregional traffic that also addresses the local needs of the Lee Vining Community.

1.2.2 Need

The roadway has reached the end of its life cycle as it exhibits major pavement distress. The local community desires complete streets facilities to accommodate multimodal transportation use. Existing Americans with Disabilities Act facilities need to be upgraded to current standards. Additionally, current drainage facilities need to be upgraded and expanded to accommodate improvements.

1.3 Project Description

The project includes reconstruction/rehabilitation of the entire existing pavement area and replacement, repair or construction of new facilities including drainage, sidewalks, curb ramps, driveways, street lighting, landscaping, retaining wall and guardrail (from postmiles 50.60 to 53.10). Permanent stormwater treatment facilities will be constructed outside of existing Caltrans right of way within Lee Vining, including a drainage ditch north of Lee Vining High School and a stormwater detention basin east of the shell gas station. The detention basin will require a minor amount excavation (up to one and a half feet), grading and establishing berms to capture stormwater flows and the drainage ditch will require excavation to approximately five feet deep. An additional drainage design option is being considered which would construct an approximately twenty-foot-wide stormwater treatment facility inside Caltrans right of way in front of the Caltrans highway maintenance station, Mono County highway maintenance station, and Lee Vining High School parcels.

There are two build alternatives and one no-build alternative that have been considered. Alternatives 3 and 4 from the Project Initiation Report have been considered but rejected from future consideration.

Caltrans includes standard specifications for the purposes of reducing impacts to the environment on every project constructed. These specifications include dust control, provisions for the handling of nesting birds, policies on the handling of hazardous materials and construction noise levels, et cetera. These standard specifications are incorporated as project features and are included as part of the project description. The significance of impacts under CEQA resulting from the project are considered after implementation of these measures.

Figure 1-1 Project Location and Vicinity Map

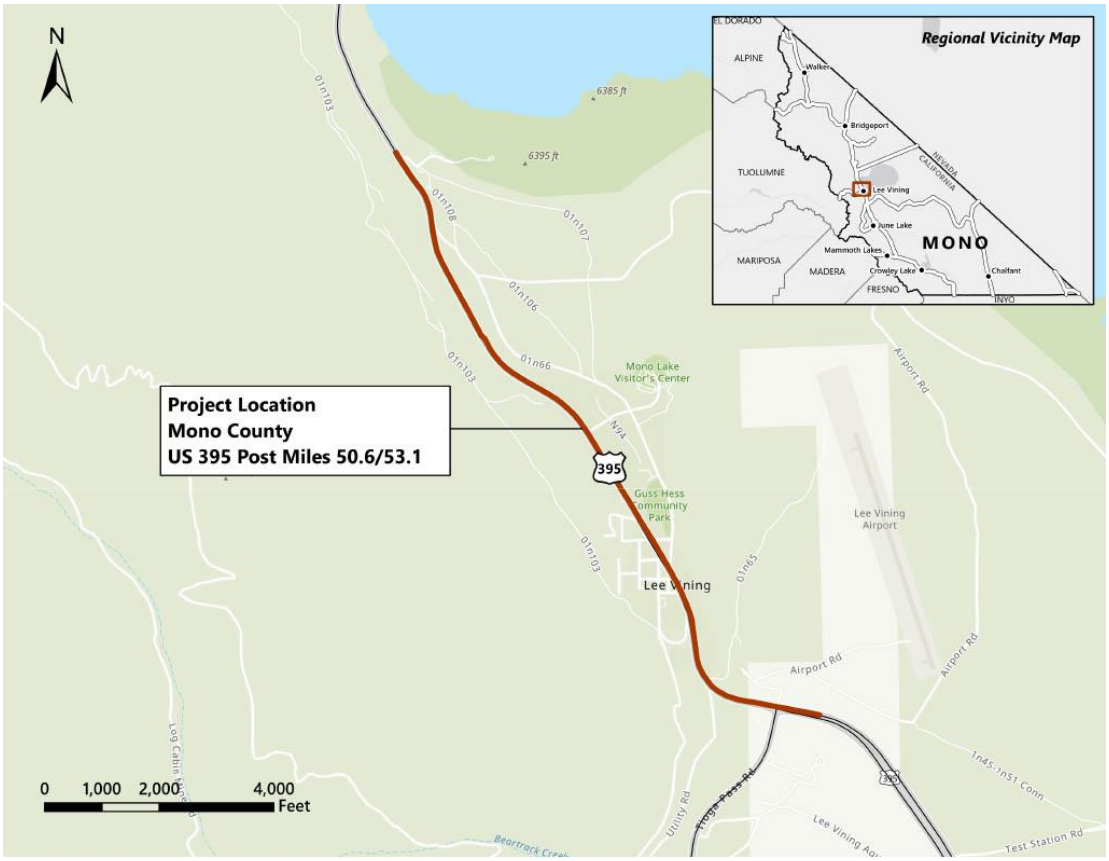

Figure 1-1: A map of the project location in the community of Lee Vining, with an inset regional vicinity map showing Lee Vining's location within Mono County. The project limits are called out on the map.

1.4 Project Alternatives

There are two build alternatives and one no-build alternative for the project.

1.4.1 Build Alternatives

There are two build alternatives and one no-build alternative that have been considered. Alternatives 3 and 4 from the Project Initiation Report have been considered but rejected from future consideration. Alternatives 1 and 2 differ based on pavement rehabilitation strategy. Alternative 1 proposes a combination of “mill and fill” and full depth reclamation/reconstruction, and alternative 2 proposes dull depth reclamation or reconstruction only for all portions of road rehabilitation.

Alternative 1 Pavement Rehabilitation Strategy:
Postmiles 50.6 to 51.2: 0.40 feet cold plane and 0.40 feet asphalt concrete overlay.

Postmiles 51.2 to 51.7: Full depth reclamation/reconstruction: 0.75 feet pulverize; 0.65 feet hot mix asphalt on 0.50 feet recycled base.
Postmiles 51.7 to 53.1: 0.40 feet cold plane and 0.40 feet asphalt concrete overlay.

Alternative 2 Pavement Rehabilitation Strategy:
Postmiles 50.6 to 53.1: Full depth reclamation: 0.75 feet pulverize; 0.65 feet hot mix asphalt on 0.50 feet recycled base.

Common Design Features of the Build Alternatives

For the portion of the project within the town of Lee Vining (postmiles 51.2 to 51.7), Caltrans facilities including sidewalks, curb ramps, and driveways will be replaced and upgraded to current Americans with Disabilities Act standards. Additional complete street design options would include street trees, landscape planters, pedestrian-scale streetlights, bulb-outs, dedicated Class II bike lanes, and pedestrian crossings. During the public information meeting held on February 15th, 2022, several conceptual cross-section design options, which reallocate the street space to accommodate vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian use, were presented and are being considered (see figures 1-4). The final street layout for this segment of the project will be determined during the Plans, Specifications and Estimates phase with continued input from the community and the County. As a part of the complete streets concept for the town of Lee Vining, existing street trees will remain or be replaced. The scope of this work will depend on whether the existing trees fit within the streetscape's new curb lines. Based on input from local agencies and residents, this project may include additional trees and planters. The final layout will be determined in the design phase. A cooperative agreement with Mono County may be necessary for future maintenance of the landscaping.

Drainage facilities through the community will be replaced, upgraded, or abandoned to accommodate new roadway and pedestrian facilities. This will entail the replacement of 13 existing culverts and the abandonment of 2 existing culverts, construction of a stormwater detention basin on the east side of community (directly east of the Shell gas station) and a 200-foot-long drainage ditch directly north of the Lee Vining High School sports field. An additional drainage option is being considered which would construct an approximately twenty-foot wide stormwater treatment facility inside Caltrans right of way in front of the Caltrans highway maintenance station, Mono County highway maintenance station, and Lee Vining High School parcels.

From postmiles 51.02 to 51.23 (along the northbound shoulder of U.S. Route 395) a mechanically stabilized earth wall will be reinforced by adding a sulfate resistant geomembrane covered by a thin rocky material layer in the surface. This membrane will be placed under existing sidewalk that will be reconstructed.

All guardrail in the project limits will be replaced with Midwest Guardrail System and stained with a Natina finish that will reduce glare off of the metal surfaces of the guardrail and blend in with the surrounding natural environment with a weathered and aged appearance. Other safety improvements will include replacement of signs, installation of enhanced wet night visibility recessed traffic stripes, and installation of rumble strips.

It is important to note that this project involves budgetary constraints that may affect Caltrans' ability to implement some or all of the complete streets features such as bike lanes; sidewalks; bulb-outs; lighting; and various other features. The Department is currently working to secure additional funds to help pay for these improvements and will continue to inform the public of the project status through planned public outreach efforts during the design phase of project development. The Caltrans project development team will continue with public outreach efforts throughout the life of the project. Caltrans staff will continue to meet with Mono County staff and will provide a 30% Design review through the Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee, which is anticipated to be in January 2023.

Figure 1-2: Design option 1 (showing a three-lane configuration, dedicated, buffered bike lanes, parallel parking and sidewalks).

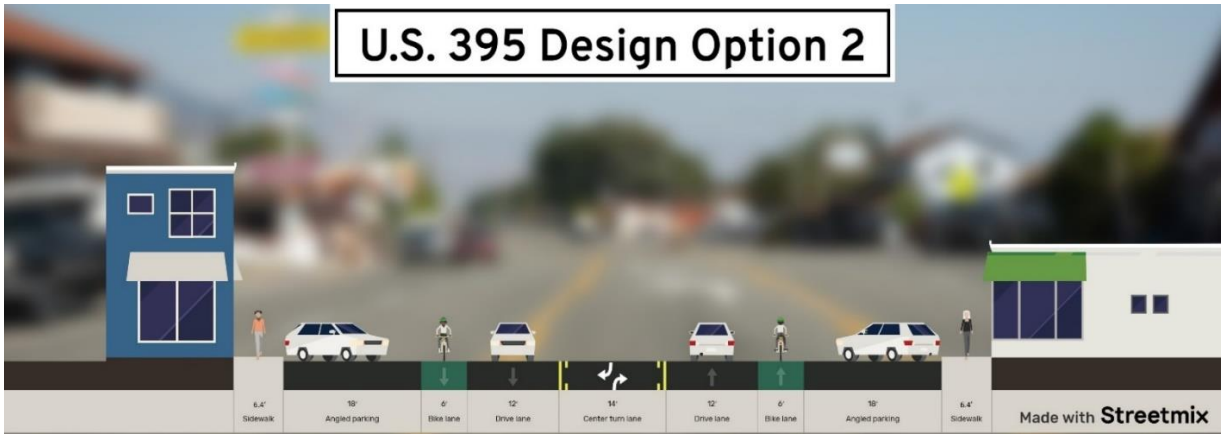

Figure 1-3: Design option 2 (showing a three-lane configuration, dedicated bike lanes, back-in diagonal parking and sidewalks).

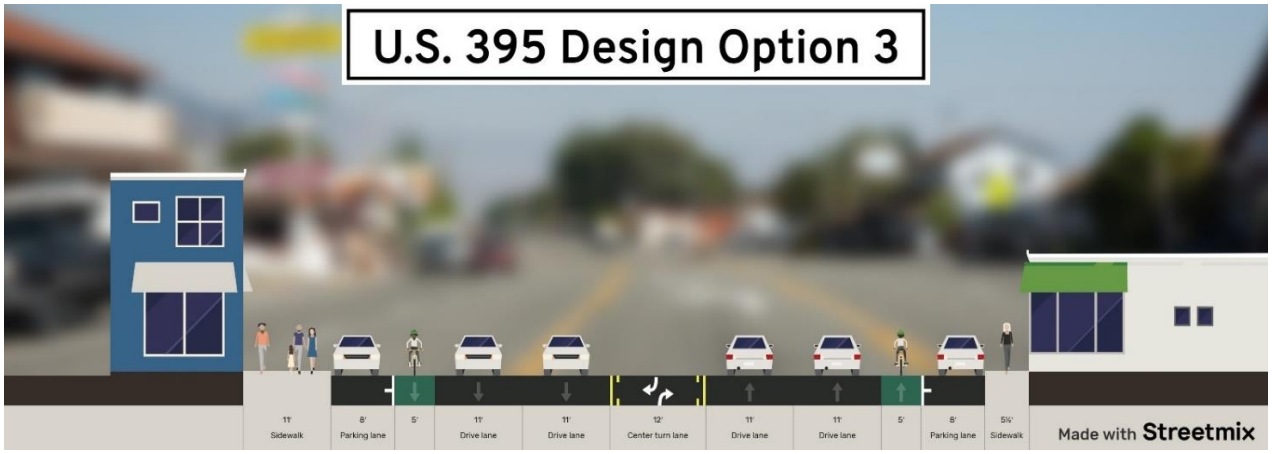

Figure 1-4: Design option 3 (showing a five-lane configuration, dedicated bike lanes, parallel parking and sidewalks).

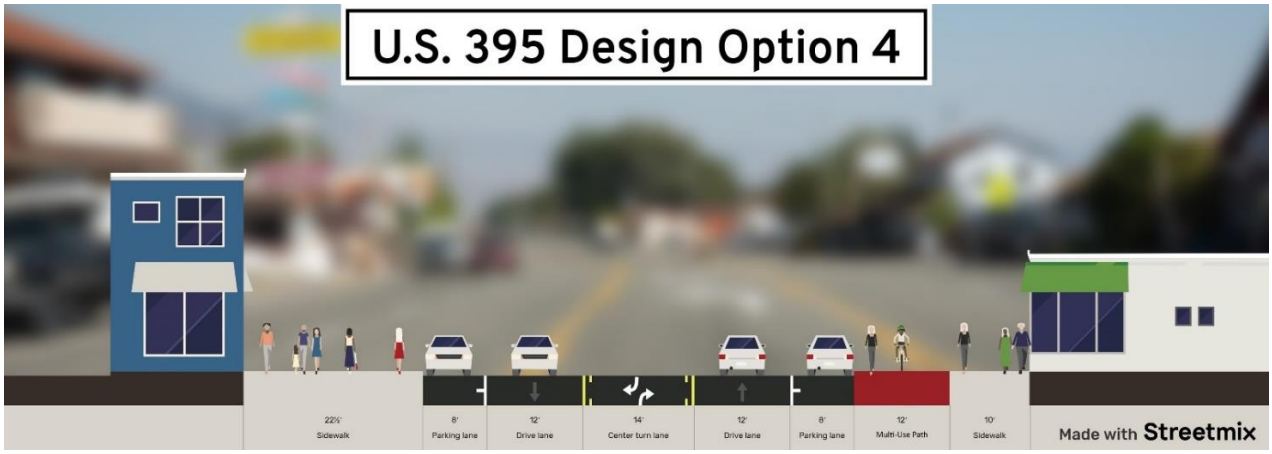

Figure 1-5: Design option 4 (showing a three-lane configuration, an above-grade multiuse path along the northbound shoulder, parallel parking and sidewalks).

Unique Features of the Build Alternatives

For the project, there are two build alternatives, which only differ through pavement strategy type from postmiles 50.6 to 53.1 on U.S. Route 395. All other design features, noted above, apply to both alternatives 1 and 2.

Alternative 1

Alternative 1 proposes to perform a full depth reclamation/reconstruction of U.S. Route 395 from postmiles 51.2 to 51.7 (through the community of Lee Vining) and a mill and fill on the south and north ends of the project (postmiles 50.6 to 51.2, and postmiles 51.7 to 53.1, respectively).

Alternative 1 Pavement Rehabilitation Strategy:
Postmiles 50.6 to 51.2: 0.40 feet cold plane and 0.40 feet asphalt concrete overlay.
Postmiles 51.2 to 51.7: Full Depth Reclamation: 0.75 feet pulverize; 0.65 feet hot mix asphalt on 0.50 feet recycled base.
Postmiles 51.7 to 53.1: 0.40 feet cold plane and 0.40 feet asphalt concrete overlay.

Alternative 2

Alternative 2 proposes to perform a full depth reclamation with pulverization of U.S. Route 395 from postmiles 50.6 to 53.1.

Alternative 2 Pavement Rehabilitation Strategy:
Postmiles 50.6 to 53.1: Full Depth Reclamation: 0.75 feet pulverize; 0.65 feet hot mix asphalt on 0.50 feet recycled base.

1.4.2 No-Build (No-Action) Alternative

The no build alternative would maintain the existing facilities within the project limits on U.S. Route 395 as is with continued routine maintenance activities. Selection of the no-build alternative would result in no project-related construction activities taking place. The no build alternative will not meet the project purpose and need as it will not bring Americans with Disabilities Act facilities or guardrail up to current standards, nor will it restore the pavement to a state of good repair or address the local mobility needs of the community of Lee Vining.

1.5 Identification of a Preferred Alternative

After public circulation of the Draft Initial Study with Proposed Negative Declaration, the project development team has selected Build Alternative 1 for the Lee Vining Rehabilitation project as the preferred alternative. Build Alternative 1 proposes a full-depth reclamation/reconstruction of U.S. Route 395 from postmiles 51.2 to 51.7 through the community of Lee Vining, and a mill and fill strategy on the south and north ends of the project from postmiles 50.6 to 51.2 and from postmiles 51.7 to 53.1. The depth of the mill and fill

may need to be adjusted based on a pavement deflection study that will be performed in Spring of 2022.

After receiving public input, the project development team recommends moving forward with a three-lane configuration of U.S. Route 395 (one travel lane in each direction and a center turn lane) with bike lanes in both directions; wider sidewalks with permanent bulb-outs; pedestrian-scale dark sky compliant lighting; landscaping that can be adequately maintained by Mono County through a maintenance agreement; the replacement or reconstruction of culverts within the project limits; and the construction of infiltration swales and a stormwater infiltration basin within the community of Lee Vining.

During the design phase, an engineering study will be performed to analyze the existing marked crossing locations and the possibility of an additional marked crossing in Lee Vining. The two existing rapid rectangular flashing beacons will be maintained with this project, and with the community's support, the location of the southern rapid rectangular flashing beacon system in the community may be relocated if the engineering study supports an additional or relocated marked crossing.

Parking will be further evaluated in the design phase. Diagonal parking could be incorporated on blocks where it is most needed. District 9 will consider comments and feedback during continued public outreach efforts when laying out parking in the design phase of this project and will continue to engage the community as the project's design is finalized. Caltrans anticipates working with Mono County, the community and local business owners to determine ideal locations for angled back-in parking spaces.

It was discussed in all public meetings held (February 9th, 15th and 17th of 2022) that permanent bulb-outs in Lee Vining will change current Caltrans snow removal procedures, which will likely cause delays in snow removal within the community of Lee Vining. Feedback received from the community largely indicated that the benefits of bulb-outs outweighed the potential for delays during snow removal efforts on U.S. Route 395 by Caltrans maintenance personnel.

1.6 Discussion of the NEPA Categorical Exclusion

This document contains information regarding compliance with CEQA and other state laws and regulations. Separate environmental documentation, supporting a Categorical Exclusion determination, has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. When needed for clarity, or as required by CEQA, this document may contain references to federal laws and/or regulations (CEQA, 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).

1.7 Permits and Approvals Needed

The following permits, licenses, agreements, and certifications are required for project construction:

Agency	Permit/Approval	Status
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	1602 Agreement for Streambed Alteration	Application for and issuance of the1602 permit is expected during the next project phase.
California Water Resources Board, Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board	401 Certification/Waste Discharge Requirements Document	Application for and issuance of the Section 401 permit is expected during the next project phase.
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Section 404 Permit for filling or dredging waters of the United States.	Application for and issuance of the Section 404 permit is expected during the next project phase.
California Transportation Commission	California Transportation Commission vote to approve funds	Along with the approval of the Final Environmental Document, the California Transportation Commission will be required to vote to approve funding for the project. The vote is anticipated in June 2022.
State Historic Preservation Officer	State Historic Preservation Officer concurrence of cultural studies completed for the project.	The State Historic Preservation Officer has provided concurrence on January 10, 2022.

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 Potentially Significant 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 in a separate volume), and no further discussion is included in this document. Detailed information regarding survey methodologies and results are also found in the associated technical studies in Volume Two of this Initial Study.

2.1.1 Aesthetics

Considering the information included in the Visual Impact Analysis and Questionnaire dated November 18, 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**
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	**Less Than Significant Impact**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Aesthetics
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?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	**No Impact**

Affected Environment

U.S. Route 395 through the project limits has been designated as part of the Eastern Sierra Scenic Byway and listed as Eligible within the California State Scenic Highway System. The U.S. Route 395 corridor is considered to be a sensitive corridor regarding visual resource issues, and the project occurs within the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area. Open and expansive views of the Mono Basin (including Mono Lake), Sierra Nevada mountains, Bodie Hills and the Mono Craters are common along the U.S. 395 corridor in the project limits. The scenic and recreational nature of the region draws visitors from around the world.

Environmental Consequences

Review of the project site and preliminary project plans indicate that the project has the potential to result in a less than significant impact to the visual environment. The visual character of U.S. Route 395 in Lee Vining would be altered with the potential introduction of new and upgraded facilities, including upgraded sidewalks, new highway paving, street lights, bulb outs, and possible lane reduction of U.S. Route 395 through the community. The potential introduction of bike lanes, diagonal back-in parking spaces, and other complete streets elements would also provide a change to the visual character of U.S. Route 395 within the limits of the project.

Drainage improvements (including the replacement or abandonment of existing culverts) and guardrail replacement are not expected to be noticeable to passing motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists on U.S. Route 395 as these facilities will be replaced in-kind. One drainage detention basin is proposed, which will require minor amounts of excavation of undisturbed soils and vegetation removal directly adjacent to the community of Lee Vining. The basin is proposed to be constructed east of, and adjacent, to the Shell gas station. This location is partially obstructed from view by existing structures along U.S. Route 395, although it will be visible from adjacent businesses and residences. The primary visual impact would result from the temporary lack of

vegetation in the newly excavated and graded areas of the basin, and the outer berms created to establish the outer perimeter of the basin until the area revegetates. The impacts resulting from a lack of vegetation would be temporary as these areas will be seeded with a native plant mix.

Permanent stormwater treatment facilities will be constructed outside of existing Caltrans right of way within Lee Vining, including a drainage ditch north of Lee Vining High School and a stormwater detention basin east of the shell gas station. The detention basin will require a minor amount excavation (up to one and a half feet), grading and establishing berms to capture stormwater flows and the drainage ditch will require excavation to approximately five feet deep. An additional drainage design option is being considered which would construct an approximately twenty-foot wide stormwater treatment facility inside Caltrans right of way in front of the Caltrans highway maintenance station, Mono County highway maintenance station, and Lee Vining High School parcels.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The following measures will be implemented during the project's design phase:

AESTHETIC-1: All guardrail replaced will be treated with Natina per the District 9 policy for guardrail along U.S. Route 395 in Mono County.

AESTHETIC-2: Missing or damaged trees in sidewalk planter locations along U.S. Route 395 in Lee Vining will replaced. Existing tree planter locations may need to be adjusted during construction. In addition, existing tree grates should be replaced with sturdier models and root guards will be installed at all planter locations.

AESTHETIC-3: Areas requiring vegetation removal (one stormwater detention basin and one stormwater drainage ditch) will be re-seeded with native seed mix to ensure permanent revegetation and erosion control of excavated areas.

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.

Per a search of the California Department of Conservation's Important Farmland Mapping Tool, there are no designated Prime, Unique or Farmlands of Statewide Importance in or near the proposed project limits. The project will not have any effect on protected Farmlands, including those under the Williamson Act, or convert any farmlands into non-agricultural use (https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/DLRP/CIFF).

Impacts to timberland are analyzed as required by the California Timberland Productivity Act of 1982 (California Government Code Sections 51100 et seq.), which was enacted to preserve forest resources. Like the Williamson Act, this program gives landowners tax incentives to keep their land in timber production. Contracts involving Timber Production Zones (are on 10-year cycles. Searches of Inyo County Planning documents, the California Department of Conservation website and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection website showed no designated timberlands or Timber Production Zones in or near the project vicinity. The project will have no effect on protected Timberlands since none exist in the project area.

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?	**No Impact**
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	**No Impact**
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**
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	**No Impact**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Agriculture and Forest Resources
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**

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 Air/Noise/Hazardous Waste/Water/Paleontology Study Memo dated March 3, 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**
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**
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	**No Impact**
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	**No Impact**

2.1.4 Biological Resources

Considering the information included in the Natural Environment Study (Minimal Impacts) dated November 22, 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 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries?	**No Impact.**
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?	**Less Than Significant Impact.**
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.**
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.**
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	**No Impact.**
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.**

Affected Environment

The project encompasses an approximate four and a half-mile section of U.S. Route 395 located in Mono County. The elevation of the study area ranges from 6,400-6,900 feet above sea level and lies within an arid, mid-elevation desert climate that is characterized by hot, dry summers and cool winters with moderate precipitation. Temperatures vary greatly throughout the year with a temperature change of approximately seventy degrees Fahrenheit between the coldest and warmest months of the year. Average total precipitation is approximately fourteen inches per year.

Aquatic resources and riparian habitat

The proposed project is located near Mono Lake, a terminal, saline lake on the eastern edge of the Sierra Nevada mountains. The lake collects flows from the eastern escarpment of the Sierra Nevada, the surrounding Mono Basin and local runoff. There is one named creek within the project impact area- Lee Vining Creek- a perennial creek that runs through the southern portion of Lee Vining, crosses U.S. Route 395, and terminates in Mono Lake. There are also smaller roadside ditches and unnamed aquatic and riparian features that cross U.S. Route 395 in various locations within Lee Vining and the project impact area. Riverine and riparian habitat exist within and adjacent to the proposed project.

Riverine habitat can be described as open-water habitat that occurs within a defined stream channel and along perennial and intermittent stretches of streams and some major dry washes. Riverine habitat may sometimes border wetlands that exist within the floodplain of the channel. Riverine habitat within the general project area occurs adjacent to Lee Vining Creek. In some locations adjacent to the project limits, this habitat is bordered by wetland habitat. Much of the riverine habitat adjacent to the project contains woody riparian vegetation, with the predominant plants being willow species (*Salix species.*). Other species found in the riparian community include Wood's rose (*Rosa woodsia*) and wax currant (*Ribes cereum*).

Riparian habitat also occurs in locations where springs and ephemeral drainages exist adjacent to the project limits. Springs- areas where ground water seeps out of the earth at locations where the water table exceeds the grounds surface- occur on several slopes adjacent to the project limits. Riparian vegetation at spring locations will not be impacted by project activities and most exist outside of the project impact area.

Environmental Consequences

There are a total of seven existing culverts that are proposed to be replaced within the project limits. All culverts that will be replaced will be replaced in-kind with similar sized culvert pipes with some minor grading within already disturbed areas of the project impact area. Other culvert work within the project scope include two culverts outside of jurisdictional areas (postmile 51.23 and postmile 51.25) that will be abandoned.

There is one detention basin proposed on the east side of the community of Lee Vining. Construction of the detention basin may require vegetation removal and may result in impacts to jurisdictional waters. Approximately 0.032 acres of waters of the State and 0.103 acres of waters of the U.S. may be impacted during the construction of the stormwater detention basin.

The proposed drainage ditch on the north end of town will not impact existing wetlands. Removal and trimming of willow species and wild rose may occur; however, they are not associated with any jurisdictional waters as the individuals identified primarily obtain water from irrigation runoff from Lee Vining High School's sports field.

Temporary impacts to waters of the U.S. and the State related to the scope of work described above in this section may occur during this project. The total acreage of temporary impact to waters of the State, including ephemeral streams, riparian habitat, and a seasonal wetland swale within the project limits may be approximately 0.42 acres. Temporary impacts to waters of the U.S. may be approximately 0.186 acres.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The following avoidance and minimization measures will be implemented for the project:

BIOLOGY 1: This project will require work within jurisdictional resources and permits will be required, including a 1600 permit from California Department of Fish and Wildlife, a 401 Water Quality Certification from California Water Resources Board, Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, and a 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (refer to page 6, Section 1.7, *Permits and Approvals Needed*).

BIOLOGY 2: All conditions outlined in the permits will be implemented during construction and environmentally sensitive area fencing will be installed to protect all wetlands, waters, and riparian vegetation that occur adjacent to the project impact area.

BIOLOGY 3: A biological monitor will be available to oversee construction activities where jurisdictional resources occur to ensure that no unanticipated impacts occur.

BIOLOGY 4: Implementation of water pollution control best management practices will occur prior to and during construction to protect all hydrologic resources adjacent to and within the project limits. Such practices may include use of fiber rolls and/or silt fencing to delineate hydrologic resources.

BIOLOGY-5: Pre-construction sensitive-status plant surveys will occur during peak blooming season seventy two (72) hours prior to construction, if the construction schedule allows. If not, these surveys will be completed the spring prior to construction start.

BIOLOGY-6: If sensitive-status species are found in the project impact area or adjacent habitat, Caltrans biologists will implement environmentally-sensitive area boundaries with protective no-work buffers.

BIOLOGY 7: If sensitive-status plants are later found in the project impact area and it is determined that permanent impacts would occur to them during construction, Caltrans biologists will coordinate with California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Both agencies will work together to develop mitigation measures for permanent impacts which may include transplanting the affected individuals. No impacts are anticipated at this time.

BIOLOGY 8: Pre-construction surveys will be completed for all burrowing mammals. Because the badger is not expected to occur on the project site, no avoidance or minimization measures are currently proposed. However, if any badgers or evidence of active burrows of any sensitive-statues species (e.g., pygmy rabbit) are observed before or during construction, measures to protect them from impacts will be implemented and consultation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife will be initiated. These measures could include implementation of environmentally sensitive areas, no-work buffers around active burrows, and potential biological monitoring during construction activities within a five hundred (500) foot buffer of an active burrow.

BIOLOGY 9: To ensure no impacts occur to bat individuals or active roosting habitat, a pre-construction survey at the culverts and any other potential roosting habitat (trees and buildings) will be conducted at least forty-eight (48) hours prior to construction. If bats are found in within the project limits, then a bat exclusionary plan will be devised in coordination with California Department of Fish and Wildlife. If bats and/or roosting locations are found within or adjacent to the project limits, environmentally sensitive areas may be delineated to ensure no impacts occur to them. Additionally, biological monitoring may be implemented if necessary to ensure no impacts occur to bats or active roosting habitat.

BIOLOGY 10: Pre-construction non-protocol level Southwestern willow flycatcher surveys will be conducted within 48 hours prior to any work being done regardless of time of year as species nesting times vary within and outside of the normal nesting period.

If a nest is found within the project impact area, a no-work buffer of up to a quarter of a mile may be implemented during nesting season (May 15- July 17) as determined by the project Biologist in coordination with California Department of Fish and Wildlife and United States Fish and Wildlife Service to avoid impacts caused by construction until nesting season has finished, or nesting activities have completed, and the bird nestling has fledged and left the area. Certain work activities occurring adjacent to nest sites may require monitoring by a qualified biologist.

BIOLOGY 11: Pre-construction nesting bird surveys will be conducted within 48 hours prior to any work being done regardless of time of year as species nesting times vary within and outside of the normal nesting period.

If a nest is found within the project impact area, an appropriate no-work buffer may be implemented as determined by the project Biologist to avoid impacts caused by construction until nesting season has finished, or nesting activities have completed, and the bird nestling has fledged and left the area. No-work buffers can vary in size depending on listing status and species. Buffers as large as a half mile may be used for Swainson's Hawk; five hundred feet for other nesting raptors; or two hundred and fifty feet for nesting songbirds. Certain work activities occurring near nest sites may require monitoring by a qualified biologist

Compensatory mitigation is not anticipated as no permanent impacts are anticipated to aquatic resources. If design changes result in permanent impacts to jurisdictional areas, Caltrans will update this environmental document to describe proposed compensatory mitigation. Potential mitigation strategies may include on-site revegetation of riparian vegetation to compensate for the removal of existing riparian vegetation or habitat.

With the implementation of the measures noted above, the project will result in less than significant impacts to biological resources.

2.1.5 Cultural Resources

Considering the information included in the Historic Properties Survey Report dated December 10, 2021, with State Historic Preservation Officer concurrence on eligibility received on January 10, 2022, 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 §15064.5?	**No Impact**
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?	**No Impact**
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	**No Impact**

2.1.6 Energy

For this project, a brief, qualitative analysis of energy impacts was performed. The proposed project will not increase highway capacity and therefore will not induce additional energy (fuel) consumption. All applicable Caltrans standard provisions for energy resources required for construction will be implemented on this project.

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.**
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	**No Impact.**

2.1.7 Geology and Soils

Considering the information included in the Air/Noise/Hazardous Waste/Water/Paleontology Study Memo dated November 23, 2021, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils
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**
a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving: ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	**No Impact**
a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving: iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	**No Impact**
a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving: iv) Landslides?	**No Impact**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	**No Impact**
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**
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**
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**
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	**No Impact**

2.1.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Considering the information included in the Lee Vining Rehab: Climate Change Analysis dated December 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?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	**Less Than Significant Impact**

Affected Environment

The project is in a small community surrounded by an undeveloped, rural landscape, with a primarily natural resources based agricultural and tourism economy. U.S. Route 395 is the main transportation route to and through the area for both passenger and commercial vehicles. Traffic counts are low, with

peak annual average traffic volumes on U.S. Route 395 within the project area at 8,300 vehicles per day in 2020 (based on traffic count data recorded at the junction of U.S. Route 395 and State Route 120 West). 2020 peak annual average traffic count data show 6,000 vehicles per day on U.S Route 395 near the Lee Vining Visitors Center (north end of the community), and that U.S. Route 395 is not typically congested.

Environmental Consequences

The purpose of the proposed project is to rehabilitate existing pavement and bring highway facilities (curbs, sidewalks, gutters, and driveways) to current Americans with Disabilities Act standards and will not increase the vehicle capacity of the roadway. This type of project generally causes minimal or no increase in operational greenhouse gas emissions. Because the project would not increase the number of travel lanes on U.S. Route 395, no increase in vehicle miles traveled would occur as result of project implementation. Construction greenhouse gas emissions were estimated using the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District Road Construction Emissions Model. Project construction is estimated to generate 791 U.S. tons of carbon dioxide over a 6-month construction period. While some greenhouse gas emissions during the construction period would be unavoidable, no increase in operational greenhouse gas emissions is expected once construction is complete.

After the project has been constructed, either build alternative would provide increased pedestrian and multi-modal access throughout the corridor in the community of Lee Vining, which may result in a net reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles. Neither alternative would increase vehicular capacity or induce additional travel which could lead to increased greenhouse gas emissions or vehicle miles traveled.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

In addition to all applicable Caltrans Standard Specifications, the following measures will be implemented in the project to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and potential climate change impacts from the project:

GREENHOUSE-1: The Contractor will be instructed to use material source and borrow sites close to the project location to the extent feasible. This will reduce the number of haul trips and distance traveled per trip.

GREENHOUSE-2: Construction personnel will comply with Caltrans Standard Specification Section 14-9.02, Air Pollution Control. Certain measures restrict how long construction vehicles may idle, reducing exhaust emissions.

The proposed project will enhance pedestrian facilities within the community of Lee Vining with the introduction of upgraded sidewalks, curb ramps, and potentially new bike lanes on both sides of U.S. Route 395 through town. Upon completion, the project has the potential to lower greenhouse gas

emissions within the community over time if more travelers choose to use the new and upgraded facilities in lieu of motorized travel.

2.1.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Considering the information included in the Air/Noise/Hazardous Waste/Water/Paleontology Study Memo, dated November 23, 2021, 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?	**No Impact**
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**
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
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**
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**
f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	**No Impact**
g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?	**No Impact**

Affected Environment

There are two schools located in the community of Lee Vining and adjacent to the project limits: Lee Vining High School and Lee Vining Elementary School. Lee Vining High School is located at the northern end of Lee Vining on U.S. Route 395, and Lee Vining Elementary School is located approximately less than a tenth of a mile west of U.S. Route 395 on Lee Vining Avenue.

Environmental Consequences

A portion of this project includes abandoning an existing underground culvert which travels through the basement of the Lakeview Lodge Hotel (postmile 51.25) on the east side of U.S. Route 395. It has been determined that this culvert will be dismantled and removed from the basement. It is also possible that some building materials (walls, floors, insulation, ceiling floors, paint, et cetera) may be needed to be disturbed to complete this work. There exists the possibility that the above stated materials may include lead and/or asbestos.

The location of this culvert, and Lake View Lodge, is approximately a tenth of a mile from Lee Vining Elementary School and less than half of a mile from Lee Vining High School.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

HAZ WASTE-1: Building alterations to abandon the culvert running through the basement of the Lake View Lodge will require lead paint and asbestos testing prior to construction. These tests will occur during the project's design phase to determine actual lead and asbestos levels of the materials to be removed. If lead or asbestos levels are found in concentrations that trigger special handling and disposal, specifications will be added into the project contract mandating the creation of a lead/asbestos compliance plan by the contractor, and that all work with these materials will be performed by a licensed lead/asbestos removal contractor. The compliance plan will outline procedures for public and worker health and safety during the removal, transportation, and disposal of lead/asbestos materials. There will be no public access to the work area. Although this work is to occur within one quarter mile of Lee Vining Elementary School, the implementation of the above stated measures will result in less than significant impacts.

HAZ WASTE 2: The Drainage easement and associated culvert replacement work under/adjacent to the Shell gas station (post mile 51.36) may require an Initial Site Assessment and/or Preliminary Site Investigation. The need for these surveys will be determined during the design phase of the project. This commitment is new to this document since it circulated for public review on February 3, 2022.

2.1.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

Considering the information included in the Air/Noise/Hazardous Waste/Water/Paleontology Study Memo (dated November 23, 2021) and the Natural Environment Study (dated November 22, 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?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
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**
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;	**Less Than Significant Impact**
(ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite;	**Less Than Significant Impact**
(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	**Less Than Significant Impact**
(iv) impede or redirect flood flows?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	**No Impact**
e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	**No Impact**

Affected Environment

The project will rehabilitate existing pavement, base, and sub-base and introduce new impervious surfaces. In addition, a new drainage ditch and one to two drainage infiltration basins are proposed within and directly east of the community of Lee Vining. Also, a bioswale strip is being considered within existing Caltrans right of way.

An Aquatic Resources Delineation Report was prepared for this project in September 2021. Multiple jurisdictional water resources were identified within the disturbance area for the project.

Environmental Consequences

Replacement of existing culverts and the creation of one detention basin will require a 401 Water Quality Certification from the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board and a Section 404 Permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for impacts to Waters of the State and Waters of the U.S., respectively. No wetlands were identified within the town of Lee Vining.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

HYDROLOGY-1: The project will pulverize pavement into the subbase material, which will increase the disturbed soil area calculations for the project. Due to this, it is likely the disturbed soil area will exceed one acre and require a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan under the Construction General Permit. New impervious surface area will increase, necessitating additional runoff infiltration areas. A bioswale strip, drainage ditch and stormwater detention basin are currently included in the project impact area and will be better defined as the project design progresses.

HYDROLOGY-2: The 401 and 404 permits, which will be obtained during the Plans, Specifications and Estimates phase, will outline permit conditions once project design has been finalized. Caltrans will develop avoidance and minimization measures, such as onsite erosion control and implementation of best management practices, during the next project phase through 401 and 404 permit applications.

2.1.11 Land Use and Planning

Considering the information included in the Community Impacts: Memo to file dated November 15, 2021, 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**
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**

2.1.12 Mineral Resources

Considering the information included in the Air/Noise/Hazardous Waste/Water/Paleontology Study Memo dated November 23, 2021, 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**
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**

2.1.13 Noise

Considering the information included in the Air/Noise/Hazardous Waste/Water/Paleontology Study Memo dated November 23, 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?	**Less Than Significant Impact**

Question—Would the project result in:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Noise
b) Generation of excessive ground borne vibration or ground borne noise levels?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
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**

Affected Environment

The project area is in and throughout the community of Lee Vining, CA. U.S. Route 395 serves as the main route through Lee Vining, and construction activities will produce elevated noise levels at various times throughout the project.

Environmental Consequences

Short term limited impacts during construction will occur as noise levels will be elevated. The project would not generate excessive ground borne vibration or ground borne noise levels; however, the degree of construction noise impacts may vary for different areas of the project site and depending on the construction activities. Construction activities will increase ambient noise levels from heavy and handheld equipment, however no long-term changes to noise levels will occur due to this project. These short-term impacts are to be expected throughout the life of the project, which is currently estimated to take six months to complete.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

NOISE-1: While local businesses and residents will be temporarily impacted by construction noise, work is only expected to occur during normal weekday working hours (daylight), and the Caltrans Planning and Public Information Office staff have coordinated with the local community throughout the project process thus far. Additional outreach efforts will occur prior to construction so residents, business owners, hotel operators, et cetera will be aware of the upcoming construction activities. Through implementation of Caltrans standard specifications for noise levels and advanced community notification, impacts are anticipated to be less than significant.

2.1.14 Population and Housing

Considering the information included in the Community Impacts: Memo to file dated November 15, 2021, 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**
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	**No Impact**

2.1.15 Public Services

Considering the information included in the Community Impacts: Memo to file dated November 15, 2021 the following significance determinations have been made:

Question:	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?	**No Impact**
Police protection?	**No Impact**
Schools?	**No Impact**

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Public Services
Parks?	**No Impact**
Other public facilities?	**No Impact**

2.1.16 Recreation

Considering the information included in the Community Impacts: Memo to file dated November 15, 2021 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**
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**

2.1.17 Transportation

Considering the information included in the Community Impacts: Memo to file dated March 10, 2021, 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**
b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	**No Impact**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Transportation
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**
d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	**No Impact**

2.1.18 Tribal Cultural Resources

Considering the information included in the Historic Properties Survey Report dated December 10, 2021, with State Historic Preservation Officer concurrence on eligibility received on January 10, 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question:	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**
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**

2.1.19 Utilities and Service Systems

Considering the information in the Right of Way Data Sheet Request and the Draft Project Report, 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**
b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	**No Impact**
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**
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**
e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	**No Impact**

2.1.20 Wildfire

Considering the information included in the Community Impacts: Memo to file dated November 15, 2021, 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**
b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby	**No Impact**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Wildfire
expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a 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**
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**

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?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
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**

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Mandatory Findings of Significance
c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	**No Impact**

As stated in the “Biological Resources” section (page 11, Section 2.1.4) of this document, the proposed project may result in temporary impacts to waters of the U.S. and State related to the proposed culverts, detention basin and drainage ditch throughout and adjacent to the community of Lee Vining. This work will occur within jurisdictional resources and permits will be required (refer to page 6, Section 1.7, Permits and Approvals Needed).

Based on the information found in this document, the proposed project will have less than significant impacts to Aesthetics, Biological Resources, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hydrology and Water Quality, and Noise.

Appendix A Title VI Policy Statement

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

Gavin Newsom, Governor

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Making Conservation a California Way of Life.

September 2021

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; PO Box 942874, MS-79, Sacramento, CA 94274-0001; (916) 324-8379 (TTY 711); or at Title.VI@dot.ca.gov.

Toks Omishakin
Director

"Provide a safe and reliable transportation network that serves all people and respects the environment."

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY Gavin Newsom, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
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Making Conservation a California Way of Life.

Septiembre de 2021

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Para obtener esta información en un formato alternativo como el Braille o en un lenguaje diferente al inglés, por favor póngase en contacto con la Oficina de Derechos Civiles del Departamento de Transporte de California, al 1823 14th Street, MS-79, Sacramento, CA 95811; PO Box 942874, MS-79, Sacramento, CA 94274-0001; al teléfono (916) 324-8379 (Teléfono de Texto TTY: 711); o al email: Title.VI@dot.ca.gov

Toks Omishakin
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Appendix B Public Comments

This appendix contains the comments received during the public circulation and comment period from February 3 to March 4, 2022. A Caltrans response follows each comment presented. The entirety of this appendix (Appendix B) is new to this document since the draft Initial Study with Proposed Negative Declaration circulated for thirty days for public comment on February 3, 2022.

The Initial Study with Proposed Negative Declaration was posted to the State Clearinghouse for the thirty-day public comment period, which occurred from February 3, 2022 and ended on March 4, 2024. In addition to public availability of the document via the State Clearinghouse online portal, the proposed Negative Declaration was available for download from the Caltrans District 9 website and available to view in hard copy format at the Mono County Library (Lee Vining Branch) during business hours.

The Caltrans project development team hosted a virtual public information meeting during the thirty-day public comment period. The meeting was held on February 15, 2022, from 6:30pm to 8:00pm. Several members of the project development team presented on the project's scope, cost, schedule and the comment period for the environmental document. Following the presentation, multiple members of the public participated in a question-and-answer session. In addition to the February 15th public information meeting, multiple Caltrans staff members presented on the project and fielded questions during two public meetings hosted by the Mono County Regional Planning Advisory Committee held on February 10th and 17th of 2022.

Caltrans received multiple comments during the thirty-day comment and circulation period. All comments on the following pages have been retyped verbatim for readability. Caltrans District 9 would like to thank the Mono County Regional Planning Advisory Committee, Mono Lake Committee, Lee Vining Fire Protection District, and all members of the public for providing input on the Lee Vining Rehab project. The Caltrans project development team will continue with public outreach efforts throughout the life of the project. Caltrans staff will continue to meet with Mono County Staff and will provide a 30% design review through the Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee which is anticipated to be in January 2023.

Comments from: Ilene Mandelbaum (Part 1 of 2; submitted via e-mail)

I am a Lee Vining resident since 1984 and have been involved in facilitating pedestrian safety and traffic calming workshops, policy and projects working through the Mono Basin Regional Planning Committee since the mid-1990's.

I want to express my appreciation to the Caltrans District 9 staff for your recognition of the need to address numerous issues that arise from having a highway that is 5 lanes wide passing through the Lee Vining Community. In particular, I commend you for being willing to consider alternatives that narrow the width of highway 395 through town to reduce the problems of excessive speeds of motor vehicles and to enhance pedestrian safety and mobility. Your proposals to create significant traffic calming and multi-modal features are a long-awaited breathe of fresh air!

The Mono Basin Community has been asking Caltrans for solutions for at least 25 years. While the Lee Vining Sidewalk Project in 2000 did provide significant improvements, these issues were made worse by the widening of the highway south and north of town. Additional problems of inadequate storm runoff management have caused gullying, a road wash-out and untreated street runoff to enter Lee Vining Creek downstream of culverts. It is clear that over time many of these features need to be corrected and upgraded.

We received the Rehab documents less than a week ago and they deserve a well-considered public review and response. There are many questions and clarifications that cannot be listed, let alone answered in just one evening.

There is no mention of additional workshops or walks through town before approval of the NEG DEC; that would be very helpful.

For instance:

(1) Where do the Alternatives to narrow the highway width begin and end?

(2) Has a round-about been analyzed for the junction of Highways 120 and 395 so that pedestrian sidewalks to that junction can be provided and a transition through the walled sections at the south end of town be facilitated to lower speeds?

(3) There is no need for 5 lanes through the walled section of highway south of town. But there is a need for wider sidewalks and a bike lane there and a slowing of traffic speeds before entering town. Even parking here would be very helpful.

(4) How many and where will be the crosswalks and with what kinds of features? In 2000 the community proposed 7 crosswalks. We ended up with

3. In particular, one is needed at the south end of town across from the Mono Market. A crosswalk at 3rd street would also be useful.

(5) Will the “hump” in the roadbed at the existing crosswalk at Nicely’s be reduced? It impedes motorists’ distant view of that crosswalk.

(6) A climate change analysis predicts only a 4.9 % increase in floodplain water depths for 100 year events, when that amount has already been exceeded several times in storm runoff events in recent years. Therefore, is the capacity of new culverts and drainage facilities adequate and how does the re-paving of the road bed change the direction of flow of runoff in the gutters?

(7) Why was detention basin #2 dropped from the proposal? That facility could provide a catchment for runoff that currently comes from a storm water drain in the southeast corner of the Caltrans Yard as well as from Mattly Ave. that flows down an eroding gully into Lee Vining Creek. That water could be put to use to create a line of trees below the bluff to visually hide the town sewage ponds.

(8) A culvert is proposed to be replaced but kept in its current location (feature 9, #5207) north of town which will continue to pour water down to the old 395 highway, which has washed out due to excessive flooding during storm events. This problem must be addressed and the wash-out repaired with its own culvert because that road is a good parallel emergency escape route from fires or when avalanches block 395. Caltrans should accept responsibility for this wash out and facilitate repairs.

(9) The culvert #5275 creates similar problems at the turn off to Picnic Grounds Road-The culvert (PM 50.99) empties right into Lee Vining Creek at the north side of the SCE substation. What does it mean that it will be replaced with a drainage easement?

(10) The bio-swale proposed along the west side of the high school sports field looks as if it would require the removal of the line of mature trees, which should not be disturbed. Nor does it make sense for a ditch to continue on into high school property north of the field, which may impede future development in that area. There is a proposal to create a housing project there. Could that ditch be placed much closer to the sports field north boundary?

Thank you very much for providing opportunities to work with you on these much anticipated improvements for our community.

Response to: Ilene Mandelbaum (Part 1 of 2)

Thank you for your input on the Lee Vining Rehabilitation project. The Caltrans project development team has decided at this time not to extend the

thirty-day public circulation period of the draft environmental document, which began on February 3, 2022 and ended on March 4, 2022. Caltrans District 9 will continue public outreach efforts throughout the life of the project, and future public outreach meetings are anticipated during the design and construction phases (the next two phases). The following are responses to your numbered comments as noted above:

(1) The proposed limits of design options one, two and four (noted by Caltrans staff during the February 15, 2022 public information meeting), all of which would reduce the number of travel lanes from four to two, are between postmiles 51.2 (the southern end of Lee Vining, approximately two hundred feet south of the Lakeview Lodge) and 51.7 (the northern end of Lee Vining, in front of the Lee Vining High School entrance). It should be noted that that southern limit of transitioning from four lanes to two has yet to be fully determined at this time and Caltrans will take public comments received in the draft Initial Study, as well as future comments, into consideration when determining the limits of travel lane reduction.

(2) A round-about at the intersection of U.S. Route 395 and State Route 120 West falls outside of the scope and funding available for this project. However, the Department may consider a round-about at this location on a future project based on operational needs and continued input from the community.

(3) The potential reduction of travel lanes from five to three is being considered at postmile 51.2 (approximately 200 feet south of the Lakeview Lodge). It should be noted that the southern limit of transitioning from four lanes to two lanes has yet to be fully determined at this time and Caltrans will take public comments received in to consideration when determining this limit. It should be noted that the southern limit of the retaining wall you note begins around postmile 51.0.

(4) All existing crosswalks on U.S. Route 395 within the Lee Vining will be reconstructed to be brought up to Americans with Disabilities Act standards. In addition, an engineering study will be performed to analyze the existing marked crossing locations and the possibility of an additional marked crossing in Lee Vining. All marked crossing locations will include advanced yield lines with associated signage, parking prohibitions to provide adequate visibility of the crossing, pedestrian crossing warning signs identifying the crossing location, and a high visibility marked crosswalk pattern. The two existing rapid rectangular flashing beacons will be maintained with this project; with the community’s support, the location of the southern rapid rectangular flashing beacon system may be relocated if the engineering study supports an additional or relocated marked crossing location.

(5) The surface of U.S. Route 395 within Lee Vining will be raised up to approximately 6 inches. Caltrans will take this location in to account when adjusting the roadway.

(6) New drainage facilities will be designed to accommodate flows based on standards defined by Caltrans. Drainage facilities are typically designed to convey a 25-year rain event. Gutter flow in Lee Vining will continue to flow from south to north which matches the general topography of Lee Vining.

(7) The construction of a second stormwater infiltration basin (located at the intersection of Mattly Avenue and 1st Street) is not being considered at this time. The Department proposes to convey stormwater to a flatter area north of the Lee Vining High School. With this change, drainage from the Caltrans right of way will not contribute significantly to increased flows to the area where a second basin was formerly considered.

(8) Caltrans recognizes the erosion problem at postmile 52.1. This project is considering several options to alleviate this problem including replacing the existing culvert, adding an additional culvert south of the existing culvert to divert some of the flow, and placing rock slope protection at the culvert's outlet to prevent future erosion. Additionally, the Department will approach the U.S. Forest Service to determine if a partnership could provide a solution for the washed-out road on adjacent Inyo National Forest land (Forest Rd 1N56).

(9) The culvert at postmile 50.99 will not require replacement as part of this project. Caltrans has an existing drainage easement in this area to maintain the rock slope stabilization at this culvert's outlet and inlet. This project will review the effectiveness of the existing rock and modify it as necessary.

(10) The Department recognizes the row of mature trees along the western edge of the Lee Vining High School ball fields and proposes to convey stormwater flows in an underground pipe adjacent to the row of trees. The removal of the trees at this location is not anticipated at this time. Caltrans will work with the Eastern Sierra Unified School District and Mono County in subsequent project phases to design and construct a ditch that aligns with future uses of the property directly north of Lee Vining High School.

Comments from: Ilene Mandelbaum (Part 2 of 2)

As a 38 year resident of Lee Vining, I thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments on this project. I appreciate the additional information given by Caltrans District 9 staff at the public workshop on February 15th and at the Mono Basin RPAC meeting February 17, 2022.

It is great news to hear about the newly-adopted Caltrans organizational priority of "Complete Streets" to "encourage and maximize walking, biking,

transit, and passenger rail as a strategy to not only meet state climate, health, equity, and environmental goals but also to foster socially and economically vibrant, thriving, and resilient communities." It is a most welcome commitment that "Caltrans will maximize the use of design flexibility to provide context-sensitive solutions and networks for travelers of all ages and abilities." This policy is consistent with the goals, objectives and priorities articulated in the Mono Basin Vision and Community Plan of 2012.

BACKGROUND

If only such a Caltrans policy prevailed 22 years ago when the Rush Creek 4-Laning Project was imposed on the Lee Vining Community, in spite of strong opposition by community members. The result was an unjustified expansion of the road width from two to five lanes entering town from the south, greatly increasing motor vehicle speeds through the community and obliterating the in-scale, natural and welcoming features of the town entryway..

Starting in 1996, our RPAC, Chamber of Commerce and a citizens' Highway 395 Task Group, with funding and staff support from the Mono County Community Development Department, sponsored several community charettes led by expert consultants, resulting in Reports and Conceptual Plans focusing on Pedestrian Safety. These plans highlighted reducing the number of traffic lanes through town and other Traffic Calming design features.

To understand the many unfortunate impacts of the 4-laning project that Caltrans did implement, and for which there have never been adequate mitigations, I include the attached photos illustrating the numerous natural, aesthetic and social attributes of features of this area PRIOR to the implementation of that project.

Four of the photos show that in 1998, dense, mature vegetation was present on both sides of a 2 lane roadway coming into town. On the west-side of the roadway, an impressive terraced flower garden climbed up to the Best Western Motel. These features and the narrowness of the roadway had a traffic calming effect coming into town.

Figure 1: Commenter-submitted photo showing the southern entry to Lee Vining and U.S. Route 395 as seen from Lee Vining Creek (east-southeast of Lee Vining). Photo credits: Ilene Mandelbaum, August 1998.

Figure 2 Commenter-submitted photo showing the southern entry to Lee Vining, U.S. Route 395 and the southern trailhead of the Lee Vining Creek trail. Photo credits: Ilene Mandelbaum, August 1998.

Figure 3: Commenter-submitted photo showing the southern entrance of Lee Vining (with terraced flower gardens at the former Best Western hotel) and U.S. Route 395. Photo credits: Ilene Mandelbaum, August 1998.

Figure 4: Commenter-submitted photo showing the southern entrance of Lee Vining (sans retaining wall along the southbound shoulder) and U.S. Route 395. Prior to the construction

of a retaining wall, the southbound shoulder of U.S. Route 395 was lined with thick, mature vegetation. Photo credits: Ilene Mandelbaum, August 1998.

Figure 5: Commenter-submitted photo showing the southern portion of Lee Vining, U.S. Route 395 and the southern trailhead of the Lee Vining Creek trail. The Banta family previously had a community garden (as pictured in the lower right portion of the photo) near the Lee Vining Creek trail. Photo credits: Ilene Mandelbaum, August 1998.

Figure 6: Commenter-submitted photo of Bill Banta Senior harvesting vegetables from the (now former) Banta family garden, which was located at the southern entrance of Lee Vining, just downslope of U.S. Route 395 and near the southern trailhead of the Lee Vining Creek trail. Photo credits: Ilene Mandelbaum, late Summer-early Fall 1994.

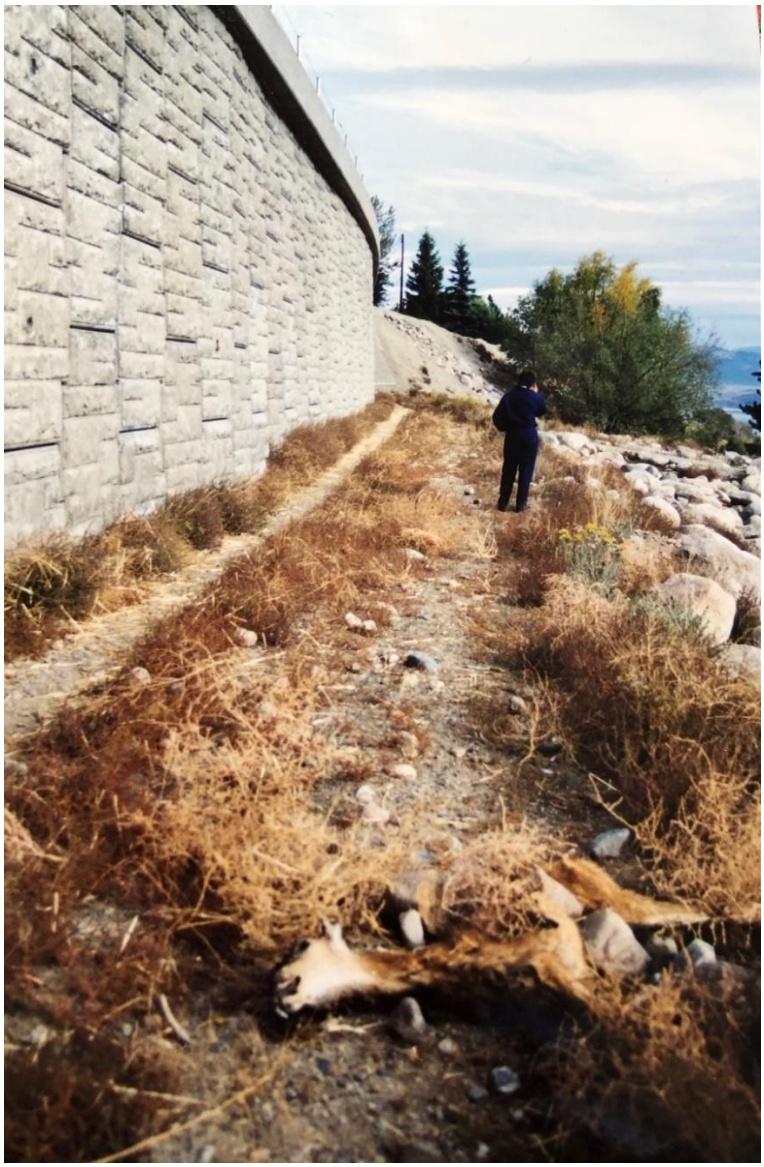
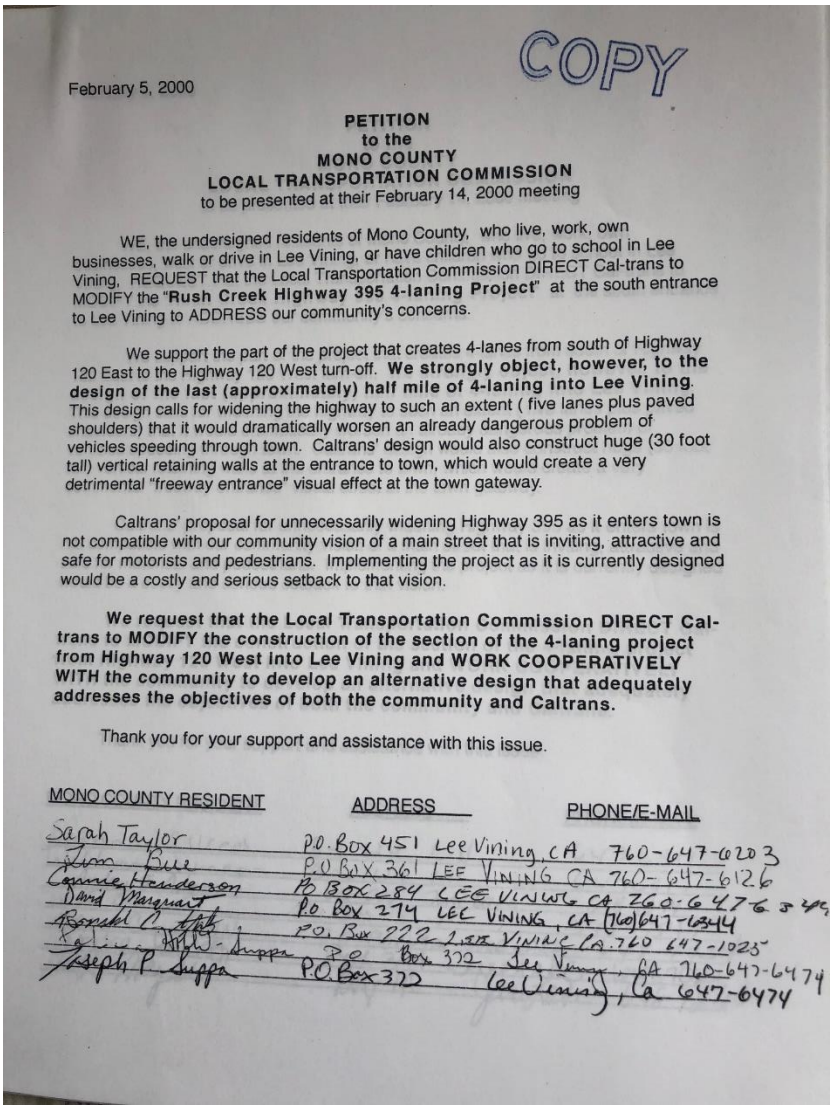


Figure 7: Commenter-submitted photo of a deceased mule deer at the base of a Caltrans retaining wall located at the southern entrance of Lee Vining, just downslope of U.S. Route 395 and near the southern trailhead of the Lee Vining Creek trail. Photo credits: Ilene Mandelbaum, August 2004.



COPY

February 5, 2000

PETITION
to the
MONO COUNTY
LOCAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
to be presented at their February 14, 2000 meeting

WE, the undersigned residents of Mono County, who live, work, own businesses, walk or drive in Lee Vining, or have children who go to school in Lee Vining, REQUEST that the Local Transportation Commission DIRECT Cal-trans to MODIFY the "**Rush Creek Highway 395 4-laning Project**" at the south entrance to Lee Vining to ADDRESS our community's concerns.

We support the part of the project that creates 4-lanes from south of Highway 120 East to the Highway 120 West turn-off. **We strongly object, however, to the design of the last (approximately) half mile of 4-laning into Lee Vining.** This design calls for widening the highway to such an extent (five lanes plus paved shoulders) that it would dramatically worsen an already dangerous problem of vehicles speeding through town. Caltrans' design would also construct huge (30 foot tall) vertical retaining walls at the entrance to town, which would create a very detrimental "freeway entrance" visual effect at the town gateway.

Caltrans' proposal for unnecessarily widening Highway 395 as it enters town is not compatible with our community vision of a main street that is inviting, attractive and safe for motorists and pedestrians. Implementing the project as it is currently designed would be a costly and serious setback to that vision.

We request that the Local Transportation Commission DIRECT Cal-trans to MODIFY the construction of the section of the 4-laning project from Highway 120 West into Lee Vining and WORK COOPERATIVELY WITH the community to develop an alternative design that adequately addresses the objectives of both the community and Caltrans.

Thank you for your support and assistance with this issue.

MONO COUNTY RESIDENT	ADDRESS	PHONE/E-MAIL
Sarah Taylor	P.O. Box 451 Lee Vining, CA	760-647-6203
Tom Bee	P.O Box 361 LEE VINING CA	760-647-6126
Connie Henderson	PO BOX 284 LEE VINING CA	760-647-6
David Margaret	Po Box 274 LEE VINING, CA	(760)647-6344
Ronald C. Apfe	P.O. Box 222 Lee Vining, CA.	760 647-1025
Joseph P. Suppa	PO Box 372 Lee Vining, CA	760-647-6474
Joseph P. Suppa	PO Box 372 Lee Vining, Ca	647-6474

Figure 8: Commenter-submitted photo of a signed public petition (only one of multiple signed pages is shown in the photograph) to the Mono County Local Transportation Commission ahead of a February 14, 2000 meeting. The petition noted objection to the proposed widening U.S. Route 395 from two lanes to four lanes from the intersection of State Route 120 West into the community of Lee Vining. The Rush Creek Four-Lane project (Caltrans) widened U.S. Route 395 from two lanes to four from 0.8 miles south of the junction with State Route 120 East into the community of Lee Vining. Ilene Mandelbaum, August 2004.

Below the east side of the roadway there was a productive and much admired vegetable and flower garden managed by an elder founder of the Lee Vining Community. This was the welcoming entry to the Lee Vining Creek trail commencing at the south end of the garden. The trail entered the creek corridor from a location considerably upstream from the subsequent rebuilt trailhead. The trail was constructed in the early 1990s by community volunteers and the US Forest Service, celebrating the revived relationship of the town to Lee Vining Creek, which had been re-watered in the mid-1980s after being desiccated by LADWP for several decades. The trail offered the

immediate experience of walking creek-side, along a tree-lined section now abandoned by the trailhead built by Caltrans. The rerouted trailhead now requires negotiating a steeper, more difficult, (slippery in winter) unshaded set of switchbacks next to an incongruous, overbuilt, unnatural concrete wall. It does not get close to the creek until considerably farther down the trail.

The construction of the walls on both sides of the roadway created a long "freeway entrance" effect. It obliterated these aesthetic features and diminished the connection to the stream for community members and visitors alike. Storm runoff from the expanded road bed resulted in washouts of the trailhead and runoff entering the creek. The eastern wall became a dangerous barrier to wildlife; (please note the last photo of a deer that plunged to its death over the wall.) The overly engineered and unnecessarily complex construction was dramatically more expensive than anything the community envisioned and precluded funding other desired features such as human-scale street lights and effective crosswalks.

Prior to the installation of this project the community was well-aware of the losses and negative impacts that the "4-laning" would cause and expressed adamant objections through a Resolution of the Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee and a Petition to the Local Transportation Commission in 2000, (please see attached photo of the petition). The petition was signed by nearly 300 community members but fell on deaf ears. We offered many design alternatives, including plans that would have created a permeable terraced treatment on the east side of the entryway that could have supported trees and other vegetation.

By 2000, our community was several years into an organized effort to define what it meant to be a "walkable" community when the Rush Creek Project was arbitrarily imposed on the town. Apart from improved sidewalks and street trees, however, none of the true traffic calming initiatives we asked for were granted. This experience illustrates why Lee Vining can be described as an "underserved community" (as considered as a priority for addressing traffic issues in the "Complete Streets" protocol) in which, historically and to this day, the ultimate decision-making authority on projects and actions affecting the well-being of residents is held by outside agencies, whether it be Caltrans, the City of Los Angeles, Southern California Edison or the US Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management.

ALTERNATIVES AND DESIGN FEATURES 2022

Today, therefore, I welcome the opportunity to offer comments on choices of Alternatives and Design Features.

(1) In terms of the extent of repaving, I would vote for the Alternative that is least extensive and expensive, if the result frees up additional funds for traffic calming features.

(2) I concur with a design through town that reduces the number of lanes for traffic from 5 to 3, with one northbound and one southbound lane and a center turn lane.

(3) Reducing the lanes from 5 to 3 through the walled section at the south entry is the number one project priority for me. There is certainly no need for 5 traffic lanes through this section. But there is a need there for wider sidewalks, bike lanes and features that slow traffic speeds before entering town. Even parking on the west side of this section would be very helpful. The reduction in traffic lanes should begin at a minimum at Utility Road on the south entry and on the north end-well north of the driveways into the high school. These transition zones are very important to signal to highway traffic to slow down for the community business district, pedestrian crosswalks and traffic entering from side-streets and driveways.

(4) I strongly urge an analysis for the junction of Highways 120 and 395 so that pedestrian sidewalks to that junction can be provided and a transition through the walled sections at the south end of town be facilitated to lower speeds.

(5) I am concerned that having angled parking on both sides of the street in the same block could unduly restrict the width of sidewalks in some locations. I suggest, therefore, that angled back-in parking and parallel parking be alternated between blocks, with the exchange between the 2 options to be moved from one side of the highway to the other where it makes the most sense in each city block.

(6) I support north and south bike travel lanes, but am interested in hearing about the advantages of having a wider lane on one side only.

(7) Regarding sidewalk widths and features such as more street trees, planters and street furniture, this should involve meeting with business owners and presentations and discussions with the community. Aesthetic, human-scale and shaded-for glare street lamps would be a tremendous asset.

(8) The community should be consulted regarding the addition of more cross walks and their design. In 2000 the community proposed 7 crosswalks. We ended up with 3. In particular, one is needed at the south end of town across from the Mono Market. A crosswalk at 3rd street would also be useful.

(9) The “hump” in the roadbed at the existing crosswalk at Nicely’s should be reduced. It impedes motorists’ distant view of that crosswalk and pedestrians’ sighting of oncoming traffic.

DRAINAGE ISSUES

(10) A climate change analysis predicts only a 4.9 % increase in floodplain water depths for 100 year events, when that amount has already been exceeded several times in storm runoff events in recent years.Therefore, the capacity of new culverts and drainage facilities may not be adequate and should be reconsidered for greater storm events. How does the re-paving of the road bed change the direction of flow of runoff in the gutters?

(11) The detention basin #2 was dropped pre-maturely from the proposal. That facility could provide a catchment for runoff that currently comes from a storm water drain in the southeast corner of the Caltrans Yard and from Mattly Ave. that flows down an eroding gully into Lee Vining Creek. That water could be put to use to create a line of trees below the bluff to visually hide the town sewage ponds. Please consult with the Lee Vining PUD regarding the design and locations of all these drainage facilities.

(12) A culvert is proposed to be replaced but kept in its current location (feature 9, #5207) north of town which has created a gully and will continue to pour water down to the old 395 highway. His has caused worsening wash outs of the old highway due to excessive runoff flooding during storm events. This old road provides an emergency evacuation route to and from town. It is an essential parallel emergency escape route from fires or when avalanches block 395. This problem must be addressed and the wash-out repaired with its own adequate culvert. The runoff from 395 should be intercepted by energy dissipators and retention basins prior to reaching the old highway. Caltrans should accept responsibility for this wash out and facilitate repairs.

(13) The culvert #5275may be creating similar problems at the turn off to Picnic Grounds Road.

(14) The culvert (PM 50.99) empties right into Lee Vining Creek at the north side of the SCE substation. What does it mean that it will be replaced with a “drainage easement?”

(15) It is wise that the bio-swale proposed along the west side of the high school sports field been dropped from consideration. That may have required the removal of the line of mature trees, which should not be disturbed. Nor does it desirable for a ditch to continue on into high school property north of the field, which could impede future development in that area. There is a proposal to create a housing project there. Could that ditch be placed much closer to the sports field north boundary?

This not a complete list of concerns, but I look forward to being involved in the discussions between Caltrans staff and community for this project. I also have many historical documents that further detail the work previously accomplished by the community on these issues (and the Caltrans response)

which I would be happy to share. Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Response to: Ilene Mandelbaum (Part 2 of 2; submitted via e-mail)

Caltrans once again thanks Ms. Mandelbaum for her submission of comments and for sharing historic photos of the community of Lee Vining before and after the construction of new Caltrans facilities. The Department acknowledges how changes to U.S. Route 395 on previous projects has affected the Lee Vining community, and a public engagement strategy is currently being developed to ensure that the community's voices are heard as this project's design is finalized. The following are responses to your numbered comments as noted above:

(1) The project development team has selected build alternative one (1) for the project. This was the less expensive of the two build alternatives proposed in the draft Initial Study.

(2) Design options 1, 2 and 4 (as described by Caltrans staff during the February 15 public information meeting) would reduce the number of lanes on U.S. Route 395 in Lee Vining from five to three.

(3) The potential reduction of travel lanes from four to two is being considered south of postmile 51.2 (approximately 200 feet south of the Lakeview Lodge).The exact location of this transition has not been determined and Caltrans will take this comment into consideration when determining the transition limits. It should be noted that the southern limit of the retaining wall that you havenoted begins around postmile 51.0.

(4) A round-about at the intersection of U.S. Route 395 and State Route 120 West falls outside of the scope and funding available for this project and is not being considered at this time. However, the Department may consider a round-about at this location on a future project based on operational needs and continued input from the community.

(5) Diagonal parking could be incorporated on blocks where it is most needed. The Department will consider this comment when laying out parking in the design phase of this project and will continue to engage the community as the project's design is finalized. Caltrans anticipates working with Mono County and local business owners to determine ideal locations for angled back-in parking spaces.

(6) Design options 1, 2 and 3 (as described by Caltrans staff during the February 15 public information meeting) propose to install bike lanes in both directions on U.S. Route 395 through the community of Lee Vining. Design option 4 is an additional option that would provide a grade-separated multi-use path from the travel way. This path would be slightly elevated above the roadway surface of U.S. Route 395, adding further

separation from multi-use path users and passing motorists on the highway.

(7) At a minimum, the Department will maintain the existing street trees in Lee Vining where feasible. The option to add more landscaping will be explored and would involve establishing a maintenance agreement with Mono County. It should be noted that discussions with the County are currently underway regarding such an agreement. Caltrans anticipates the installation, where feasible, of pedestrian-scale lighting that is compliant with current Mono County Dark Sky regulations. The potential installation of additional features (such as benches) will also be considered moving forward.

(8) An engineering study will be performed to analyze the existing marked crossing locations and the possibility of an additional marked crossing in Lee Vining. All marked crossing locations will include advanced yield lines with associated signage, parking prohibitions to provide adequate visibility of the crossing, pedestrian crossing warning signs identifying the crossing location, and a high visibility marked crosswalk pattern. The two existing rapid rectangular flashing beacons will be maintained with this project; with the community's support, the location of the southern rapid rectangular flashing beacon system may be relocated if the engineering study supports an additional or relocated marked crossing location.

(9) The surface of U.S. Route 395 within Lee Vining will be raised up to approximately 6 inches. Caltrans will take this location in to account when adjusting the roadway.

(10) New drainage facilities will be designed to accommodate flows based on Standards defined by Caltrans. Drainage facilities are typically designed to convey a 25-year rain event. Gutter flow in Lee Vining will continue to flow from south to north which matches the general topography of Lee Vining.

(11) The construction of a second stormwater infiltration basin (located at the intersection of Mattly Avenue and 1st Street) is not being considered at this time. The Department proposes to convey stormwater to a flatter area north of the Lee Vining High School. With this change, drainage from Caltrans right of way will not contribute significantly to increased flows to the area where a second basin was formerly considered.

(12) Caltrans recognizes the erosion problem at postmile 52.1. This project is considering several options to alleviate this problem including replacing the existing culvert, adding an additional culvert south of the existing culvert to divert some of the flow, and placing rock slope protection at the culvert's outlet to prevent future erosion. Additionally, the Department will approach the U.S. Forest Service to determine if a partnership could

provide a solution for the washed-out road on adjacent Inyo National Forest land (Forest Rd 1N56).

(13) The washed-out terrain occurring at this location has been noted as well. The Department will engage with the Inyo National Forest to develop a stormwater design solution for this location.

(14) The culvert at postmile 50.99 will not require replacement as part of this project. Caltrans has an existing drainage easement in this area to maintain the rock slope stabilization at this culvert's outlet and inlet. This project will review the effectiveness of the existing rock and modify it as necessary.

(15) The Department recognizes the row of mature trees along the western edge of the Lee Vining High School ball fields and proposes to convey stormwater flows in an underground pipe adjacent to the row of trees. Caltrans will work with the Eastern Sierra Unified School District and Mono County in subsequent project phases to design and construct a ditch that aligns with future uses of the property directly north of Lee Vining High School.

Comments from: Ed Beck (submitted via the project website)

Please just leave lee Vining alone. pave 395, stripe it. and please let it go. It did not work in Bridgeport, and I bet ya it won't work in LV.

Response to: Ed Beck

Thank you for your comment on the Lee Vining Rehabilitation Project. Based on the number of comments and support received for lane reduction and implementation of complete streets features such as bike lanes, wider sidewalks, bulb-outs, pedestrian scale lighting and landscaping, Caltrans intends to move forward with the project alternative and common design features and design options described in this final Initial Study. The project development team for this project will continue to engage the public and consider public input during the design phase of project development to help guide the final design choice for U.S. Route 395 in the community of Lee Vining.

Comments from: Janice Barnett (submitted via the project website)

I think option 3 is the best to keep traffic moving and people safe.

Response to: Janice Barnett

Thank you for your comment on the Lee Vining Rehabilitation Project. Based on the number of comments and support received for lane reduction and

implementation of complete streets features such as bike lanes, wider sidewalks, bulb-outs, pedestrian scale lighting and landscaping, Caltrans intends to move forward with the project alternative and common design features and design options described in this final Initial Study. The project development team for this project will continue to engage the public and consider public input during the design phase of project development to help guide the final design choice for U.S. Route 395 in the community of Lee Vining.

Comments from: Kimberly Traynor (submitted via the project website)

Please consider a bike path or at the least an actual bike lane all the way from Lee Vining to the Lundy Canyon Road. The portion of 395 that is just west of Mono Lake right there is far too narrow and incredibly dangerous for bikes. I know this was being talked about in the past, but seems to have been washed out of future planning. Thanks!

Response to: Kimberly Traynor

Thank you for your input on the Lee Vining Rehabilitation project. While dedicated bike lanes will be added within the community of Lee Vining for this project (from postmiles 51.2 to 51.7), adding dedicated bike lanes north of Lee Vining falls outside of the scope and funding available for this project. The Department may consider the construction of dedicated bike lanes on U.S. Route 395 north of Lee Vining on future projects.

Comments from: Bill Perry (submitted via the project website)

Option #3 appears to be the best overall for traffic and the local business. Reducing the amount of lanes thru Lee Vining to a single lane in each direction will create more congestion entering town and could induce more traffic accidents via travelers speeding up to get ahead of others when the a lane ends.

Response to: Bill Perry

Thank you for your comment on the Lee Vining Rehabilitation Project. The Department has determined that average annual traffic volumes on U.S. Route 395 in Lee Vining are low enough that a reduction of travel lanes from five to three will not severely impact traffic in the community. Based on the number of comments and support received for lane reduction and implementation of complete streets features such as bike lanes, wider sidewalks, bulb-outs, pedestrian scale lighting and landscaping, Caltrans intends to move forward with the project alternative and common design features and design options described in this final Initial Study. The project development team for this project will continue to engage the public and consider public input during the design phase of project development to help

guide the final design choice for U.S. Route 395 in the community of Lee Vining.

Comments from: Janet Carle (submitted via the project website)

Thank you for the presentation on this project last night. It is so exciting to finally have some improvement on the situation in Lee Vining. My husband and I have lived in the Mono Basin since 1982. We are ALL FOR reducing the lanes from 5 to 3 through town. The current 5 lanes encourage passing and speeding. TRAFFIC CALMING is a very worthy goal and should greatly enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety. DIAGONAL PARKING is problematic either front in or back in. Prefer front in, but it seems that visibility to back out onto Hwy 395 would be less than ideal. We realize it provides more parking, but in Bridgeport we deliberately avoid parking in the back in spaces. Best to stick with parallel parking unless the business owners have strong feelings otherwise. BIKE LANE FORMAT: Prefer the alternative with bike lanes on both sides of the street, and the 3 lanes of traffic with parallel parking. It is really scary to try to get out of your car in town right now with the semi trucks passing inches away. The bike lanes would provide a much needed buffer from the traffic. Like the idea of the additional buffer between the bike lanes and the traffic as well. BULBS: like the look of these and think that the snow removal issues could be worked out. Anything that enhances pedestrian safety should be seriously considered. ROUND ABOUT at HWY 120 W and Hwy 395 This is probably not in the budget, but is a worthy goal. A roundabout would serve to calm traffic down before entering the main part of Lee Vining. CONTINUATION OF SIDEWALK TO UTILITY ROAD: Yes! Very important. DRAINAGE: It sounds like there are some major improvements planned for the drainage off the highway. I know there have been problems with the existing sewage ponds and also erosion on the Lee Vining Creek trail. Please keep those places in mind. FUTURE MEETINGS: It would be very helpful to have a digital mock up of the plan actually in place in Lee Vining if that is possible to do. Looking forward to this project evolving and making our town safer, more welcoming and more walkable. Thank You!!

Response to: Janet Carle

Thank you for your comment on the Lee Vining Rehabilitation Project. Based on the number of comments and support received for lane reduction and implementation of complete streets features such as bike lanes, wider sidewalks, bulb-outs, pedestrian scale lighting and landscaping, Caltrans intends to move forward with the project alternative and common design features and design options described in this final Initial Study. The project development team for this project will continue to engage the public and consider public input during the design phase of project development to help guide the final design choice for U.S. Route 395 in the community of Lee Vining.

As you mentioned, a round-about at the intersection of U.S. Route 395 and State Route 120 West does fall outside of the scope and funding available for this project. Thank you for your interest in future meetings for this project. The Caltrans project development team will continue with public outreach efforts throughout the life of the project. Caltrans staff will continue to meet with Mono County Staff and will provide a 30% Design review through the Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee which is anticipated to be in January 2023.

Comments from: Jeff Wyneken (submitted via e-mail)

I am writing in support of a "complete streets" design for Lee Vining as part of the Caltrans pavement rehabilitation project. I am a homeowner of 27 years in Mono City.

Here I would like to offer my personal views and suggestions for the project. First, I recommend Alternative 1 (mill and fill outside of town limits) for pavement rehab, in the hope that the relative savings in funds would be applied to complete streets design features. The community has long been waiting for such improvements.

On specific design features, and per the Mono Basin Community Plan, as well as residents I have heard from, I strongly endorse traffic-calming elements:

(1) Reconfiguring the current five lanes through town to three lanes, transitioning north of the high school playing field and, on the south end of town, as close to SR 120 as feasible. A gateway bulb-out or similar feature on both ends of town, with the addition of an attractive welcoming sign on the north side (the south side has one already) would be a signal to drivers that they are passing through an active community containing pedestrians, bikes, and business congestion (such as parking maneuvers).

(2) Bulb-outs at pedestrian crossings throughout town. Pedestrian crossing signs and lights (ad-fixed to the roadway matrix itself).

(3) Diagonal parking at congested sites (such as the Mono Market; the section from Nicely's to the El Mono Hotel, thus including the Chamber of Commerce (Mono Lake Committee); and Mono Cone. This of course will provide needed on-street parking, but it will also serve to slow through-traffic down.

(4) 25 mph posted through the town. This is the case on 395 through the Owens Valley, and it should apply to Lee Vining as well. Speeding through town should be countered however possible.

In addition to these traffic features, the community would very much like to see its "main street" be just that, instead of a US highway throughway. Along these lines, then:

(5) Bike lanes (in both directions)

(6) Pedestrian-scale lighting (compliant with dark-sky standards)

(7) Landscape planting along sidewalks.

(8) Wider sidewalks, with expansions for future parklets and cafe seating.

The concern from snow plowers about bulb-outs and snow storage seems to be not too great a problem, given that almost all businesses are closed in the dead of winter and on-street parking is minimal. Any inconvenience during these brief periods are, to my view, far outweighed by the amenities listed above and the creation of a livable, appealing, and safe main street in Lee Vining.

We are all looking forward to seeing Caltrans' ideas and proposals for the design. I understand that the first step is deciding on a pavement plan, but when the time comes we hope to have ample opportunity to review and comment on your design proposals, well in advance of your final selection. This concern was raised in the 2/17 RPAC meeting, but I did not hear any assurance at that time that the community will have a real opportunity to comment and participate in the final list of street improvements.

Thank you for this once in a generation opportunity to reshape the look and feel of our town, and to make it a safer and saner place to live in and visit.

Response to: Jeff Wyneken

Thank you for your comment on the Lee Vining Rehabilitation Project. Based on the number of comments and support received for lane reduction and implementation of complete streets features such as bike lanes, wider sidewalks, bulb-outs, pedestrian scale lighting and landscaping, Caltrans intends to move forward with the project alternative and common design features and design options described in this final Initial Study. The project development team for this project will continue to engage the public and consider public input during the design phase of project development to help guide the final design choice for U.S. Route 395 in the community of Lee Vining. Responses to your numbered comments are as follows:

(1) Design options 1, 2 and 4 (as noted during the February 15 public information meeting held by Caltrans) would propose to reduce the number of lanes on U.S. Route 395 from four to two from postmiles 51.2 to 51.7. The potential reduction of travel lanes from four to two is being considered south of postmile 51.2 (approximately 200 feet south of the

Lakeview Lodge).The exact location of this transition has not been determined and Caltrans will take this comment into consideration when determining the transition limits. In addition, the Department will assess the feasibility of constructing gateway features at the northern and southern limits of Lee Vining for further providing for traffic calming of the community.

(2) Bulb-outs throughout the community of Lee Vining are being considered for this project. All marked crossing locations will include advanced yield lines with associated signage, parking prohibitions to provide adequate visibility of the crossing, pedestrian crossing warning signs identifying the crossing location, and a high visibility marked crosswalk pattern. Additional pedestrian rapid rectangular flashing beacons currently fall outside of the funding available for this project but may be considered during the design phase of the project.

(3) Diagonal parking could be incorporated on blocks where it is most needed with the design option that has been selected. The Department will consider this comment when laying out parking in the design phase of this project.

(4) The Caltrans project development team believes that the potential introduction of traffic calming elements (reduction of travel lanes from five to three, bulb-outs, bike lanes or multi-use path, and wider sidewalks) to Lee Vining may cause passing motorists to reduce speeds through the community. A traffic survey would be needed during the design phase of the project to investigate reducing the posted speed limit to 25 miles per hour through the community.

(5) Design options 1, 2 and 3 propose to install bike lanes in both directions on U.S. Route 395 through the community of Lee Vining.

(6) Caltrans anticipates the installation, where feasible, of pedestrian-scale lighting that is compliant with current Mono County Dark Sky regulations.

(7) At a minimum, the Department will maintain the existing street trees in Lee Vining where feasible. Additional landscaping is possible contingent upon a maintenance agreement with Mono County. Discussions are currently taking place between Caltrans and the County to develop such an agreement.

(8) The proposed wider sidewalks could certainly be used for future parklets and outdoor dining. The Caltrans encroachment permits office would be willing to work with local business owners and the County to utilize this space.

Thank you for your interest in staying engaged with Caltrans throughout this project. The Caltrans project development team will continue with outreach

efforts throughout the life of the project. Caltrans staff will continue to meet with Mono County Staff and will provide a 30% Design review through the Mono Basin RPAC which is anticipated to be in January 2023.

Comments from: Constance Millar (submitted via e-mail)

I am writing in regard to the CalTrans Lee Vining Pavement Rehabilitation Project. I own two properties/homes in Mono City and have lived in one since 1994. First I want to offer my sincere thanks to all CalTrans staff who have worked to date on this project and who have offered multiple opportunities to explain the project and communicate details with the public. I commend the agency for using the Mono Basin Community Plan (which I was part of formulating) as a guide to the desires of the greater Basin residency.

I support Alternative 1 (mill and fill outside of town limits) for pavement rehab, in the hope that the relative savings in funds will be applied to “complete streets” design features.

On specific design features, I strongly endorse traffic-calming elements, including:

(1) Reconfiguring the current five lanes through town to three lanes, transitioning north of the high school playing field and, on the south end of town, as close to SR 120 as feasible. A gateway bulb-out or similar feature on both ends of town, with the addition of an attractive welcoming sign on the north side (the south side has one already) would be a signal to drivers that they are passing through an active community containing pedestrians, bikes, and business congestion (such as parking maneuvers).

(2) Bulb-outs at pedestrian crossings throughout town. Pedestrian crossing signs and lights (ad-fixed to the roadway matrix itself). I don’t believe this would impose added burden in winter, as currently (even with multiple lanes) only 2 lanes north/south are routinely plowed, and many businesses are closed in winter.

(3) Diagonal parking at congested sites (such as the Mono Market; the section from Nicely's to the El Mono Hotel, thus including the Chamber of Commerce (Mono Lake Committee); and Mono Cone. This will provide needed on-street parking, and also serve to slow through-traffic down.

(4) 25 mph posted through the town. This is the case on US 395 through the Owens Valley, and it should apply to Lee Vining as well. Speeding through town should be countered in all ways possible.

In addition to these traffic features, I urge, as the Mono Basin Community Plan does also, that design actions are taken to convert Lee Vining’s

“downtown” to be more of a rural "main street" rather than a major highway throughway. This could include such things as:

(5) Bike lanes (in both directions)

(6) Pedestrian-scale lighting (compliant with dark-sky standards)

(7) Landscape planting along sidewalks including trees.

(8) Wider sidewalks, with expansions for future parklets and cafe seating.

I look forward to hearing Caltrans' specific ideas and proposals for the design and I will be ready to provide comments then. Thanks again to all staff in this project. We are very excited about a future for Lee Vining as a fine Sierra Nevada rural community.

Response to: Constance Millar

Thank you for your comment on the Lee Vining Rehabilitation Project. Based on the number of comments and support received for lane reduction and implementation of complete streets features such as bike lanes, wider sidewalks, bulb-outs, pedestrian scale lighting and landscaping, Caltrans intends to move forward with the project alternative and common design features and design options described in this final Initial Study. The project development team for this project will continue to engage the public and consider public input during the design phase of project development to help guide the final design choice for U.S. Route 395 in the community of Lee Vining. Responses to your numbered comments are as follows:

(1) Design options 1, 2 and 4 would propose to reduce the number of lanes on U.S. Route 395 from four to two from postmiles 51.2 to 51.7. The potential reduction of travel lanes from four to two is being considered south of postmile 51.2 (approximately 200 feet south of the Lakeview Lodge).The exact location of this transition has not been determined and Caltrans will take this comment into consideration when determining the transition limits. In addition, the Department will assess the feasibility of constructing gateway features at the northern and southern limits of Lee Vining as an additional traffic calming feature for this project.

(2) Bulb-outs throughout the community of Lee Vining are being considered for this project. All marked crossing locations will include advanced yield lines with associated signage, parking prohibitions to provide adequate visibility of the crossing, pedestrian crossing warning signs identifying the crossing location, and a high visibility marked crosswalk pattern. Additional pedestrian rapid rectangular flashing beacons currently fall outside of the funding available for this project but may be considered during the design phase of the project. The two rapid rectangular flashing beacons will be perpetuated with this project, and with the Community’s

support, the location of the southern rapid rectangular flashing beacon system in the community may be relocated if the engineering study supports an additional or relocated marked crossing.

(3) Parking will be further evaluated in the design phase. Diagonal parking could be incorporated on blocks where it is most needed with the design option that has been selected. District 9 will consider comments and feedback when laying out parking in the design phase of this project and will continue to engage the community as the project's design is finalized. Caltrans anticipates working with Mono County and local business owners to determine ideal locations for angled back-in parking spaces.

(4) The Caltrans project development team believes that the potential introduction of traffic calming elements (reduction of travel lanes from five to three, bulb-outs, bike lanes or multi-use path, and wider sidewalks) to Lee Vining may cause passing motorists to reduce speeds through the community. A traffic survey would be needed during the design phase of the project to investigate reducing the posted speed limit to 25 miles per hour through the community.

(5) Design options 1, 2 and 3 (as noted during the February 15 public information meeting held by Caltrans) propose to install bike lanes in both directions on U.S. Route 395 through the community of Lee Vining.

(6) Caltrans anticipates the installation, where feasible, of pedestrian-scale lighting that is compliant with current Mono County Dark Sky regulations.

(7) At a minimum, the Department will maintain the existing street trees in Lee Vining where feasible. Additional landscaping is possible contingent upon a maintenance agreement with Mono County. Discussions are currently taking place between Caltrans and the County to develop such an agreement.

(8) The proposed wider sidewalks could certainly be used for future parklets and outdoor dining. The Caltrans encroachment permits office would be willing to work with local business owners and the County to utilize this space.

Thank you for your interest in staying engaged with Caltrans throughout this project. The Caltrans project development team will continue with outreach efforts throughout the life of the project. Caltrans staff will continue to meet with Mono County Staff and will provide a 30% Design review through the Mono Basin RPAC which is anticipated to be in January 2023.

Comments from: Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee (Kevin Brown, chair; submitted via e-mail)

Dear Mr. Spaulding,

We write to comment on the Lee Vining Main Street Rehabilitation Project as part of the public comment period for the Initial Study. The Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee (RPAC) counsels the Mono County Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, and Planning Division on planning and development issues within the Mono Basin. Additionally, the RPAC serves as a critical community forum and information clearinghouse on planning matters.

Beginning in 2010, the Mono Basin RPAC spearheaded a multi-year, intensive, community-based planning effort designed to guide future land use, quality of life, and development decisions in the Mono Basin. The result of that effort is the Mono Basin Community Plan, completed in 2012. The Plan is a real achievement in focusing the varied ambitions of a diverse rural community into clear, achievable goals for the future. The “Mono Basin vision,” a preface to the Plan that distills several community values, makes apparent how residents feel about transportation and community character. What is important in the Mono Basin are “small, compact communities,” including “a walkable town with public gathering spaces, a vibrant and attractive commercial area … and connectivity through transit services and trails” (p. 13).

This vision for the Mono Basin shares a strong affinity with the recently adopted Caltrans policy on “complete streets.” The policy states that “all transportation projects funded or overseen by Caltrans will provide comfortable, convenient, and connected complete streets facilities for people walking, biking, and taking transit … unless an exception is documented and approved.” It further states that the aims of this policy are to “not only meet state climate, health, equity, and environmental goals but also to foster socially and economically vibrant, thriving, and resilient communities.”

We believe that the Lee Vining street rehabilitation project is a once in a generation opportunity to fulfill a critical part of the Mono Basin vision and to meet the Caltrans directive for complete streets. In addition to the conceptual overlap between the Mono Basin vision and the Caltrans complete streets directive, many of the design options for the rehabilitation project discussed by Caltrans staff in recent RPAC meetings have been met with substantial enthusiasm from community members.

In this context, we would like to take the opportunity to restate specific transportation and community character objectives in the Plan while decisions about the build alternatives identified in the Initial Study, as well as several design options, are pending. Action items in the Plan relevant to the street rehabilitation project include:

(1) “Prioritiz[ing] pedestrian safety facilities and improvements on Highway 395 over other facility improvements” (p. 23).

(2) “Emphasiz[ing] safe travel for pedestrians to community and activity centers, such as schools, parks, library, museums and visitor centers” (p. 23).

(3) “Initiat[ing] community discussions to consider pedestrian and street lighting in appropriate locations for safety, connectivity, and comfort and ensure compliance with Dark Sky Regulations” (p. 23).

(4) “Improv[ing] parking opportunities in Lee Vining” as part of an effort to “contribute to business viability and residential livability” (p. 23; see also 9A-10A).

(5) “Pursu[ing] Objective D of the Mono Basin Policies in the Circulation Element of the [Mono County] General Plan to make progress toward a comprehensive streetscape plan for the Lee Vining Main Street area that enhances pedestrian safety, connectivity (including trails), and makes Lee Vining a more attractive place to walk, live and work” (p. 23).

   a. Streetscape elements identified in this section of the County General Plan include road improvements, pedestrian facilities, cross walks, parking, transit facilities, signage, landscaping, drainage facilities, underground utility placement, community entryway improvements, lighting, corridor aesthetics, and speed limits and enforcement (p. 10A).

   b. “Improvement designs for the Highway 395 corridor in Lee Vining shall address the needs of all feasible modes of people movement, including transit, cyclists, pedestrians, and local and interregional traffic. The movement of interregional traffic shall not be the sole consideration in the design of highway improvements within the Lee Vining community” (p. 11A).

These goals and policy changes advocated for in the Plan suggest the importance to the community of improving the safety, appearance, and aesthetics of Lee Vining through a change in the design and function of U.S. 395. The design options involving “complete streets” principles, ADA upgrades, and new stormwater drainage areas described by Caltrans staff at the February 9 and 17, 2022 Mono Basin RPAC meetings and at a Caltrans-hosted open house meeting on February 15, 2022 would go a long way to meeting many of these objectives.

Specifically, we support the inclusion of the following design options in the final build:

(6) Lane reduction to three total lanes (two travel and one turning) and introduction of other traffic calming infrastructure as need to reduce speeds on U.S. 395.

(7) Bike lanes for the entire stretch of the project. These can serve as "anchors" for future opportunities to extend bicycle infrastructure north and south.

(8) Wider sidewalks with the possibility for future restaurant outdoor seating and parklet construction.

(9) "Bulb outs" at intersections and crosswalks to improve safety for pedestrians.

(10) Pedestrian-scale lighting that complies with dark sky regulations.

(11) Landscaping that can be adequately maintained through agreement with county staff.

(12) Stormwater runoff infrastructure that will stop current erosion problems that affect the Lee Vining Creek watershed and Lee Vining Public Utility District treatment ponds.

(13) Additionally, we support the choice of Build Alternative 1 ("mill and fill") identified in the Initial Study, as the lower cost of this build alternative will allow for inclusion of complete streets design options within the overall project budget.

The Mono Basin RPAC is not able to, nor would we, speak for the community on many of the specific design questions related to this project, but we do want to speak up for what we believe are consensus positions identified through our previous work in developing the Mono Basin Community Plan.

Thank you for your consideration of this comment letter.

Sincerely,

Kevin C. Brown, chair

Response to: Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee (Kevin Brown, chair)

Caltrans District 9 would like to thank the Mono County Regional Planning Advisory Committee for the above comments and for hosting two open virtual meetings during the month of February to further discuss the project with Caltrans staff. The two meetings held allowed for additional opportunities for members of the public to provide input and have questions answered by Caltrans staff. The Department looks forward with staying engaged with the Committee throughout the life of the project to design and construct a project that aligns with the Mono County Community Plan as much as possible.

The following are responses to your numbered comments above:

(1) The Caltrans project development team is proposing multiple pedestrian facility upgrades on this project including, the reduction of travel lanes from five to three, bulb-outs, bike lanes or multi-use path, and wider sidewalks. These changes to Lee Vining may cause passing motorists to reduce speeds through the community.

(2) In addition to potentially wider sidewalks, bulb-outs, and bike lanes, an engineering study will be performed to analyze the existing marked crossing locations and the possibility of an additional marked crossing in Lee Vining. All marked crossing locations will include advanced yield lines with associated signage, parking prohibitions to provide adequate visibility of the crossing, pedestrian crossing warning signs identifying the crossing location, and a high visibility marked crosswalk pattern. The two existing rapid rectangular flashing beacons will be maintained with this project; with the community's support, the location of the southern rapid rectangular flashing beacon system may be relocated if the engineering study supports an additional or relocated marked crossing location.

(3) Caltrans anticipates the installation, where feasible, of pedestrian-scale lighting that is compliant with current Mono County Dark Sky regulations. The Caltrans project development team will continue with outreach efforts throughout the life of the project. Caltrans staff will continue to meet with Mono County Staff and will provide a 30% Design review through the Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee which is anticipated to be in January 2023.

(4) Parking will be further evaluated in the design phase. Diagonal parking could be incorporated on blocks where it is most needed with the design option that has been selected. District 9 will consider comments and feedback when laying out parking in the design phase of this project and will continue to engage the community as the project's design is finalized. Caltrans anticipates working with Mono County and local business owners to determine ideal locations for angled back-in parking spaces.

(5) Caltrans once again looks forward to staying engaged with the Mono County Regional Planning Advisory Committee throughout the life of this project during the design phase to discuss all of the above proposed improvements of U.S. Route 395 through the community of Lee Vining. Caltrans staff will continue to meet with Mono County Staff and will provide a 30% Design review through the Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee which is anticipated to be in January 2023.

(6) The Caltrans project development team has selected to advance a project design that reduces the number of travel lanes on U.S. Route 395 from five to three in the community of Lee Vining and provide for additional upgrades, including: bike lanes on both sides of the roadway, permanent bulb-outs at marked pedestrian crossings, and construct wider sidewalks.

(7) Caltrans has selected to advance a project design that included dedicated bike lanes on both sides of U.S. Route 395 in the community of Lee Vining. Throughout the remainder of the project limits, dedicated bike lanes are outside of the budget and scope for this project. The possibility for dedicated bike lanes on U.S. Route 395 outside of the community of Lee Vining may be considered for future Caltrans projects.

(8) The proposed wider sidewalks could certainly be used for future parklets and outdoor dining. The Caltrans encroachment permits office would be willing to work with local business owners and the County to utilize this space.

(9) Caltrans has selected to advance a project design that includes permanent bulb-outs at marked pedestrian crossings on U.S. Route 395 in Lee Vining.

(10) Caltrans anticipates the installation, where feasible, of pedestrian-scale lighting that is compliant with current Mono County Dark Sky regulations.

(11) At a minimum, the Department will perpetuate the existing street trees in Lee Vining where feasible. The option to add more landscaping will be considered contingent upon the establishment of a maintenance agreement with Mono County. Such discussions with the County are taking place.

(12) Caltrans is proposing multiple drainage improvements for this project. The permanent drainage treatment being considered for this project will reduce flows in the vicinity of the Lee Vining Creek Trail and the sewage treatment ponds.

(13) The Caltrans project development team has selected build alternative one (1), which is the less expensive of the two pavement strategies being considered for this project.

Caltrans District 9 once again thanks the Mono County Regional Planning Advisory Committee for all of the input provided on the Lee Vining Rehabilitation project.

Comments from: Jennifer Kreitz (submitted via the project website)

The complete street should avoid angled parking. The community of Bridgeport has that and has experienced accidents from this and is not satisfied with them. I don’t understand why the sidewalks are not the same width on both sides. I prefer three lanes total, this should slow traffic organically. Bike lanes should be on both sides of the road. Clear delineation of the bike lanes is critical for safety, such as coloring the lane and maintenance of the delineation. Seasonal barriers or permanent physical barriers between the bike lanes and the car lanes would be great. Thank you!

Response to: Jennifer Kreitz

Thank you for your comment on the Lee Vining Rehabilitation Project. Based on the number of comments and support received for lane reduction and implementation of complete streets features such as bike lanes, wider sidewalks, bulb-outs, pedestrian scale lighting and landscaping, Caltrans intends to move forward with the project alternative and common design features and design options described in this final Initial Study. The project development team for this project will continue to engage the public and consider public input during the design phase of project development to help guide the final design choice for U.S. Route 395 in the community of Lee Vining.

Design option 1 (as noted during the February 15 public information meeting held by Caltrans) would provide for a three-foot buffer between the active travel lanes of U.S Route 395 and proposed bike lanes should the number of travel lanes be reduced from five to three. Other factors, including angled in parking, would affect the ability to provide for a buffer between bike lanes and the travel lanes. Seasonal and permanent barriers between proposed bike lanes and the travel lanes are not being considered at this time, as such barriers would reduce the number of parking spaces available on U.S. Route 395 in the town of Lee Vining.

Comments from: Chuck Newdigate (submitted via the project website)

Traffic needs to slow down in town. The only way to do that is to narrow the road to two lanes. Consider putting a curve into the road on the north end to slow vehicles around the high school. Option 1 is best as the angled back in parking just sucks in Bridgeport.

Response to: Chuck Newdigate

Thank you for your comment on the Lee Vining Rehabilitation Project. Based on the number of comments and support received for lane reduction and implementation of complete streets features such as bike lanes, wider sidewalks, bulb-outs, pedestrian scale lighting and landscaping, Caltrans intends to move forward with the project alternative and common design features and design options described in this final Initial Study. The project development team for this project will continue to engage the public and consider public input during the design phase of project development to help guide the final design choice for U.S. Route 395 in the community of Lee Vining. The Caltrans project development team believes that the potential introduction of traffic calming elements (reduction of travel lanes, bulb-outs, bike lanes, and wider sidewalks) to Lee Vining may cause passing motorists to drive slower through the community. Curving the alignment of U.S. Route 395 at the northern end of town is not being considered at this time for this project, but Caltrans will investigate the feasibility of constructing gateway

features at the community limits to provide for additional traffic calming measures.

Caltrans District 9 acknowledges that while angled in parking may provide for more parking spaces in Lee Vining, it may not be preferred by certain members of the public. Caltrans anticipates working with Mono County and local business owners to determine ideal locations for angled back in parking spaces.

Comments from: Margaret Eissler (submitted via e-mail)

Thank you for this project proposal and the time you and your team have dedicated to recent community meetings. I am excited about this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that will contribute so much to Lee Vining and the safety of residents and visitors from around the world.

(1) Of the two Build Alternatives, I support the Alternative 1 Pavement Rehabilitation Strategy. I am aware that Alternative 2 is far more costly than Alternative 1 and could easily deplete funding for the rest of the project. Selection of Alternative 1 most reliably affords the completion of the entire project and the fruition of a rare opportunity to improve community and visitor experience and safety.

(2) I also support the Complete Streets Planning priorities of multi-modal travel, ample space for pedestrians, separated bikeways, landscaped areas with street trees, … and the following elements specific to Lee Vining:

(3) Reducing the current five lanes to a total of three—two lanes for travel and one turn lane—and introducing other traffic calming infrastructure to reduce U.S. Route 395 traffic speed through town;

(4) Creating bike lanes the entire length of the project;

(5) Upgrading and widening sidewalks to allow safer walkways, the possibility of restaurant outdoor seating, …;

(6) Adding curb bulb-outs at intersections, high visibility crosswalks, and pedestrian-activated traffic control devices to improve safety and ease of crossing the highway;

(7) Incorporating pedestrian-scale lighting that complies with dark sky regulations;

(8) Landscaping in a way that can be maintained through agreement with Mono County staff; and

(9) Improving stormwater runoff infrastructure that will stop current erosion problems that affect the Lee Vining Creek watershed and Lee Vining Public Utility District treatment ponds.

As the Complete Streets Planning Toolbox states, all of these elements work in tandem to create a vibrant, people-oriented community space. Our community will flourish with these changes and additions.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Response to: Margaret Eissler

Thank you for your comment on the Lee Vining Rehabilitation project. Responses to your above number comments are as follows:

(1) The project development team has evaluated all public input received to help select build alternative 1 for the project.

(2) The Caltrans project development team is proposing multiple pedestrian facility upgrades on this project including, the reduction of travel lanes from five to three, bulb-outs, bike lanes, and wider sidewalks.

(3) The project development team has selected to advance a ProJet design that proposes to reduce the number of travel lanes of U.S. Route 395 in Lee Vining from five to three.

(4) Caltrans has selected to advance a project design that includes dedicated bike lanes on both sides of U.S. Route 395 in the community of Lee Vining. Throughout the remainder of the project limits, dedicated bike lanes are outside of the budget and scope for this project. The possibility for dedicated bike lanes on U.S. Route 395 outside of the community of Lee Vining may be considered for future Caltrans projects.

(5) Caltrans is proposing to replace and upgrade existing sidewalks throughout Lee Vining on U.S. Route 395. The proposed wider sidewalks could certainly be used for future parklets and outdoor dining. The Caltrans encroachment permits office would be willing to work with local business owners and the County to utilize this space.

(6) Bulb-outs throughout the community of Lee Vining are being considered for this project. An engineering study will be performed to analyze the existing marked crossing locations and the possibility of an additional marked crossing in Lee Vining. All marked crossing locations will include advanced yield lines with associated signage, parking prohibitions to provide adequate visibility of the crossing, pedestrian crossing warning signs identifying the crossing location, and a high visibility marked crosswalk pattern. The two existing rapid rectangular flashing beacons will be maintained with this project; with the community's support, the location

of the southern rapid rectangular flashing beacon system may be relocated if the engineering study supports an additional or relocated marked crossing location.

(7) Caltrans anticipates the installation, where feasible, of pedestrian-scale lighting that is compliant with current Mono County Dark Sky regulations.

(8) At a minimum, the Department will perpetuate the existing street trees in Lee Vining where feasible. The option to add more landscaping is an option with a maintenance agreement in place with Mono County. Such discussions with the County are taking place.

(9) Caltrans is proposing multiple drainage improvements for this project. The permanent drainage treatment being considered for this project will reduce flows in the vicinity of the Lee Vining Creek Trail and the sewage treatment ponds.

Comments from: Lee Vining Fire Protection District (Santiago Escruceria, Chair, Lee Vining Fire Protection District Board of Commissioners; submitted via e-mail)

Dear Ryan and Project Team Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on the Lee Vining Rehab Project.

The entirety of the proposed project falls within the Lee Vining Fire Protection District boundaries. Founded in 1947, the Lee Vining Fire Protection District volunteer firefighters and EMTs provide fire, rescue and basic emergency response services to the community of Lee Vining and surrounding public lands in California's Mono Basin.

The District strongly supports proposed design elements which will result in reduced traffic speed and enhanced pedestrian safety along the Highway through town.

The Lee Vining Fire Protection District responds to an average of 70 calls per year. As you may imagine, issues surrounding the safety and sustainability of emergency vehicle ingress and egress into highway traffic are a key concern. Every single emergency response requires District emergency vehicles enter directly into highway traffic from the Fire Station on the eastside of Highway 395 (55 Mattley Avenue).

Fire personnel have managed rapid deployment directly from our station onto Highway 395 into the current 5-lane highway by having firefighters enter travel lanes with a hand-held stop sign to stop traffic and enable vehicles to

safely enter the Highway. Given the small size of our department and a shifting number of responders to each call for service, we are only able to deploy a ‘flagman’ into the Highway approximately 60% of the time. For departures without a ‘flagman’, emergency vehicles enter the Highway as safely as possible with the hope highway traffic slows and/or stops for the emergency lights.

Upon returning to the station, District emergency vehicles must back into the bays fronting Highway 395. This maneuver requires a break in highway traffic. Currently this traffic break is created with either a ‘flagman’ or another emergency vehicle physically blocking both lanes of northbound traffic while the engines back into their respective bays.

The Fire District respectfully requests Caltrans consider the installation of flashing lights or some other emergency indicator system to the north and south of the station that the District may activate when entering or exiting the station into the Highway. The goal of such an upgraded safety installation would be to alert highway traffic of emergency vehicles entering or in the highway.

Additionally, the District requests an in-person, on site meeting with members of the project design team to review and discuss potential project elements that may impact ingress and egress from the Fire Station into the Highway corridor. Specifically:

(1) potential width of the sidewalk in front of the station;
(2) length of driveway cut;
(3) snow removal directly at the driveway cut;
(4) sightlines from the station driveway;
(5) temporary parking for emergency responders driving to the station; and
(6) drainage along the driveway frontage.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide comments on the Lee Vining Rehab Project. District volunteers have appreciated the willingness of Caltrans staff to listen to, clearly respond to and incorporate community concerns and suggestions regarding this project to date.

Please direct all future communications with the Lee Vining Fire Protection District regarding this project to Paul McFarland, District Secretary at leeviningfiredistrict@gmail.com or 760-709-1093.

Respectfully,

Santiago M. Escruceria, Chair
Lee Vining Fire Protection District Board of Commissioners

Response to: Lee Vining Fire Protection District (Santiago Escruceria, Chair, Lee Vining Fire Protection District Board of Commissioners)

Caltrans District 9 would like to thank the Lee Vining Fire Protection District for reaching out to provide input on the Lee Vining Rehabilitation project. It is important for the Department to take in to account the Fire District's response procedures on U.S. Route 395 when responding to emergency calls within and beyond the community of Lee Vining. The department has noted the Fire District's request for a site visit with Caltrans staff to discuss the following as noted above in your comments:

(1) Potential width of the sidewalk in front of the station.
(2) Length of driveway cut.
(3) Snow removal directly at the driveway cut.
(4) Sightlines from the station driveway.
(5) Temporary parking for emergency responders driving to the station.
(6) Drainage along the driveway frontage.

In addition, the Department acknowledges the need for the installation of activated flashing beacon lights on U.S. Route 395 that the District may activate when entering or exiting the station to and from the highway. The feasibility of adding this to the project will be investigated during the design phase of the project.

Caltrans looks forward to working with the Lee Vining Fire Protection District throughout the life of this project. The Department will coordinate with Mr. McFarland to set up a site visit during the design phase of the project, which is when the project's design will be finalized.

Comments from: Paul McFarland (submitted via e-mail)

Dear Ryan and Project Team Members -

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the proposed Lee Vining Rehab Project.

My family and I have lived in Lee Vining for the last two decades plus. During this time we have experienced the dramatic increase in traffic speed and volume along our little town's main street - US Highway 395.

I would like to express sincere thanks for the attitude of openness and collaboration you and the project team have brought to each public meeting concerning this project. It has made us hopeful we may actually get some solid traffic calming and community benefit from this project. Thank you.

As a family with children who cross the highway daily, a volunteer firefighter who has watched near misses and responded to fatal highway incidents in town, and just a person who cherishes walkable, livable communities that are

based on people not cars, I support any option that maximizes pedestrian and cyclist safety, achieves aesthetic enhancement of the highway corridor and tangibly reduces speed through town.

(1) Reviewing the Design Options presented, I would favor Option 1 or 3. Option 4 is interesting but I am unsure how the dual-direction, multi-use path would work north and south of town.

(2) Additionally, I support extending the sidewalks on both the north and south bound shoulders as far south as possible. The extension as far as Utility Road is appreciated, but can we go farther?

(3) As you all have noted, there are severe drainage issues with the current highway stormwater system. While I like the detention basin east of the Shell station, I am concerned the bioswall north of town will impact school land that has been identified by the community for potential town expansion in the future. The notion behind the bioswale - diversion and collection of water for infiltration and vegetation support - is very sound, but I wonder if the planned infiltration swale in front of the county yard could be extended north paralleling the east side of the Highway north of the High School driveway rather than off-highway to the north.

(4) While the early project study documents included creation of a detention basin east of First Street to address the current intense erosion from that storm drain, this project component was not carried over into the proposal. Real mitigation and improvements to this storm drain need to be implemented ASAP. Stormwater from this drain originating from the Highway and Caltrans yard are not only impacting Lee Vining Creek, but regularly threatening flooding and erosion of the town sewer ponds to the north of the outlet. This outlet is not even shown on the "Proposed Drainage Improvement" map. A detention basin, infiltration swale or some other form of reducing the kinetic energy of the stormwater from the culvert needs to be implemented for this culvert.

(5) Additionally, the project should address stormwater flowing down a previously shallow arroyo north of Visitor Center Road resulting in the washout of the old Highway east of the current alignment. This old Highway was used by locals and visitors to access Mono Lake and Picnic Grounds Road. However, due to Highway runoff resulting from previous Caltrans pavement and drainage projects, this road is now an impassable safety hazard. While a culvert replacement is shown as planned on the "Proposed Drainage Improvement" graphic, a detention basin or some other form of reducing the kinetic energy of the stormwater from the culvert needs to be implemented along with repair of the washed out road.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to comment on this project and your demonstrated commitment to improve safety, walkability and drainage for our little town's Main Street.

Respectfully,
Paul McFarland

Response to: Paul McFarland

Thank you for your comment on the Lee Vining Rehabilitation project. Responses to your above number comments are as follows:

(1) Caltrans has selected to advance a project design that would reduce the number of travel lanes on U.S. Route 395 from five to three and include bike lanes on both sides of the highway within Lee Vining only.

(2) The continuation of sidewalk along the southbound side of U.S. Route 395 to the intersection with Utility Road is currently part of the project's scope. Southbound continuation of the sidewalk beyond this intersection is outside of the project's scope and funding at this time but may be further investigated during the design phase.

(3) Caltrans acknowledges your concerns regarding the proposed infiltration ditch just north of the Lee Vining High School property and plans for future development of this area. Caltrans will work with the Eastern Sierra Unified School District and Mono County in subsequent project phases to design and construct a ditch that aligns with future uses of the property directly north of Lee Vining High School.

(4) The construction of a second stormwater infiltration basin (located at the intersection of Mattly Avenue and 1st Street) is not being considered at this time. The Department proposes to convey stormwater to the flatter area just north of the Lee Vining High School via the construction of a bio-swale and infiltration ditch. With this change, drainage from Caltrans right of way will not contribute significantly to increased flows to the area where a second basin was formerly considered.

(5) Caltrans recognizes the erosion problem at postmile 52.1. This project is considering several options to alleviate this problem including replacing the existing culvert, adding an additional culvert south of the existing culvert to divert some of the flow, and placing rock slope protection at the culvert's outlet to prevent future erosion. Additionally, the Department will approach the U.S. Forest Service to determine if a partnership could provide a solution for the washed-out road on adjacent Inyo National Forest land (Forest Rd 1N56).

Comments from: Mono Lake Committee (Bartshé Miller, Eastern Sierra Policy Director; submitted via e-mail)

Dear Mr Spaulding,

The Mono Lake Committee is writing to provide comments on the Lee Vining Rehabilitation Project, Initial Study with Draft Proposed Negative Declaration (Project). The Mono Lake Committee (MLC) is a non-profit citizen's group dedicated to protecting and restoring the Mono Basin ecosystem, educating the public about Mono Lake and the impacts on the environment of excessive water use, and promoting cooperative solutions that protect Mono Lake and meet real water needs without transferring environmental problems to other areas. Supported by 16,000 members, MLC has been active in the Mono Basin since 1978.

In addition to engaging with public policy issues in the Mono Basin, the Mono Lake Committee has operated a business—our Information Center and Bookstore—on main street Lee Vining for over 40 years. The Committee supports project design opportunities that enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety, meet the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, calm traffic in Lee Vining, enhance parking opportunities, and upgrade drainage facilities that protect community infrastructure, Lee Vining Creek, and Mono Lake. The current proposed project alternatives offer design opportunities that complement the efforts of the Committee and other business owners on Lee Vining's main street to welcome visitors whether they be traveling by vehicle, transit, bicycle, wheelchair, or on foot.

Tribal Cultural Resources

(1) The project does not indicate whether tribal consultation was offered or occurred pursuant to AB 52. The Mono Lake Kutzadika'a are the local indigenous tribe in the Mono Basin, traditionally and culturally affiliated with the resources in the project area. MLC recommends that Caltrans consult directly with the Kutzadika'a Tribe about the project and, additionally, request a Tribal Monitor to oversee construction activities where artifacts may be discovered, and to coordinate protocols and procedures in consultation with the Tribe.

Hydrology and Water Quality

(2) There is a history of runoff problems resulting from the Highway 395 corridor in Lee Vining. The Public Utility District's facilities, county roads to the east, Lee Vining Creek Trail, and Lee Vining Creek have been directly or indirectly impacted by runoff from Highway 395. Past Caltrans projects have improved some of these issues, but some persist. The current build alternatives highlight drainage features like infiltration basins and bioswales that would be welcome improvements. However, not all features appear to be definitively within the Caltrans right of way or easement. Stormwater runoff, erosion, and water quality issues can be significant and unintentional unless detailed engineering and plans provide

clarity. The Committee recommends that Caltrans provide additional project details related to drainage engineering, and that Caltrans seek additional public comment through a site visit to address runoff and drainage issues before finalizing the environmental documentation to assure that the concepts for improved management of runoff can be fully implemented.

Land Use and Planning

The proposed project has the potential to enhance and benefit the community of Lee Vining, and the Committee recognizes Caltrans' Complete Streets Policy (2021) which has influenced the project's features and are consistent with the Mono Basin Community Plan vision, goals, and objectives. The Complete Streets Policy states:

- "Accordingly, in location with current and/or future pedestrian, bicycle, or transit needs all transportation projects funded or overseen by Caltrans will provide comfortable, convenient, and connected complete streets facilities for people walking, biking, and taking transit ..."(page 1)
- "This policy establishes Caltrans' organizational priority to encourage and maximize walking, biking, transit…to not only meet state climate, health, equity, and environmental goals but to foster socially and economically vibrant, thriving, and resilient communities ..."(page 2)
- "Complete streets shift the focus of transportation planning and project development from vehicle movement as the primary goal to the movement of people and goods." (page 2)

The Mono Basin Community Plan, adopted in 2012 after a comprehensive, multi-year planning effort, and now incorporated into the Mono County General Plan, identifies values, policy objectives, and actions that are consistent with the Complete Streets Policy, project purpose, need, and design features:

- "Small, compact communities with a clear edge between developed and natural areas … small town rural character, featuring a walkable town with public gathering spaces … connectivity through transit services and trails." (page 13)
- "Safe, friendly communities." (page 13)
- "Parking standards should contribute to business viability … to improve parking opportunities in Lee Vining…" (page 23)
- "Provide safe and convenient pedestrian and biking facilities working with Caltrans when applicable, to reduce vehicular traffic, increase local livability, and encourage visitors to explore town." (page 23)
- "Prioritize pedestrian safety facilities and improvements on Highway 395 … to make progress toward a comprehensive streetscape plan for the Lee Vining Main Street area that enhances pedestrian safety,

connectivity (including trails), and makes Lee Vining a more attractive place to walk, live, and work." (page 23)

With complimentary philosophies and approaches to land use and planning highlighted in the Mono Basin Community Plan and Caltrans' Complete Streets Policy, this project's design features, if successfully implemented, will unify the main street community experience in Lee Vining and reduce conflicts between highway travel and Lee Vining/Mono Basin land use and planning.

A build alternative that provides maximum funding for key design features

(3) The Lee Vining Rehab Project offers two build alternatives. The Committee encourages Caltrans to choose the most cost-effective build alternative that meets safety standards in order to preserve funding for design elements that are consistent with Mono Basin Community Plan and Caltrans' Complete Streets Policy.

While final, specific design features are neither fully engineered nor available for specific comment, the conceptual design features which the Committee supports include:

(4) Upgraded drainage facilities that prevent erosion and stormwater runoff from impacting community parks, County streets, Public Utility District Infrastructure, Lee Vining Creek, Lee Vining Creek Trail, and the slope area immediately east of Highway 395, just north of the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area Visitor Center.

(5) Upgraded curbs, sidewalks, and driveways that are consistent with ADA standards.

(6) Lane reductions to three total lanes (two travel and one turning) through the community of Lee Vining.

(7) Bike lanes throughout the entire project area.

(8) Pedestrian-friendly, wider sidewalks that accommodate future outdoor seating, landscaping, and dark-sky compliant pedestrian-scale streetlights.

(9) Multiple and accessible pedestrian crossings throughout the Lee Vining community, and where feasible, bulb-out features.

(10) Angled parking areas within the Lee Vining project area to maximize parking opportunities for visitors, businesses, and the community.

Request for future site visit

(11) Because drainage facilities are proposed with either build alternative, and detailed plans, easements, and right of ways have yet to be finalized, MLC requests a site visit with appropriate Caltrans staff before the final environmental document is released. A site visit would help parties understand specific drainage challenges in Lee Vining and how they impact the geomorphology and water quality of Lee Vining Creek in addition to drainage and erosion issues specific to Lee Vining and the project area immediately north and south of the community. This cooperative approach has worked well in the past with Caltrans. Planning this site visit to include other stakeholders such as the Kutzadika'a Tribe, Lee Vining Public Utility District, Mono County Public Works staff, Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, and interested main street business owners would provide valuable history and insight to address drainage problems related to Highway 395 and the Caltrans right of way.

Please contact me at (760) 647-6595 x121 and bartshe@monolake.org if you have any questions about these comments or future project notification. We look forward to future communication with Caltrans regarding this project and others within the Mono Basin watershed.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Bartshé Miller
Eastern Sierra Policy Director

Response to: Mono Lake Committee (Bartshé Miller, Eastern Sierra Policy Director)

Caltrans thanks the Mono Lake Committee for the above input on the Lee Vining Rehabilitation project. The Department looks forward to staying engaged with the Committee, other stakeholders, and members of the public throughout the life of the project to design and construct a project that aligns with the Mono County Community Plan as much as possible.

The responses to your number comments above are as follows:

(1) Caltrans contacted the Native American Heritage Commission on November 9, 2020, requesting a search of their Sacred Lands File and names and contact information of tribal groups and individuals in the area. The Native American Heritage Commission responded on November 24, 2020, stating that the Sacred Lands File search yielded negative results.

Caltrans initially contacted tribal groups and individuals already on file for the project area under Assembly Bill 52 consultation in early November 2020, and tribal groups whose names were provided by the Native

American Heritage Commission were contacted on November 16, 2020. Of the parties initially contacted, Darrel Cruz of the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California responded via phone on November 23, 2020. Mr. Cruz stated that he would defer to the Mono Lake Kutzadika'a Tribe regarding consultation efforts for this project. A project description and location map were sent to each individual. Ms. Charlotte Lange, Chairperson of the Mono Lake Kutzadika'a Tribe, was sent an initial contact letter on November 5, 2020. No response was received. Follow-up calls were made to the remaining parties on December 18, 2020. No other responses were received. A full summary of tribal consultation can be viewed in the Historic Property Survey Report (bound separately in Volume 2).

Prior to Extended Phase I fieldwork, Far Western (a consultant hired by Caltrans to complete cultural and tribal cultural resource field surveys) contacted the Mono Lake Kutzadika'a Tribe to request a tribal monitor. Rhonda Kauk (representing the Mono Lake Kutzadika'a Tribe) was present for all Extended Phase I and Phase II field surveys that occurred within the project limits. Caltrans will evaluate the need for a tribal monitor, during construction, based on future input received from the Mono Lake Kutzadika'a Tribe.

(2) Caltrans proposes to make multiple drainage improvements on the project. The Department looks forward to staying engaged with the Mono Lake Committee throughout the life of this project during the design phase to discuss all of the above proposed improvements of U.S. Route 395 through the community of Lee Vining. In addition, Caltrans staff will continue to meet with Mono County Staff and will provide a 30% design review through the Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee which is anticipated to be in January 2023.The request for a future site visit to review and discuss areas where drainage improvements will occur has been noted. The Department will reach out to Mr. Miller to coordinate such a meeting during the project's design phase.

(3) After a review of all public input received on this project during the thirty-day public comment period, the project development team has decided to select Build Alternative 1 moving in to the design phase. Build Alternative 1 was the less expensive of the two build alternatives, both of which focused on pavement rehabilitation strategy.

(4) Caltrans proposes to make multiple drainage facility improvements on this project, including addressing the areas noted above in your comment. The Department once again looks forward to a field site visit with the Committee and other stake holders to discuss these locations.

(5) Caltrans plans to upgrade existing sidewalks, curb ramps and driveway conforms within the community of Lee Vining to current Americans with Disabilities Act standards as part of this project.

(6) The Caltrans project development team has selected to advance a project design that would reduce the number of travel lanes from five to three within the community of Lee Vining.

(7) Caltrans has selected a design option that includes dedicated bike lanes on both sides of U.S. Route 395 in the community of Lee Vining. Throughout the remainder of the project limits, dedicated bike lanes are outside of the budget and scope for this project. The possibility for dedicated bike lanes on U.S. Route 395 outside of the community of Lee Vining may be considered for future Caltrans projects.

(8) Sidewalk widths along U.S Route 395 within Lee Vining will be widened and will allow for additional landscaping (contingent upon a maintenance agreement with Mono County) and pedestrian-scale lighting that is compliant with Mono County Dark Sky regulations. The proposed wider sidewalks could certainly be used for future parklets and outdoor dining. The Caltrans encroachment permits office would be willing to work with local business owners and the County to utilize this space.

(9) The project development team has selected to include permanent bulb-outs in the project's scope moving in to the design phase. In addition, an engineering study will be performed to analyze the existing marked crossing locations and the possibility of an additional marked crossing in Lee Vining. All marked crossing locations will include advanced yield lines with associated signage, parking prohibitions to provide adequate visibility of the crossing, pedestrian crossing warning signs identifying the crossing location, and a high visibility marked crosswalk pattern. The two existing rapid rectangular flashing beacons will be maintained with this project; with the community's support, the location of the southern rapid rectangular flashing beacon system may be relocated if the engineering study supports an additional or relocated marked crossing location.

(10) Parking will be further evaluated in the design phase. Diagonal parking could be incorporated on blocks where additional parking is most needed with the design option that has been selected. District 9 will consider comments and feedback when laying out parking in the design phase of this project and will continue to engage the community as the project's design is finalized. Caltrans anticipates working with Mono County and local business owners to determine ideal locations for angled back-in parking spaces.

(11) The Committee's request for a field site visit with Caltrans staff has been noted. The Department once again looks forward to a field site visit

with the Committee and additional stake holders to discuss the project. The Department anticipates scheduling such a meeting during the project's design phase.

Caltrans District 9 once again thanks the Mono Lake Committee for the input and looks forward to staying engaged with the Committee throughout the life of the Lee Vining Rehabilitation project.

Comments from: Thomas Himes (submitted via the project website)

Use design #3. It maintains the 4 lane highway, while adding improvements. I don't think the angled parking is safe. I don't think eliminating lanes is safe. Especially in wildfire & heavy snow conditions.

Response to: Thomas Himes

Thank you for your input on the Lee Vining Rehabilitation project. After receiving public input, the project development team recommends moving forward with a three-lane configuration of U.S. Route 395 (one travel lane in each direction and a center turn lane) through the community. The Department does not anticipate a notable change to travel times through the limits of proposed lane reduction in the community. While the southern limit of the transition from five lanes to three lanes has yet to be determined, the estimated length of lane reduction on U.S. Route 395 is approximately one half of a mile in Lee Vining. Caltrans acknowledges your concerns of traffic on U.S. Route 395 in Lee Vining during events such as wildfires and heavy snow conditions. During emergency conditions, traffic will be controlled by emergency responders to help direct drivers in a safe manner.

Parking will be further evaluated in the design phase. Diagonal parking could be incorporated on blocks where additional parking is most needed with the design option that has been selected. District 9 will consider comments and feedback when laying out parking in the design phase of this project and will continue to engage the community as the project's design is finalized. Caltrans anticipates working with Mono County and local business owners to determine ideal locations for angled back-in parking spaces.

List of Technical Studies (bound separately and available upon request)

Air, Noise, Hazardous Waste, Water Quality and Paleontology Study Memo. Caltrans. November 23, 2021.

Climate Change Analysis: Lee Vining Rehab. December 2021.

Community Impacts: Memo to file. Caltrans. November 15 2021.

Historic Properties Survey Report. Caltrans. December 10, 2021.

Natural Environment Study (Minimal Impacts). Caltrans. November 22, 2021.

Visual Impact Assessment Questionnaire and Memo. Caltrans. November 18, 2021.

Lee Vining US 395 Rehab Project Public Engagement Summary. Prepared by MIG, Inc. August 2018

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

Ryan Spaulding
Associate Environmental Planner, California Department of Transportation
500 S. Main St, Bishop, CA 93514

Or send your request via email to: Ryan.Spaulding@dot.ca.gov
Or call: 760-937-1556

Please provide the following information in your request:

Lee Vining Rehab

On US 395, in the community of Lee Vining, CA.

09-MNO-395-50.60/53.10

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