

Chapter 4 Comments and Coordination

Early and continuing coordination with the general public and appropriate public agencies is an essential part of the environmental process to determine the scope of environmental documentation, the level of analysis, potential impacts and mitigation measures, and related environmental requirements. Agency consultation and public participation for this project have been accomplished through a variety of formal and informal methods, including project development team meetings and interagency coordination meetings. This chapter summarizes the results of the efforts of the City of Santa Maria and Caltrans to fully identify, address, and resolve project-related issues through early and continuing coordination.

Scoping Process

A Notice of Preparation was prepared for the proposed project that notified reviewing agencies and the public that the project could result in substantial adverse effects on the environment.

The Notice of Preparation was circulated on October 10, 2003 for a 30-day public comment period that ended November 8, 2003. A prior Notice of Preparation for a City General Plan Circulation Element Amendment for the roadway extension portion of the project was circulated on July 16, 2003 for a 30-day public review period that ended August 14, 2003. The General Plan Amendment for the roadway portion of the project was heard before the City of Santa Maria Planning Commission on September 3, 2003 and before the Santa Maria City Council on October 7, 2003. An Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration was also submitted for the roadway extension portion of the project on September 13, 2000. In addition, a scoping meeting was held on October 11, 2001 at the City of Santa Maria Library for the roadway portion of the project. The Notice of Preparation and responses to the Notice of Preparation are available for review at the City of Santa Maria Public Works Department, 110 S. Pine Street, Santa Maria, California 93458. The following issues were identified by the scoping process for this Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment as having potentially significant impacts:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Historic Resources
- Drainage/Hydrology
- Geologic Hazards
- Hazardous Materials
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Transportation/Circulation
- Growth and Irreversible Effects

The Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment evaluates site-specific and cumulative impacts for each of these areas. The focus of the document is to address potentially significant environmental issues identified in the scoping process and to recommend feasible avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures, where possible, that reduce or eliminate substantial environmental impacts. Consistency with local zoning, General Plan, land use policies, and long-range air-quality planning programs, as well as the project's potential to induce growth, are also examined in the Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment.

Public participation in the development of the Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment and in the selection of the final design concept occurs at several points in the planning process. The first input involves the Notice of Preparation. The Notice of Preparation was sent to all concerned resource agencies and other potentially interested parties. These notices were intended to solicit public input in the environmental document preparation process.

Consultation and Coordination with Public Agencies

Coordination with federal, state, and local agencies has occurred throughout the preparation of this document. Coordination has been established with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, California Department of Fish and Game, and various Santa Barbara County agencies.

A request for a jurisdictional determination regarding potentially non-jurisdictional wetlands on and adjacent to the study area was sent to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) in March 2004. The Corps responded that the potential wetlands would be considered jurisdictional as tributary to Waters of the U.S. (refer to Section 2.3.2, *Wetlands and Other Waters*, of this document). The Corps is currently reviewing a Section 404 Clean Water Act Nationwide Permit application for impacts to Corps jurisdictional waters. In addition, the State Water Resources Control Board is currently reviewing a Section 401 Clean Water Act Certification or waiver request and Waste Discharge Permit application. Before construction, a National Pollutant

Discharge Elimination System permit from the State Water Resources Control Board would also be required.

Informal communication with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was conducted regarding the California tiger salamander. Bridget Fahey and Katherine Drexhage of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred that based on habitat conditions and proximity of the project to known breeding ponds on the Airport property, the California tiger salamander could potentially use upland habitat (native and naturalized habitats) west of State Route 135. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service suggested that the City of Santa Maria would need to demonstrate absence of the California tiger salamander in this area through the use of a two-year drift fence study to avoid the need of acquiring an incidental take permit. Aquatic surveys were conducted in spring 2006, 2007, and 2008 and upland drift fence surveys were conducted in winter 2006/2007 and 2007/2008. Regular communication with Ms. Drexhage was conducted during the course of the surveys to inform the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of survey results. In addition, based on informal consultation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff has indicated strong support for the elimination of the roadway segment west of Blosser Road to protect breeding ponds and nearby farmland used by California tiger salamanders. Formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act for impacts to California tiger salamander and California red-legged frog was initiated in July 2008. Through the Section 7 consultation process, Caltrans is seeking U.S. Fish and Wildlife concurrence with the Threatened and Endangered Species environmental consequences determinations for California tiger salamander and California red-legged frog.

A special-status species list was received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2003 and 2007 listing all endangered, threatened, and candidate species as well as those special-status species for which critical and potential critical habitat occurs within the U.S. Geological Survey Santa Maria quadrangle. The list fulfills the requirements of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under Section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

Caltrans prepared a Historic Property Survey Report and supporting technical documents in December 2007, and a supplemental Historic Property Survey Report in May 2008, and transmitted them to the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). For the purposes of this project, Caltrans, in coordination with the State Historic

Preservation Officer, determined that three properties within the architectural area of potential effect (at 4136, 4162, and 4174 Orcutt Road) are assumed eligible under Criteria A and C, at the local level of significance. The alignment was therefore redesigned to avoid or minimize impacts to these historic properties. In accordance with the implementing regulations of Section 106, Caltrans, as assigned by the Federal Highway Administration, proposed a Finding of No Adverse Effect for the project as a whole in a letter to the State Historic Preservation Officer dated July 1, 2008.

Stipulation X.B.1.b of the Programmatic Agreement Among the Federal Highway Administration, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the California State Historic Preservation Officer, and the California Department of Transportation Regarding Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as it Pertains to the Administration of the Federal-Aid Highway Program in California states:

“If the SHPO agrees with the No Adverse Effect finding made hereunder, the undertaking shall not be subject to further review under this Agreement. Unless FHWA and the SHPO have agreed to extend the 30-day time frame for SHPO review specified in 36 CFR 800.5(c), failure of the SHPO to comment within this time frame may be deemed by FHWA to constitute SHPO concurrence in the No Adverse Effect finding. Documentation of date of receipt as the basis for determining the 30-day review period may be provided through the SHPO database, a mail delivery receipt, or written or documented oral communication with the SHPO.”

Office of Historic Preservation staff indicated in an e-mail dated August 18, 2008 that the State Historic Preservation Officer had no objections to the Finding of No Adverse Effect and therefore did not send a letter for the Finding of No Adverse Effect.

Natural Resource Conservation Service field staff was consulted regarding corridor assessment criteria for the Farmland Conversion Impact Rating for Corridor Type Projects (Form NRCS-CPA-106). Natural Resources Conservation Service staff advised that the Land Evaluation Criterion Relative to Value of Farmland Conversion should be assumed to be the highest value of 100 because the Corridor Assessment Criteria resulted in relatively low scores of less than 60 (refer to Appendix E).

Public Participation

A Notice of Availability for the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment was sent to all parties listed in Chapter 6, *Distribution List*. Copies of the Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment were distributed to those parties designated in Chapter 6, *Distribution List*, which includes federal, state, and local agencies, and political representatives. An open forum public hearing regarding the project was held on August 12, 2008, from 5:30 to 8:00 PM. at the Radisson Hotel at 3455 Skyway Drive, Santa Maria, California.

Written Comments and Responses

At the close of the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment comment period, comments were compiled. Copies of the letters and the responses to the comments are provided in Appendix H, *Comments, Responses, and Revisions to the Draft EIR*.