

# State Route 78 Julian Asset Management Project

SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

11-SD-78 Post Miles 37.2/60.0

Project Number: 11-43089/1119000197

State Clearinghouse Number: 2024100916

## Initial Study with Mitigated Negative Declaration



Prepared by the  
State of California Department of Transportation

January 2025



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## General Information About This Document

Document prepared by: California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)

The Initial Study was circulated to the public for 30 days between October 18, 2024 and November 18, 2024. The state agency review period was October 21, 2024 to November 19, 2024. An extension was granted until November 22, 2024. Comments received during this period are included in Appendix B. Elsewhere, language has been added throughout the document to indicate where a change has been made since the circulation of the draft environmental document. Minor editorial changes and clarifications have not been so indicated.

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State Clearinghouse Number 2024100916  
11-SD-78 Post Miles 37.2/60.0  
Project Number 11-43089/1119000197

The proposed project would construct improvements to various transportation assets along State Route 78 (from post miles 37.2 through 60.0) in eastern San Diego County, including pavement rehabilitation, culvert rehabilitation, Complete Streets and mobility elements, and safety/roadside elements.

**INITIAL STUDY  
with Mitigated Negative Declaration**

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

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
Department of Transportation



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Tracey D'Aoust Roberts  
Acting Deputy District Director, Environmental  
California Department of Transportation  
CEQA Lead Agency

10/17/2024

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Date

The following individual can be contacted for more information about this document:

Matthew Voss, Environmental Division MS 242, Caltrans District 11 Office at  
4050 Taylor Street, San Diego, CA 92110; 1-858-289-1276; [matthew.voss@dot.ca.gov](mailto:matthew.voss@dot.ca.gov)

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## **Mitigated Negative Declaration**

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

**State Clearinghouse Number:** 2024100916

**District-County-Route-Post Mile:** 11-SD-78 Post Miles 37.2/60.0

**EA/Project Number:** EA-43089/1119000197

### **Project Description**

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to rehabilitate and enhance various assets on State Route 78 in eastern San Diego County, between post miles 37.2 and 60.0. Proposed improvements include pavement rehabilitation; culvert rehabilitation; Complete Streets and mobility elements, such as Americans with Disabilities Act curb ramps; and safety/roadside element improvements, including sign panels, guardrails, rumble strips, and dikes.

### **Determination**

An Initial Study has been prepared by Caltrans District 11. On the basis of this study, it is determined that the proposed action with the incorporation of the identified mitigation measures will not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

- Permanent impacts to 0.006 acre of native upland habitat will be offset through the deduction of 0.012 acres of habitat from a mitigation bank approved by the USFWS' Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office. Documentation that the habitat has been conserved will be provided to the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office prior to the commencement of vegetation removal and project construction.
- Compensatory mitigation is anticipated for approximately 0.001 acres of permanent impacts to jurisdictional wetlands resulting from culvert replacement work and will be replaced at a 3:1 ratio. Caltrans has several mitigation banks with available credits for all habitats and impacts associated with the project. Credits are available at Rancho San Diego, Rutherford Ranch, and Go Cart mitigation banks. Coordination with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Army Corps of Engineers, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife during acquisition of permits may determine additional protective measures to be implemented by the project.
- Where permanent impacts to large oak trees and jurisdictional areas (State Wetlands and Waters of the U.S.) cannot be avoided, they will be mitigated using existing mitigation bank credits at a minimum of a 3:1 ratio. Caltrans has several

mitigation banks with available credits for all impacts associated with the project. Credits are available at Rancho San Diego, Rutherford Ranch and Go Cart mitigation banks. Temporary impact areas where grading, clearing and/or grubbing results in the removal of native vegetation will require hydroseeding of the impact area with an appropriate seed mix for the existing plant community.

- Temporary impacts to 0.33 acres of native upland habitat and 0.068 acres of wetland habitat would be restored with native wetland or upland species of similar composition to the adjacent habitat. Temporary impact areas will be seeded as soon as possible following completion of construction to prevent encroachment by nonnative plants.



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Tracey D'Aoust Roberts  
Deputy District Director, Environmental  
California Department of Transportation

**01/14/2025**

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Date



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## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AB	Assembly Bill
AC	asphaltic concrete
ACHP	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AMM	avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measure
AQIA	Air Quality Impact Analysis
ARB	California Air Resources Board
ASR	Archaeologist Survey Report
BC	black carbon
BMP	best management practice
BSA	Biological Study Area
CAAQS	California Ambient Air Quality Standards
CAL FIRE	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CESA	California Endangered Species Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CH <sub>4</sub>	methane
CNDDB	California Natural Diversity Database
CO	carbon monoxide
CO <sub>2</sub>	carbon dioxide
CO <sub>2e</sub>	carbon dioxide equivalent
CRHR	California Register of Historical Resources
ESA	environmentally sensitive area
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FESA	federal Endangered Species Act
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
HFC	hydrofluorocarbon
HPSR	Historic Property Survey Report
HRER	Historical Resources Evaluation Report
mgd	million gallons per day
MMTCO <sub>2e</sub>	million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MS4	municipal separate storm sewer system

NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NAHC	Native American Heritage Commission
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NMFS	United States National Marine Fisheries Service
N <sub>2</sub> O	nitrous oxide
NO <sub>x</sub>	nitrogen oxides
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
PA	Programmatic Agreement
PM <sub>10</sub>	particulate matter 10 micrometers or smaller
PM <sub>2.5</sub>	particulate matter 2.5 micrometers and smaller
Porter-Cologne Act	Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act
PRC	Public Resource Code
project	State Route 78 Julian Asset Management Project
RAQS	Regional Air Quality Strategy
ROG	reactive organic gases
RWQCB	Regional Water Quality Control Board
SANDAG	San Diego Association of Governments
SDAB	San Diego Air Basin
SDAPCD	San Diego Air Pollution Control District
Section 106 PA	January 2014 First Amended PA among the FHWA, the ACHP, the California SHPO, and the Caltrans regarding compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA
SHOPP	State Highway Operation and Protection Program
SHPO	California State Historic Preservation Officer
SIP	State Implementation Plan
SO <sub>2</sub>	sulfur dioxide
TCM	Transportation Control Measure
TMP	Traffic Management Plan
TOG	total organic gases
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	United States Geological Survey
VOC	volatile organic compound

# **Chapter 1**      **Proposed Project**

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## **1.1 Introduction**

The proposed State Route 78 Julian Asset Management Project (project) intends to rehabilitate and enhance multiple transportation assets on State Route 78 in unincorporated areas of eastern San Diego County, including the communities of Ramona, Ballena, Witch Creek, Santa Ysabel, Wynola, Whispering Pines, and Julian. The project is generally bounded on the western end by the intersection of State Route 78 and Magnolia Avenue, and on the eastern end by the intersection of State Route 78 and Wynola Road. The project area extends along State Route 78 for approximately 22.5 miles. In the project area, State Route 78 is a two-lane highway and briefly becomes a local road (Main Street) with a reduced speed limit through Downtown Julian. The primary land uses in the area include rural residential, agricultural, industrial, retail, service commercial, and open space uses.

The proposed project is a State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP) project with pavement rehabilitation as the main asset. The proposed project would be funded through the SHOPP. The project also proposes to rehabilitate other assets related to drainage, safety, signs, roadside safety, mobility, and Complete Streets.

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) would act as lead agency for both the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This CEQA Initial Study with Mitigated Negative Declaration and the NEPA Categorical Exclusion have been prepared in accordance with Caltrans' environmental procedures, as well as state and federal environmental regulations.

## **1.2 Purpose and Need**

### **1.2.1 Purpose**

The purpose of the proposed project is to:

- Restore the facility to a state of good repair;
- Improve ride quality, minimize maintenance, and extend the service life of the existing roadway; and
- Complete upgrades to existing facilities to meet current standards and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to enhance mobility for pedestrians.

### **1.2.2 Need**

The project is needed to improve deteriorated pavement. An assessment of the pavement in 2018 identified 45.6 lane miles prone to cracking and distress.

Drainage features within the project boundaries include culverts that are in poor condition. Improvements to drainage systems would protect the traveling public by maintaining the water flow in the area and preventing deterioration of the roadway.

Curb ramps, sidewalks, and crosswalks need to be upgraded to meet current standards and to comply with the ADA to enhance mobility for pedestrians.

Safety elements, such as signage and guardrail upgrades, are included in the project. Existing signs would be upgraded to increase visibility. Existing guardrails do not meet current standards and would be upgraded to improve safety for errant vehicles.

## **1.3 Project Description**

The proposed project intends to rehabilitate and enhance multiple transportation assets on State Route 78 between post miles 37.2 and 60.0 in San Diego County, including rehabilitation of pavement and other assets related to drainage, mobility, complete streets, and safety.

Project vicinity and location maps are shown in Figures 1-1 and 1-2, respectively, on the following pages.

## **1.4 Project Alternatives**

This section describes the proposed project that was developed to achieve the project purpose and need while reducing environmental impacts. There are two alternatives: the Build Alternative and the No-Build Alternative.

**Figure 1-1 Project Vicinity Map**

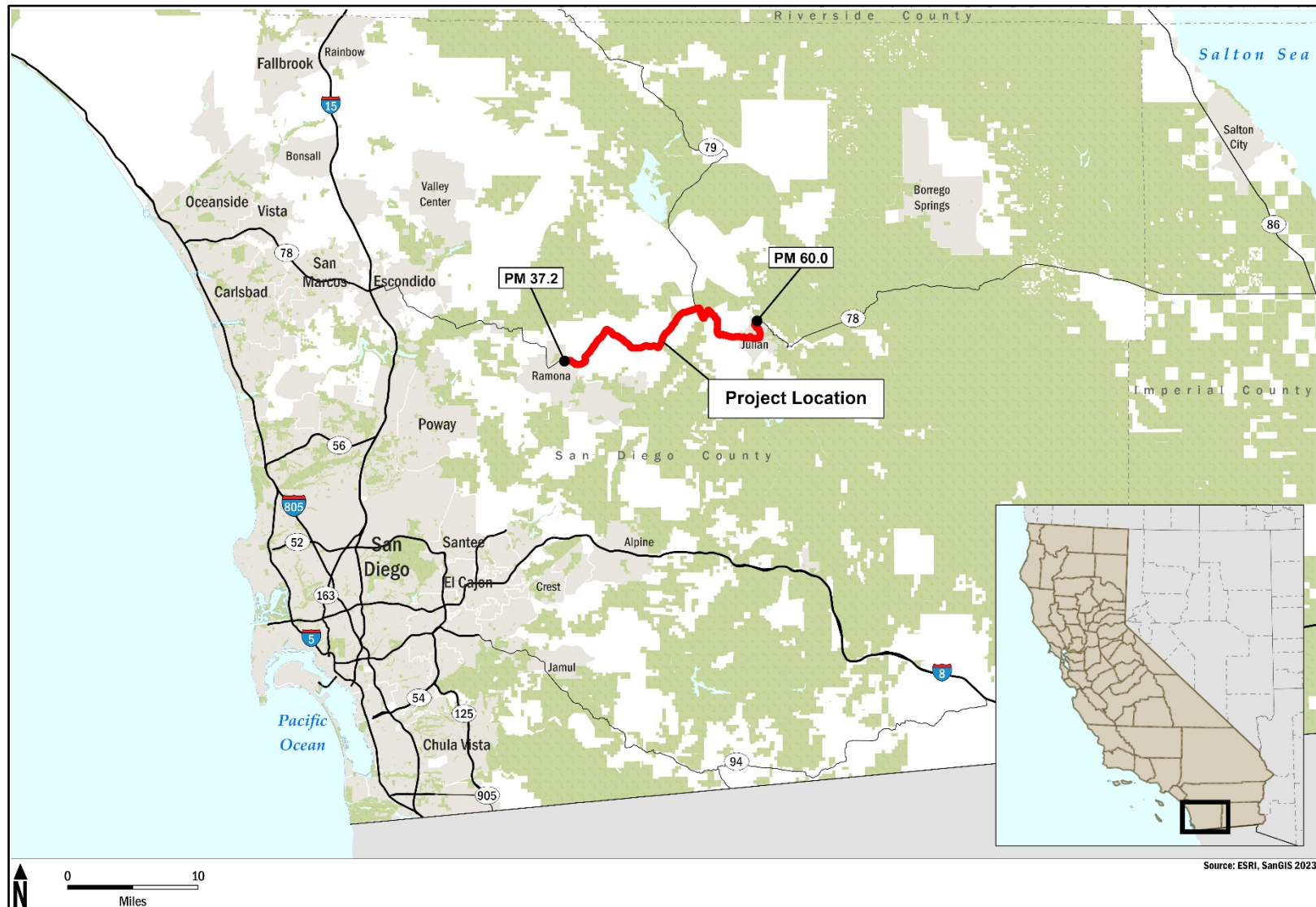
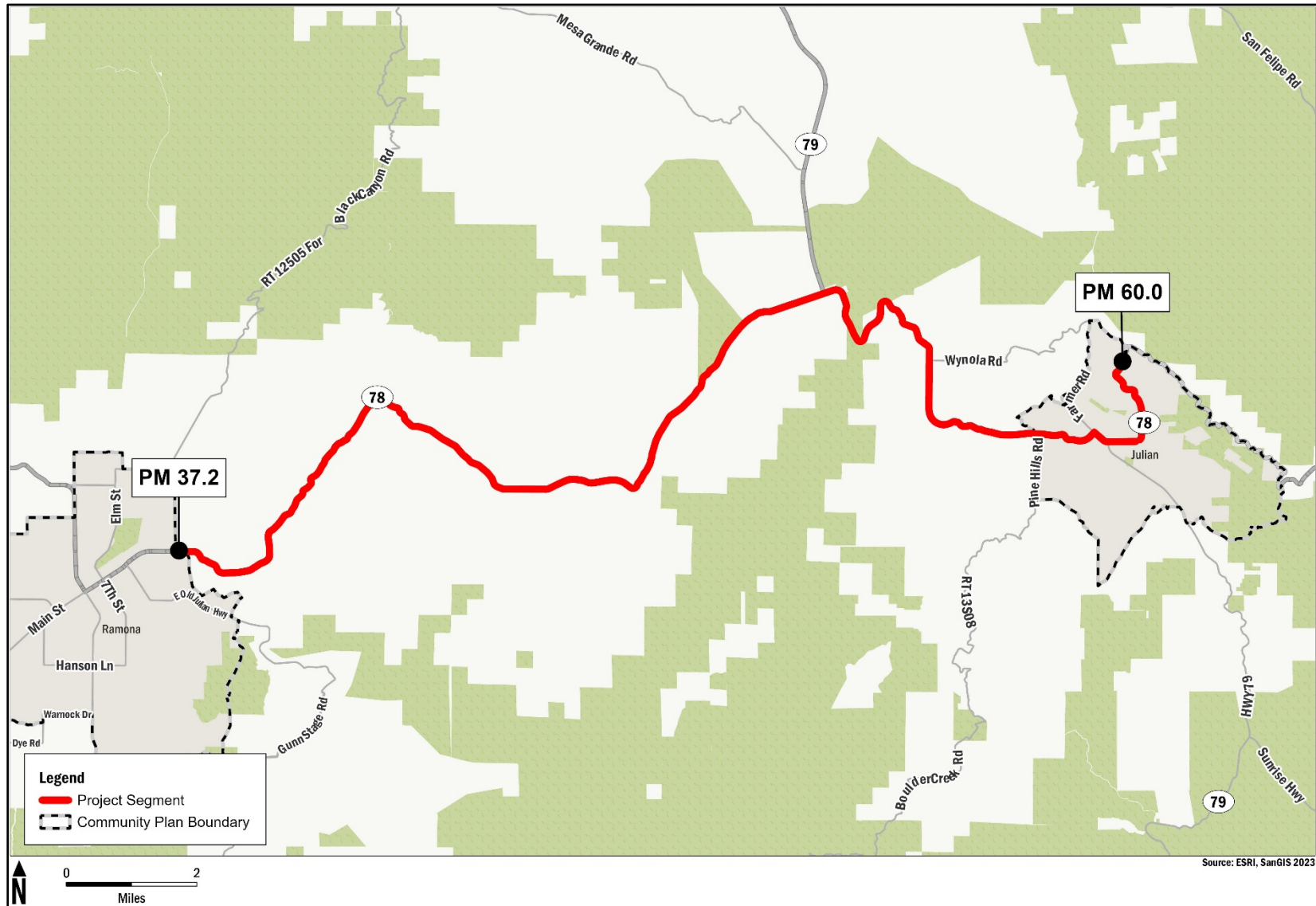




Figure 1-2 Project Location Map





### **1.4.1 Build Alternative**

The Build Alternative, also referred to as the proposed project, contains a number of standardized project measures that are used on most, if not all, Caltrans projects and were not developed in response to any specific environmental impact resulting from the proposed project. These measures are listed in Section 1.5.

The Build Alternative proposes to rehabilitate and enhance multiple assets on State Route 78, from post miles 37.2 through 60.0, in unincorporated areas of eastern San Diego County. The main asset for the proposed project is pavement rehabilitation, which would repair or replace distressed pavement on State Route 78 that is in fair, poor, or critical condition. Improvements to other assets are also included in the Build Alternative. The proposed improvements under the Build Alternative are discussed in greater detail in the following paragraphs.

#### ***Pavement Rehabilitation (Anchor Asset)***

The Build Alternative would rehabilitate pavement along 45.6 lane miles of State Route 78 (one lane in each direction for the 22.8-mile-long project area). The proposed pavement rehabilitation includes removal of distressed pavement; replacement with new asphalt; and replacement and enhancement of shoulders, dikes that are used to carry runoff, traffic stripes, and pavement markings. Pavement rehabilitation methods would include the following:

- Rubberized hot mix asphalt overlay involves the application of 0.2 feet of new asphalt over existing asphaltic concrete (AC) pavement. This technique would be used for most of the project length on travel lanes and shoulders (from post miles 37.2 through 57.7, and from post miles 58.1 through 60.0).
- Cold planing is a technique used to grind away existing AC pavement to a specific depth and replace it with base and top layers of new asphalt. This technique would be used in specific locations where curb and gutter are present (from post miles 57.7 through 58.1).
- Digout is a strategy used for pavement areas that have localized distress which would remove partial depth of the existing AC pavement and recompact a base material at specific locations.
- Dike replacement involves replacing existing AC dikes that carry runoff away from the roadway.
- Shoulder rehabilitation involves improving graded areas on the side of the roadway to prevent erosion and avoid uneven surfaces at the edge of pavement. Shoulder rehabilitation would be conducted up to 4 feet from the edge of pavement.

***Culvert Replacements and Drainage Improvements [This section has been updated]***

The Build Alternative would replace 20 culvert pipe segments within the project limits. Culvert replacement entails replacing existing pipes and requires trenching, ground disturbance, and vegetation removal. Additional end treatment repairs may be needed, including repairing flared end sections and/or headwalls, joint sealing/repair, stabilizing embankments, debris removal or sediment flushing, and removing vegetation. Culvert replacement details are described below in Table 1-1.

**Table 1-1 Culvert Replacements**

<b>Culvert Number</b>	<b>Post Mile Location</b>	<b>Length (linear feet)</b>	<b>Existing Diameter and Material</b>	<b>Proposed Diameter and Material</b>	<b>Other Improvements</b>
1	37.55	49.5	18" CSP/RSP	18" RCP	-Install RSP at outlet
2	39.84	47.9	18" CSP	18" RCP	-Construct new pipe HW and RSP at outlet -Replace HW at inlet
3	41.01	42.57	24" CSP	24" RCP	-Grade slope to drain at outlet
4	41.13	47.59	36" CSP	36" RCP	-Reconstruct RSP at outlet
5	41.55	41.39	18" CSP	18" RCP	-Remove existing riser and install GMP -Reconstruct HW at inlet
6	46.32	47.43	18" CSP	18" RCP	N/A
7	47.71	40.46	18" CSP	24" RCP	N/A
8	48.00	41.59	24" CSP	24" RCP	-Replace HW at outlet -Construct inlet HW
9	48.82	62.94	24" CSP	24" RCP	N/A
10	51.62	57.63	18" CSP	24" RCP	-Restore RSP at outlet
11	51.76	61.41	18" CSP	24" RCP	-Replace existing drainage inlet -Replace HW at outlet

Culvert Number	Post Mile Location	Length (linear feet)	Existing Diameter and Material	Proposed Diameter and Material	Other Improvements
12	51.85	55.41	18" CSP	24" RCP	-Reconstruct existing drainage inlet
13	54.40	42.67	18" CSP	18" APC	-Install stress reducing slab
14	54.61	47.04	18" CSP	18" APC	-Install stress reducing slab
15	55.20	54.53	18" CSP	18" RCP	-Replace HW at outlet
16	57.76	78.70	36" CSP	36" RCP	-Replace HW at outlet
17	58.08	64.89	18" CSP	18" RCP	-Install stress reducing slab
18	58.44	54.32	24" CSP	24" RCP	-Replace manhole with junction structure
19	58.66	44.39	18" CSP	18" RCP	-Install stress reducing slab
20	59.48	51.63	18" CSP	18" RCP	N/A

Notes: CSP=Corrugated Steel Pipe; RCP=Reinforced Concrete Pipe; HW=Headwall; RSP=Rock Slope Protection; APC=Alternative Pipe Culvert; GMP=Steel Pipe Inlet

### ***Mobility Improvements [This section has been updated]***

The Build Alternative would upgrade 11 curb ramps to meet ADA standards. The existing curb ramps, curbs, and gutters would be upgraded, and a detectable warning surface (a distinctive surface pattern that alerts people with vision impairments to potential hazards) would be installed in each curb ramp. Curb ramps would be upgraded on State Route 78 at intersections with Washington Street, Coleman Circle, B Street, and C Street. Decorative crosswalks would be installed at select locations.

At the intersection of Main Street and Washington Street in Downtown Julian, the Build Alternative originally proposed curb extensions at all four corners of the intersection to meet ADA standards. In consideration of community concerns related to traffic flow disruption and alteration of the appearance and character of the Julian Historic District, the Build Alternative now proposes to construct standard curb ramp upgrades at only the northeastern, southwestern and southeastern corners of the intersection. The existing curb ramp at the northwestern corner of the intersection (where the historic Julian Market & Deli building is located) currently has building columns in the middle of the nonstandard sidewalk. In response to community concerns, the northwestern corner curb ramp and sidewalk would not be upgraded, and an exception to ADA requirements has been approved for this location.

### ***Safety Improvements***

The Build Alternative would replace existing nonstandard metal beam guardrail with Midwest Guardrail Systems at 18 locations. The proposed guardrail and end treatments would extend or add new elements to the roadside. In two locations (the bridge over Hatfield Creek at post miles 37.2 and 45.0), concrete anchor blocks and crash cushions would also be installed as part of guardrail replacements. The work would require grading and vegetation removal.

A total of 64 roadside sign panel replacements would be completed at 40 locations within the project limits. Existing signposts would be used for the replacements.

Additionally, centerline and shoulder rumble strips would be installed or upgraded between post miles 37.4-57.75 and 58.6-60.0.

### ***Complete Streets Improvements***

The Build Alternative would install decorative crosswalks on State Route 78 at eight locations to enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety.

### ***Construction Activities and Schedule***

Construction of the Build Alternative is expected to begin in Winter 2026 and last approximately 25 months, with an opening year of 2029. Typical construction processes would involve vegetation removal, grading, excavation, pavement removal/repaving, trenching for culvert installation, lane restriping, and end treatment repairs to project elements such as culverts. Anticipated construction equipment includes dump trucks, backhoes, concrete mixer trucks, street sweepers, air compressors, generators, an auger drill rig, pneumatic tools (e.g., jack hammer or impact wrenches), concrete saws, vacuums, and hand tools. Contractors may use additional equipment depending on logistics and timing. Nighttime construction may occur in select areas. Construction would only occur in Downtown Julian between May and August, as determined through community outreach. Vegetation removal would be limited to minor clearing/grubbing in the right-of-way and immediately adjacent areas as necessary to complete culvert installations. Soil off-site removal and disposal of construction debris would also be required.

Construction staging would occur in various areas along State Route 78, depending on the type of activities occurring. Staging areas are under consideration for the following locations:

- Caltrans maintenance facility in Julian, off State Route 78 at post mile 58.6;
- at the southern end of State Route 78 at post mile 40.8;

- at the northern and southern side of State Route 78 at post miles 41.70 and 41.75, respectively;
- at the northern side of State Route 78 at post mile 45.47;
- at the southern side of the intersection of State Route 78 and Julian Road between post miles 46.15 and 46.17;
- at the northern side of State Route 78 at post mile 46.25;
- at the southern side of State Route 78 at post mile 51.78; and
- at the southern side of State Route 78 at post mile 51.90.

To the extent feasible, staging areas would be in the Caltrans right-of-way. Temporary construction easements with private property owners may be required due to site constraints, access limitations, or safety needs. Any temporary easements would be negotiated by Caltrans pending project approval and after final design. The Build Alternative would not result in any residential or commercial property relocations or permanent property acquisitions.

#### **1.4.2 No-Build (No-Action) Alternative**

The No-Build Alternative provides a baseline for considerations of the Build Alternative. It may be preferred if other alternatives or variations proposed have substantial impacts to the environment, do not serve the project's purpose and need, or are not economically feasible.

The No-Build Alternative retains the existing conditions of the transportation assets and would not address the purpose and need of the project. This alternative would not rehabilitate the deteriorating assets, improve driver and worker safety, or enhance mobility and Complete Streets.

### **1.5 Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in All Build Alternatives**

This project would incorporate standardized measures and best management practices (BMPs), which are employed on most, if not all, Caltrans projects and were not developed in response to any specific environmental impact resulting from the proposed project. These measures are addressed in more detail by resource area in the Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation sections found in Chapter 2.

- The construction contractor must comply with San Diego Air Pollution Control District (SDAPCD) Rule 55 and Caltrans' Standard Specifications 14-9 (Caltrans 2023). Section 14-9 requires compliance

with applicable laws and regulations related to air quality, including air pollution control district regulations and local ordinances. In accordance with Section 14-9, waste or material generated from construction activities would not be disposed of by burning.

- Water palliative would be applied to the site and equipment as often as necessary to control fugitive dust emissions. Fugitive emissions generally must meet a “no visible dust” criterion, either at the point of emissions or at the right-of-way line, depending on local regulations.
- Construction equipment and vehicles would be properly tuned and maintained and would use low-sulfur fuel as required by California Code of Regulations, Title 17, Section 93114.
- Equipment and materials storage sites would be located as far away from residential and park uses as feasible, and construction areas would be kept clean and orderly.
- To the extent feasible, construction traffic would be scheduled and routed to reduce congestion and related air quality impacts caused by idling vehicles along local roads during peak travel times.
- The construction contractor shall use alternative fuels such as renewable diesel-fueled or solar-powered construction equipment, as feasible.
- The construction contractor shall implement an idling limit of 5 minutes or less for delivery trucks and other diesel-powered equipment (with some exceptions).
- The construction contractor shall schedule truck trips outside of peak morning and evening commute hours and implement a Traffic Management Plan (TMP), to be developed during the design phase, to minimize the effects to traffic.
- The construction contractor shall reduce construction waste and maximize the use of recycled materials including project features as applicable (such as salvaging rebar from demolished concrete and process waste).
- The construction contractor shall encourage improved fuel efficiency from construction equipment by ensuring that construction equipment is maintained and properly tuned, and that equipment has been correctly sized for the job.
- The construction contractor shall provide construction personnel with the knowledge to identify environmental issues and BMPs to minimize impacts to the human and natural environment. The construction contractor shall supplement existing training with information regarding methods to reduce greenhouse gas emissions related to construction.

- The construction contractor shall use recycled water or reduce consumption of potable water for construction.
- The construction contractor shall reduce the need for transport of earthen materials by balancing cut and fill quantities.
- The construction contractor shall salvage large removed trees for lumber or similar onsite beneficial uses other than standard wood-chipping.
- The construction contractor shall select long-life, permeable pavement materials that lower the rolling resistance of highway surfaces as much as possible, while still maintaining design and safety standards.
- The construction contractor shall use cold in-place recycling for pavement rehabilitation, as feasible.
- The construction contractor shall replace lighting with ultra-reflective sign materials that are illuminated by headlights to reduce energy used by electric lighting.
- Emergency service providers and first responders would be notified of construction sequencing and the potential for temporary lane closures and/or changes to traffic circulation, as identified in the TMP.
- In accordance with Caltrans Standard Specifications 7-1.02M(2), Fire Protection, a fire prevention plan shall be prepared and submitted by the construction contractor prior to the start of job site activities. Fire prevention authorities shall be cooperated with during the performance of work, any fires shall be reported immediately, and fires shall be extinguished if caused directly or indirectly by job site activities.
- Construction crews would implement and maintain stormwater and erosion control BMPs described in the Caltrans Construction Site (BMPs) Manual (Caltrans 2017) and follow specifications in Section 13 of the Caltrans Standard Specifications and associated special provisions. At a minimum, protective measures would include:
  - preventing pollutants generated by vehicle and equipment maintenance or cleaning from entering storm drains or aquatic resources;
  - servicing or storing vehicles and equipment no less than 100 feet from storm drains or aquatic resources unless the features are protected by impermeable barriers;
  - maintaining vehicles and equipment to prevent fluid leaks;

- storing hazardous materials such as fuels, oils, or solvents in sealed containers at a designated location no less than 100 feet from storm drains or aquatic resources; and
- capturing or controlling sediment with erosion control devices such as silt fences, fiber rolls, and appropriate erosion control netting, and covering temporary stockpiles.
- If a special-status species is discovered, construction personnel would immediately halt work within 100 feet of the discovery and notify the Resident Engineer and Biologist. The Biologist would coordinate with the appropriate agency for assistance if necessary. Work would not continue at the location until authorized by the Biologist.
- For hazardous waste generated on the job site, the Water Pollution Control manager must be knowledgeable of proper handling and emergency procedures for hazardous waste, as demonstrated by submitting a training certificate that indicates completion of training required under 22 California Code of Regulations Section 66265.16, in accordance with Caltrans Standard Specifications 14-11.01.
- The construction contractor, upon discovery of unanticipated asbestos and/or hazardous substance, is required to immediately stop working in the area of the discovery and notify Caltrans Environmental Engineering, in accordance with Caltrans Standard Specifications 14-11.02. Environmental Engineering will use the on-call Construction Emergency Response Contract to perform any required work.
- The construction contractor is required, in accordance with Caltrans Standard Specifications 14-11.03, to handle, store, and dispose of hazardous waste under 22 California Code of Regulations Division 4.5.
- A Lead Compliance Plan under Caltrans Standard Specifications 7-1.02K(6)(j)(ii) would be required during construction when handling lead-contaminated soils, as well as removal of lead-based paint, thermoplastic, painted traffic stripe, and/or pavement marking.
- Excavation, transportation, and handling of material containing hazardous waste or contamination must result in no visible dust migration. When clearing, grubbing, and performing earthwork operations in areas containing hazardous waste or contamination, a water truck or water tank must be provided on the job site, in accordance with Caltrans Standard Specifications 14-11.04.
- The construction contractor is not permitted to stockpile material containing hazardous waste or contamination unless ordered. Stockpiles containing hazardous waste or contamination must not be placed where affected by surface run-on or run-off. Stockpiles are not permitted in environmentally



sensitive areas (ESAs). Stockpiled material must not enter storm drains, inlets, or Waters of the State. These requirements are provided in Caltrans Standard Specifications 14-11.05.

- The construction contractor is designated the generator of hazardous waste produced from materials the construction contractor has brought to the job site, in accordance with Caltrans Standard Specifications 14-11.06.
- Removal of any treated wood waste (e.g., wooden posts for guardrails, signs, barriers, or piles) would require proper handling and disposal, in accordance with Caltrans Standard Special Provisions 14-11.14. Treated wood waste products contain hazardous chemical preservatives; therefore, treated wood waste is considered a California Hazardous Waste.
- Imported local materials from either a (1) noncommercial source, or (2) source not regulated under California jurisdiction, must be evaluated and approved for use by Environmental Engineering Branch, in accordance with Caltrans Standard Specifications 6-1.03B.
- Minimization measures to reduce traffic impacts resulting from construction activities would be implemented with the TMP, including appropriate staging, timing, and sequencing of activities; maintenance of traffic in both directions; and advanced notification to motorists and nearby communities to inform the public of potential delays.
- Prior to construction activities, the construction contractor would contact utilities, DigAlert services, and/or other applicable entities to mark underground facilities, as needed.
- Emergency service providers and first responders would be notified of construction sequencing and the potential for temporary lane closures and/or changes to traffic circulation, as identified in the TMP.

## **1.6 Identification of a Preferred Alternative**

There were two alternatives assessed in this document: the Build Alternative and No-Build Alternative. After comparing and weighing the benefits and impacts of all feasible alternatives, the Project Development Team has identified the Build Alternative as the preferred alternative. With incorporation of mitigation measures, standardized avoidance measures, and BMPs, and with consideration of the community benefits provided by project features, there would be minimal impacts from implementation of the Build Alternative. The Build Alternative would meet the identified purpose and need (Section 1.2 of this document) which comprise the proposed project assessed in this document.

## 1.7 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 for the proposed project in accordance with NEPA. 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—that is, species protected by the Federal Endangered Species Act and consideration of significant impacts on historical resources that may be identified pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act).

## 1.8 Permits and Approvals Needed

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

Agency	Permit/Approval	Status
United States Army Corps of Engineers	Clean Water Act – Section 404 Nationwide Permit	Anticipated by February 2026.
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	ESA Section 7 Informal Consultation	Concurrence received December 2024.
San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board	Clean Water Act – Section 401 Water Quality Certification	Anticipated by February 2026.
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Fish and Game Code – 1602 Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement	Anticipated by February 2026.

## Chapter 2 CEQA Evaluation

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### 2.1 CEQA Environmental Checklist

This checklist identifies physical, biological, social, and economic factors that might be affected by the proposed project. Potential impact determinations include Significant and Unavoidable Impact, Less-than-Significant Impact 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 BMPs 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, and no further discussion is included in this document.

#### 2.1.1 Aesthetics [This section has been updated]

Considering the information in the Visual Impact Assessment dated March 27, 2024 (Caltrans 2024a), 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?	<b>No Impact</b>
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	<b>No Impact</b>

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?	<b>Less-than-Significant Impact</b>
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	<b>No Impact</b>

### ***Regulatory Setting***

CEQA Public Resources Code requires all actions necessary be taken to maintain the aesthetic, natural, scenic and historic environmental qualities of the state.

California Streets and Highways Code directs Caltrans to use drought-resistant landscaping and recycled water when feasible and to incorporate native wildflowers and native and climate-appropriate vegetation into the planting design when appropriate.

### ***Affected Environment***

Within the project limits, State Route 78 is an undivided highway in a rural area traversing flat to mountainous terrain. Key visual elements in the rural segment include sharp curves on steep grades through mountainous open spaces that have intact native vegetation. Most of the rural viewsheds have high visual quality and visual character. The project limits are eligible to be a state scenic highway but have not been designated.

Developed areas in the project limits include residences, commercial buildings, recreational spaces, and schools. Julian is a historic town in the project area. Various historic buildings in the town contribute to the historical visual appearance of the area. The design of the town is defined by linear streets and a commercial core along Main Street.

### ***Environmental Consequences***

Although the project limits contain a portion of State Route 78 that is an eligible state scenic highway, the proposed project would not substantially damage scenic resources. Some vegetation removal may occur but would be limited to the amount necessary to complete the work, would be replanted and would not significantly detract from the scenic quality of the roadway.

Changes to visual character from the proposed project are anticipated to impact different users of the highway. The different viewer groups in the

project area and their expected awareness of visual changes are described below:

- Residents from the area and daily commuters would have moderate viewer awareness of changes on State Route 78 due to their familiarity with the drive.
- Recreational and weekend users would have lower viewer awareness of changes on State Route 78 than residents and daily highway users. Recreational trail users may have limited foreground views, except for those at higher elevations.
- Residents, workers, and visitors are the primary viewer groups with the most exposure to curb ramp and crossing changes in Downtown Julian. Residents from the area and daily users would have moderate awareness due to their familiarity with walking in the small town.

Proposed culvert work would cause temporary impacts to visual resources from construction activities. Drainage work would require brush removal, grading and trenching. Although the proposed culvert work would result in some change to the visual character on the roadway, the locations of vegetation removal would be significantly spaced out at intervals of approximately 1 mile or greater. Vegetation removal would not be concentrated in only one area, and the affected areas would only be visible intermittently from vehicles traveling at high speeds on State Route 78. Temporary access routes (if graded) may be visible from foreground and distant elevated locations. Vegetation removal would be avoided to the extent possible and limited to the amount necessary to complete the work. Disturbed soils would be revegetated with grasses, buckwheat, and sage scrub.

Visual quality would be reduced where mature trees and large shrubs are removed. Where trees are impacted, the change to visual character could be moderately high. Specifically, visual impacts would be adverse if a solitary specimen tree was removed. Existing trees would be protected to the highest possible extent to avoid any inadvertent damage, which would minimize visual impacts along the corridor.

Proposed improvements in the town of Julian would integrate into the historic character of the town and reduce visual impact. The project proposes to install crosswalks and ADA curb ramps. The project originally proposed large bulb outs with curb ramps at each corner of the intersection of Washington Street and Main Street. Urban style, high-visibility continental crosswalks were also proposed at the intersections of Main Street with Washington Street, B Street and C Street. Julian stakeholders reviewed the proposal and requested that the proposed design be reconsidered to fit the rural character of the town. In response, the intersection of Main Street and Washington Street was redesigned to replace the bulb outs with standard curb ramp

upgrades at only three corners of the intersection and eliminate high-visibility continental crosswalks. Proposed crosswalks would use stamped asphalt with a colored brick pattern at crosswalks to mimic bricks used in some of the buildings in Downtown Julian. Public sensitivity to this visual change should be moderate to low because the aesthetic would be designed to be consistent with the historic, rural character of Julian and avoid visual impacts.

Due to the quantity of viewers who would experience the proposed project, the viewer exposure is considered high. Although viewer exposure is high, viewer sensitivity and response to anticipated visual changes is considered low because of the low change in visual resources and the avoidance measures which have been incorporated into the project. Therefore, impacts to visual character and quality would be less than significant.

### ***Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures***

The proposed project would implement the following avoidance measures as project features:

- The project would implement the following project features to minimize visual impacts within the Julian Historic District. New crosswalks will use stamped asphalt paving with a brick pattern to match the pattern of the existing stamped brick crosswalk at 10th Street in Ramona. The stamped asphalt surface color will look like the brick color or colors used at brick buildings in the historic district. High visibility “Continental” crosswalk striping must not be used over the stamped asphalt brick paving at crosswalks. Reconstructed sidewalks and curb ramps will be integrally colored concrete to appear as older concrete. The surface finish should appear to be a uniform “light sand finish”. The sand finish will be achieved by using concrete surface retardants (no sandblasting, water blasting, or broom finish). Truncated domes would be either brown or gray (not yellow).
- Avoid tree removal and rock outcroppings if possible.
- Avoid blading vegetated areas in access routes and contractor use areas.
- Avoid placement of fill, grading, or trenching under tree canopies to avoid damage to tree roots.
- No equipment, material storage, or vehicles are allowed under the dripline of trees within or outside of the construction footprint. (This includes contractor use areas and temporary access routes. Install netting, a stake and rope system, or other device around the edge of the tree dripline canopy to delineate the area that is not for contractor use.)
- Avoid severe tree pruning. Pruning and shaping of trees shall be performed under the direct supervision of a certified arborist in accordance

with the current standards of the Western Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture and the current American National Standards Institute A300 Plant Maintenance Standard Practices, and as directed and approved by the State's Engineer. Pruning shall not detract from the appearance, compromise the function, or adversely impact the maintainability or longevity of the tree. Pruning shall be done in the horticulturally appropriate time of the year.

- Protect vegetation outside of the work area limits by prohibiting material storage, parking, machinery, and construction access in vegetated areas.
- Brush trimming work shall not adversely impact the longevity of trees and shrubs. Brush trimmings would be hauled away or chipped.
- Disturbed areas would be mulched or treated with a permanent erosion control mix consisting of California native species, in accordance with the recommendation of the Project Biologist and Landscape Architect.
- Wildlife fencing, if proposed, would be painted or stained a dark brown.

### 2.1.2 Agriculture and Forestry 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 (ARB).

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?	<b>No Impact</b>
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	<b>No Impact</b>

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Agriculture and Forest Resources
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))?	<b>No Impact</b>
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<b>No Impact</b>
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?	<b>No Impact</b>

### ***Discussion of Agriculture and Forestry Resource Evaluation***

The project site does not contain designated Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, nor does the project site contain forest lands (California Department of Conservation 2020). The project site is in the Caltrans right-of-way and is not zoned for agricultural or forest use. Additionally, there are no Williamson Act contract lands within the project limits (California Department of Conservation 2022). Therefore, the proposed project would have no impact on agriculture and forestry resources.

#### **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.

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Air Quality
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	<b>No Impact</b>
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?	<b>Less-than-Significant Impact</b>
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	<b>Less-than-Significant Impact</b>
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	<b>Less-than-Significant Impact</b>



## ***Regulatory Framework***

### ***Federal***

#### **Federal Clean Air Act**

The Federal Clean Air Act, as amended, is the primary federal law that governs air quality. This law, and related regulations by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), set standards for the concentration of pollutants in the air. At the federal level, these standards are called National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS).

### ***State***

#### **California Clean Air Act**

The California Clean Air Act is the companion state law to the Federal Clean Air Act. Similarly, this law and related regulations by ARB sets standards for the concentration of pollutants in the air. At the state level, these standards are called California Ambient Air Quality Standards (CAAQS).

NAAQS and CAAQS have been established for the following six criteria pollutants that have been linked to potential health concerns:

- Carbon monoxide (CO);
- Nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>x</sub>);
- Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>);
- Particulate matter (PM)—which is broken down for regulatory purposes into two particles sizes:
  - 10 micrometers or smaller (PM<sub>10</sub>), and
  - 2.5 micrometers and smaller (PM<sub>2.5</sub>);
- Lead (Pb); and
- Sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>).

In addition, the CAAQS also include standards for the following additional criteria:

- Visibility-reducing particles,
- Sulfates,
- Hydrogen sulfide, and
- Vinyl chloride.

The NAAQS and CAAQS are set at levels that protect public health and are subject to periodic review and revision. Both state and federal regulatory frameworks also cover toxic air contaminants (air toxics); some criteria pollutants are also air toxics or may include certain air toxics in their general definition.

## *Regional*

### *San Diego Air Pollution Control District*

SDAPCD regulates most air pollutant sources, except for motor vehicles, marine vessels, aircraft, and agricultural equipment, which are regulated by ARB or USEPA. Included in the SDAPCD's tasks are monitoring of air pollution, preparation of implementation plans for San Diego, and establishing rules and regulations for air quality. USEPA has delegated responsibility to air districts to establish local rules to protect air quality. Caltrans Standard Specifications requires compliance with applicable air quality laws and regulations, including local and air district ordinances and rules.

SDAPCD has established Air Quality Impact Analysis (AQIA) Trigger Levels in Regulation II, Rule 20.2, which are applicable to new or modified stationary sources. The SDAPCD AQIA trigger levels may be used to evaluate the increased emissions from projects; and to demonstrate that a project's emissions would not result in a significant impact to regional air quality or impede attainment of air quality standards for the region

### ***Affected Environment***

The proposed project site is in San Diego County, in the San Diego Air Basin (SDAB). Air quality in the SDAB is regulated by USEPA, ARB, and SDAPCD. As described above, each of these agencies develops rules, regulations, or policies and/or goals to attain the directives imposed through legislation.

Both USEPA and ARB use ambient air quality monitoring data to designate areas according to their attainment status for criteria air pollutants. The purpose of these designations is to identify the areas with air quality problems and initiate planning efforts for improvement. The three basic designation categories are nonattainment, attainment, and unclassified. An "attainment" designation for an area signifies that pollutant concentrations did not exceed the established standard.

Table 2-1 shows attainment designations for the SDAB. The SDAB currently meets the NAAQS for most criteria air pollutants except ozone; and meets the CAAQS for most criteria air pollutants except ozone, PM<sub>10</sub>, and PM<sub>2.5</sub>.

**Table 2-1 San Diego Air Basin Attainment Status**

Criteria Pollutant	Federal Designation	State Designation
Ozone (8-Hour)	Nonattainment	Nonattainment
Ozone (1-Hour)	Attainment <sup>1</sup>	Nonattainment
Carbon Monoxide	Attainment	Attainment
PM <sub>10</sub>	Unclassifiable <sup>2</sup>	Nonattainment
PM <sub>2.5</sub>	Attainment	Nonattainment

Criteria Pollutant	Federal Designation	State Designation
Nitrogen Dioxide	Attainment	Attainment
Sulfur Dioxide	Attainment	Attainment
Lead	Attainment	Attainment
Sulfates	No Federal Standard	Attainment
Hydrogen Sulfide	No Federal Standard	Unclassified
Visibility	No Federal Standard	Unclassified

**Notes:**

- <sup>1</sup> The federal ozone (1-hour) standard of 12 parts per million was in effect from 1979 through June 15, 2005. The revoked standard is referenced here because this benchmark is addressed in State Implementation Plans.
- <sup>2</sup> At the time of designation, if the available data do not support a designation of attainment or nonattainment, the area is designated as unclassifiable.

PM<sub>10</sub> = particles 10 micrometers or smaller; PM<sub>2.5</sub> = particles 2.5 micrometers or smaller

**Source:** SDAPCD 2024

**Environmental Consequences**

Construction activities for the proposed project would generate temporary emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur oxides, PM<sub>10</sub>, and PM<sub>2.5</sub>. Ozone, a regional pollutant derived from NO<sub>x</sub> and VOCs in the presence of sunlight and heat, would be indirectly produced.

Construction-related emissions of VOCs, NO<sub>x</sub>, CO, and particulate matter would primarily be associated with off-road and on-road equipment exhaust, as well as fugitive dust associated with demolition and ground-disturbing activities. SO<sub>2</sub> is generated by oxidation during combustion of organic sulfur compounds contained in diesel fuel. SO<sub>2</sub>-related issues due to diesel exhaust would be minimized through compliance with existing regulations.

Emissions associated with construction of the proposed project were calculated using the Caltrans Construction Emissions Tool (CAL-CET [version 2021v1.0.2]) and are shown in Table 2-2. Emissions are compared to the SDAPCD AQIA Trigger Levels in Regulation II, Rule 20.2.

**Table 2-2 Daily Construction Emissions**

Phase	TOG	VOC	CO	NO <sub>x</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>	PM <sub>2.5</sub>
Daily Average (pounds per day)	3.0	2.8	15.5	22.4	45.6	5.8
Project Maximum Daily Emissions (pounds per day)	4.2	3.9	25.9	29.0	65.3	9.4

Phase	TOG	VOC	CO	NO <sub>x</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>	PM <sub>2.5</sub>
Threshold of Significance <sup>1</sup>	Not applicable	Not applicable	550	250	100	67
Significant Impact?	Not applicable	Not applicable	No	No	No	No

**Notes:**

CO = carbon monoxide; NO<sub>x</sub> = nitrogen oxides; PM<sub>10</sub> = particles 10 micrometers or smaller; PM<sub>2.5</sub> = particles 2.5 micrometers or smaller; TOG = total organic gases; VOC = volatile organic compounds

<sup>1</sup> SDAPCD Air Quality Impact Analysis Trigger Levels in Regulation II, Rule 20.2

**Source:** Caltrans 2024b

As shown in Table 2-2, construction-related emissions would not exceed the SDAPCD AQIA trigger levels. Construction impacts to air quality are short in duration and, therefore, would not result in long-term adverse conditions or in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is nonattainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard.

Operational emissions for the proposed project are expected to remain similar to existing conditions because the project would replace or rehabilitate existing facilities without increasing capacity or inducing additional vehicle travel. The improvements proposed by the project would allow for operational efficiencies in vehicle travel on State Route 78 due to pavement rehabilitation, drainage improvements, and signage. Furthermore, the project would improve existing curb ramps and crosswalks along the corridor, which would improve pedestrian facilities in the area. For these reasons, operation of the project would not result in long-term air quality impacts. This impact would be less than significant.

The primary air pollutant exposure from the project would occur during construction from toxic air contaminants associated with construction equipment exhaust. There are sensitive receptors (residences, schools, and childcare centers) along State Route 78 near the project limits. The total duration of construction activities is anticipated to be approximately 25 months; the exposure of sensitive receptors to construction emissions would be short term. Construction would only occur intermittently and would progress linearly without concentrated emission exposure in any one location. In addition, as described above, the proposed project construction emissions would not exceed the SDAPCD AQIA trigger levels. Therefore, the proposed project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations, and this impact would be less than significant.

Construction activities associated with the proposed project could result in short-term odor emissions from diesel exhaust associated with construction equipment and asphalt paving operations. As described above, construction would occur only intermittently and would progress linearly, without

concentrated emission exposure in any one location. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in other emissions, such as those leading to odors, affecting a substantial number of people. This impact would be less than significant.

***Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures***

The proposed project would implement the following standard measures to avoid or minimize air quality effects:

- The construction contractor must comply with SDAPCD Rule 55 and Caltrans Standard Specification 14-9. Section 14-9 includes specifications requiring compliance with applicable laws and regulations related to air quality, including air pollution control district and air quality management district regulations and local ordinances. In accordance with Section 14-9, waste or material generated from construction activities would not be disposed of by burning.
- Water palliative would be applied to the site and equipment as often as necessary to control fugitive dust emissions. Fugitive emissions generally must meet a “no visible dust” criterion, either at the point of emissions or at the right-of-way line, depending on local regulations.
- Construction equipment and vehicles would be properly tuned and maintained and would use low-sulfur fuel as required by California Code of Regulations, Title 17, Section 93114.
- Equipment and materials storage sites would be located as far away from residential and park uses as feasible, and construction areas would be kept clean and orderly.
- To the extent feasible, construction traffic would be scheduled and routed to reduce congestion and related air quality impacts caused by idling vehicles along local roads during peak travel times.
- The construction contractor shall use alternative fuels, such as renewable diesel, for construction equipment.
- The construction contractor shall implement an idling limit of 5 minutes or less for delivery trucks and other diesel-powered equipment (with some exceptions).
- The construction contractor shall encourage improved fuel efficiency from construction equipment by ensuring that construction equipment is maintained and properly tuned, and that equipment has been correctly sized for the job.

### 2.1.4 Biological Resources [This section has been updated]

Considering the information in the Natural Environment Study dated October 2024 (Caltrans 2024c), 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, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries?	<b>Less-than-Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated</b>
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 United States Fish and Wildlife Service?	<b>Less-than-Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated</b>
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	<b>Less-than-Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated</b>
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?	<b>No Impact</b>
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	<b>No Impact</b>
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?	<b>No Impact</b>

### ***Regulatory Framework***

Sensitive natural resources are protected by varying degrees of local, state, and federal laws, regulations, and acts. Regulatory requirements that apply to the proposed project are listed in the following subsections.

#### ***Federal***

#### ***Federal Endangered Species Act***

The Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) provides legal framework for protection of threatened and endangered species that the U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service (USFWS) or National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) place on the federal list. An agency reviewing a proposed project with federal funding, authorization, and/or permits must determine whether any federally listed species may be present in the project's affected environment and if there is potential for impacts to act upon that species. Habitat loss for a listed species is also considered under FESA and would require mitigation.

#### *Migratory Bird Treaty Act*

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) is a treaty with Canada, Mexico and Japan that makes it unlawful at any time, by any means or in any manner, to pursue, hunt, take, capture, or kill migratory birds. The law applies to the removal of nests that are occupied by migratory birds during the breeding season. Sections of California Fish and Game Code also prohibit the destruction of any nest, egg, or nestling.

#### *Clean Water Act*

The Clean Water Act (CWA) regulates the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters. The discharge of any pollutant from a point source into navigable waters is illegal unless a permit is provided by a responsible agency. The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs) are responsible for implementing the Clean Water Act.

In accordance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, USACE regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material into Waters of the United States, including wetlands.

#### *Executive Order 11990 Protection of Wetlands*

This executive order established a national policy to avoid adverse impacts on wetlands whenever there is a practicable alternative. On federally funded projects, impacts on wetlands must be identified, and alternatives that avoid wetlands must be considered. If wetland impacts cannot be avoided, then all practicable measures to minimize harm must be included.

#### *Executive Order 13112 Invasive Species*

Executive Order 13112 requires projects to prevent the introduction or spread of invasive species if there is federal agency funding or approvals. Invasive species are classified as those species that may cause human health, environmental or economic harm.

#### *State and Regional*

#### *California Endangered Species Act*

The California Endangered Species Act (CESA) is an environmental law that conserves and protects plant and animal species at risk of extinction. CESA provides a listing and review process, prohibits certain acts as damaging to

listed species, and facilitates a consultation process for state projects that may result in take of a species listed under CESA.

### Lake and Streambed Alterations

Under Sections 1600 through 1607, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) regulates activities that would divert or obstruct the natural flow or substantially change the bed, channel, or bank of any river, stream, or lake that supports riparian habitat and/or wildlife.

### **Affected Environment**

#### *Biological Study Area*

The proposed project footprint includes the area of direct impacts. The Biological Study Area (BSA) includes the footprint and areas that could be indirectly impacted by project activities. The BSA for this project includes the footprint and a 100-foot buffer around the footprint to account for all impacts. Actions considered when determining the BSA include ground disturbance, equipment access, right-of-way, air quality impacts, lighting effects, and noise disturbances during culvert maintenance work.

Examples of direct impacts include ground disturbance from operation of equipment and staging. Examples of indirect impacts include spread of invasive weeds, which could occur after construction is completed; and impacts to aquatic resources outside the BSA from activities that occur in the BSA (e.g., stormwater discharges). Some impacts may be considered both direct and indirect, such as increased noise and artificial illumination. Both occur during construction and within the footprint; however, they may also impact resources outside of the footprint.

#### *Land cover*

Within the BSA, there are approximately 672 acres comprised of 31 land cover types. Landcover acreage is provided in Table 2-3.

**Table 2-3 Land Cover and Plant Communities in the Biological Study Area**

Land Cover Type/Habitat	Acres in the Biological Study Area
<b><i>Upland Habitats</i></b>	--
Buckwheat Shrub	6.05
Coast Live Oak Woodland	7.97
Chamise Chaparral	41.55
Coastal Sage Chaparral Shrub	23.98
Dense Coast Live Oak Woodland	76.48



<b>Land Cover Type/Habitat</b>	<b>Acres in the Biological Study Area</b>
Dense Engelmann Oak Woodland	15.48
Diegan Coastal Sage Scrub	46.88
Disturbed Buckwheat Scrub	0.03
Disturbed Chaparral	0.01
Disturbed Coastal Sage Scrub	0.036
Disturbed/Developed Habitat	3.9
Engelmann Oak Woodland	3.50
Eucalyptus Woodland	3.56
Field/Pasture	27.47
Mixed Oak/Coniferous/Bigcone/Coulter Forest	52.73
Mixed Oak Woodland	28.95
Native Grassland	123.79
Nonnative Vegetation (Grasses, Ornamental)	0.64
Northern Mixed Chaparral	25.25
Open Coast Live Oak Woodland	26.98
Open Engelmann Oak Woodland	15.32
Orchards Vineyards, Row/Crop	8.94
Scrub Oak Chaparral	0.03
Scrub Oak Mixed Chaparral	0.06
Southern Mixed Chaparral	3.46
Urban/Developed	95.83
<b>Upland Habitat Total</b>	<b>638.88</b>
<b>Wetland Habitats</b>	
Blackberry Dominated Channel	0.007
Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest	13.44
Southern Riparian Forest/Scrub	14.04
Unvegetated Channel	0.007
Wet Montane Meadow and Freshwater Seep	5.51
<b>Wetland Habitat Total</b>	<b>32.99</b>

Landcover is discussed in detail below and separated by habitat classification of wetland or upland. Landcover that is anticipated to not be impacted by the project will not be discussed further. This includes Buckwheat Scrub, Chamise Chaparral, Coastal Sage Chaparral Shrub, Dense Coast Live Oak Woodland, Dense Engelmann Oak Woodland, Engelmann Oak Woodland,

Eucalyptus Woodland, Mixed Oak/Coniferous/Bigcone/Coulter Forest, Mixed Oak Woodland, Native Grassland, Nonnative Vegetation (Grasses, Ornamental), Northern Mixed Chaparral, Open Coast Live Oak Woodland, Open Engelmann Oak Woodland, Orchards Vineyards, Row/Crop, and Southern Mixed Chaparral.

### *Upland Habitats*

#### Coast Live Oak Woodland

Coast Live Oak Woodlands are characterized by the dominance of a single evergreen oak species, Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*). Coast live oaks can reach heights of approximately 30 to 80 feet. These woodlands are typically found on north-facing slopes and shaded ravines in southern regions and more exposed locations in the north. Other characteristic species in this community include California buckeye (*Aesculus californica*), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), coffeeberry (*Rhamnus californica*), blue elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*), and poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*), among other species that make up a sparse shrub layer. Coast live oaks are abundant throughout the project area, particularly near creeks and wetland areas. Generally, many oaks are present adjacent to or near the State Route 78 shoulder.

#### Diegan Coastal Sage Scrub

This vegetation type was once widespread in coastal southern California, and now it occurs in patches from Los Angeles into Baja California. This plant community is composed of a variety of low, soft, aromatic shrubs dominated by drought-deciduous species such as California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), flat-topped buckwheat, white sage (*Salvia apiana*), and black sage (*Salvia mellifera*). Typically, there are also scattered evergreen shrubs, including lemonadeberry (*Rhus integrifolia*), laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), and toyon. The understory is diverse and includes a rich variety of annual forbs, and both annual and perennial grasses. Disturbed coastal sage scrub is composed of a mixture of the plant species listed above and non-native or invasive species. In the project area, coastal sage scrub was commonly observed in patches in the BSA, particularly along slopes adjacent to the State Route 78.

#### Disturbed Chaparral

Disturbed chaparral is intermixed with non-native and/or invasive plant species. Disturbed chaparral may also lack the density and diversity of plant cover typically found in this community. This community was primarily observed near a residential area within the BSA.

#### Disturbed/Developed Habitat

These areas are any lands where agricultural practices, construction, or other land-clearing activities have significantly altered the native vegetation. The

species composition and site conditions are not characteristic of the disturbed phase of one of the plant associations in the BSA. Such habitat, which is dominated by nonnative annuals and perennial broadleaf species, is typically found in vacant lots, roadsides, construction staging areas, and abandoned fields. Types of vegetation observed included ornamental species such as tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), berry bush (*Pyracantha* sp.), and daffodils (*Narcissus* sp.). Other nonnative species commonly found in disturbed habitat include Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*), sweet fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), horseweed (*Conyza canadensis*), mustard (*Brassica* spp.), ice plant (*Carpobrotus edulis*), African fountain grass (*Pennisetum setaceum*), and castor bean (*Ricinus communis*). Various fruit orchards and agricultural areas were observed. Disturbed habitat is found regularly immediately adjacent to State Route 78.

### Field/Pasture

This is a land use type that is used to provide grazing and supplement for livestock. Vegetation cover is primarily composed of introduced forage species but can also include enhanced native forage species. Cover includes grasses, legumes, forbs, shrubs, or a combination of these (USDA n.d.). Common introduced species found along State Route 78 include foxtail chess, slender wild oat, ripgut grass, and soft chess. Large portions of route State Route 78 are bordered by private property where grazing livestock are present. The right-of-way in these areas is widely disturbed due to encroachment from nonnative grasses.

### Montane Buckwheat Scrub

This community is widely dominated by flat-topped buckwheat. Montane buckwheat scrub, referred to as buckwheat scrub in this document, is primarily found in higher elevations and in disturbed areas at lower elevations in San Diego County, and commonly found near mountain meadows where sandy soils are present. Disturbed buckwheat scrub is composed of a mixture of native buckwheat and non-native or invasive plant species. Buckwheat scrub was commonly seen on slopes along State Route 78 in large patches.

### Nonnative Grassland

Nonnative grasslands consist of dense-to-sparse cover of nonnative annual grasses, often associated with species of showy-flowered, native annual forbs, especially in years of high rainfall. During field surveys, nonnative grasslands were commonly observed on private property. In the Caltrans right-of-way, nonnative grasses were primarily found bordering the State Route 78 shoulder or in other disturbed areas.

### Scrub Oak Chaparral

Like chamise chaparral, this subtype of chaparral is defined by the dominant plant species in this community, scrub oak. Scrub oak chaparral was primarily

observed near culvert locations #10 to #12, and along other nearby steep, rocky slopes in the BSA.

#### Scrub Oak Mixed Chaparral

Like chamise chaparral, this subtype of chaparral is defined by the dominant plant species in this community, scrub oak. Scrub oak chaparral was primarily observed near culvert locations #10 to #12, and along other nearby steep, rocky slopes in the BSA.

#### Urban/Developed

Developed areas are lands that have been permanently altered by human activities. These areas include roads, buildings, and other areas where the land has been altered to such a state that natural vegetation cannot become reestablished. This project occurs along a paved roadway where private residences and small businesses are present. Developed land includes the roadway itself and other developed land along the route.

#### Wetland Habitats

##### Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest

This community is characterized by open to locally dense evergreen forests primarily dominated by coast live oak. Other characteristic species that thrive in this environment include bigleaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), California mugwort, poison oak, milkmaids (*Cardamine californica*), and blue elderberry, among others (Holland 1986). Southern coast live oak riparian forests are predominantly found in the canyons and valleys of coastal southern California. This habitat occurs along creeks in the BSA and is within the temporary impact area.

##### Unvegetated Channel

Unvegetated channels are the sandy, gravelly, or rocky fringe of waterways or flood channels. They are unvegetated on a relatively permanent basis. Variable water lines inhibit the growth of vegetation, although some weedy species of grasses may grow along the outer edges of the wash. Vegetation may exist here but is usually less than 10 percent total cover. Unvegetated channels are found at the inlets/outlets and proposed impact areas for 4 out of the 20 culvert replacement locations in the BSA.

##### Blackberry Dominated Vegetated Channel

There is one California blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*) dominated channel within the temporary impact area of one of the culvert replacements.

#### Special-Status Plant Species

No special-status plant species were found during general or vegetation mapping surveys in the project footprint.

### Wildlife in the BSA

Wildlife species commonly identified in the study area included both common riparian and upland species in San Diego County. During general surveys, common bird species such as Stellar jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*), California quail (*Callipepla californica*), acorn woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*), American crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), and common raven (*Corvus corax*) were heard or seen in the BSA. Migratory birds such as red-winged black birds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) were also observed.

### Special-Status Species Known to Occur in the BSA

Various special-status species occurrences have been recorded in the BSA. An official Information for Planning and Consultation list of federally listed species with the potential to occur in the study area was requested from USFWS. There are 14 federally listed species on the list. The official list was received July 5, 2024. A species list was also obtained from CDFW's California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB), which showed an additional four special-status species. See Table 2-4 below for species and listing statuses.

**Table 2-4 Special-Status Plants and Animal Species with the Potential to Occur in the Biological Study Area**

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent
<b>Plants</b>			
San Diego button celery	<i>Eryngium aristulatum</i> var. <i>parishii</i>	FE/SE	A
San Diego thorn mint	<i>Acanthomintha ilicifolia</i>	FT/SE	HP
Spreading navarretia	<i>Navarretia fossalis</i>	FT/CNPS 1B.1	A
<b>Invertebrates</b>			
Monarch butterfly	<i>Danaus plexippus</i>	FC	HP
San Diego fairy shrimp	<i>Branchinecta sandiegonensis</i>	FE/SE	A
Crotch's bumble bee	<i>Bombus crotchii</i>	SC	HP
<b>Amphibians</b>			
Arroyo toad	<i>Anaxyrus californicus</i>	FE/SSC	HP
Western spadefoot	<i>Spea hammondi</i>	FPT/SSC	HP
California red-legged frog	<i>Rana draytonii</i>	FT/SSC	HP
<b>Reptiles</b>			
Southwestern pond turtle	<i>Actinemys pallida</i>	FPT/SSC	HP
<b>Birds</b>			
California spotted owl	<i>Strix occidentalis occidentalis</i>	FC/SSC	A

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent
Coastal California gnatcatcher	<i>Poliophtila californica californica</i>	FT/SSC	HP
Least Bell's vireo	<i>Vireo bellii pusillus</i>	FE/SE	A
Southwestern willow flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>	FE/SE	A
<b>Mammals</b>			
American badger	<i>Taxidea taxus</i>	SSC	HP
Pallid bat	<i>Antrozous pallidus</i>	SSC	HP
Western mastiff bat	<i>Eumops perotis californicus</i>	SSC	HP
Western yellow bat	<i>Lasiurus xanthinus</i>	SSC	A
Peninsular bighorn sheep	<i>Ovis canadensis nelsoni</i>	FE/ST	A

**Notes:**

Absent [A] – no habitat present and no further work needed

Habitat Present [HP] -habitat is or may be present; the species may be present

**Status:**

Federal Endangered (FE)	State Threatened (ST)
Federal Threatened (FT)	Fully Protected (FP)
Federal Candidate (FC)	State Species of Special Concern (SSC)
Federal Proposed Threatened (FPT)	State Candidate (SC)
State Endangered (SE)	California Native Plant Society (CNPS)

**Special-Status Species**

A total of 19 special-status wildlife and plant species shown on federal and state databases were determined to have potential to occur in the BSA. Most of these wildlife species were either not observed in the BSA during surveys, did not have suitable habitat present, were not known to occur in the area, and/or were not observed in temporary or permanent impact locations. However, there is potentially suitable habitat present in or adjacent to the impact areas for the following species:

- Arroyo toad (*Anaxyrus californicus*) and
- Western spadefoot (*Spea hammondi*).

A general description of all the special-status species is available below. Detailed and technical descriptions of the information in this section is available in the NES dated October 2024.

*San Diego Button Celery*

San Diego button celery or suitable habitat (vernal pools) were not observed in the BSA. There are no recorded occurrences in the databases or critical habitat present within the project limits.

*San Diego Thornmint*

The microhabitat associated with the San Diego thornmint was not detected during vegetation and general surveys of proposed impact areas. It is unlikely that this species occurs in the vicinity of the project. There are no recorded occurrences in the databases or critical habitat present within the project limits.

*Spreading Navarretia*

Spreading navarretia was not observed in the BSA. There are no recorded occurrences in the databases or critical habitat present within the project limits.

*Monarch Butterfly*

Monarch butterfly or its host plant (milkweeds) were not observed during general surveys within the temporary or permanent impact areas. Pre-construction survey will be conducted within proposed impact areas to ensure individuals and potential breeding habitat are not present or disturbed during construction.

*Crotch's Bumble Bee*

The Crotch's bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii*) is a candidate for state listing as endangered as of September 2022. It ranges between Redding, California to the north to San Diego, California to the south in a variety of habitats including open grasslands, shrublands, chaparral, desert margins including Joshua tree and creosote scrub, and semi-urban settings. It is near endemic to California, with only a few records from Nevada and Mexico. The Crotch's bumble bee was not observed during surveys of the project impact locations and adjacent areas. There is potential habitat (coastal sage scrub, grasslands, and chaparral) in and around the project impact areas.

*San Diego Fairy Shrimp*

The San Diego fairy shrimp is a small aquatic crustacean that can be found in vernal pools and non-vegetated, ephemeral basins throughout coastal Southern California and northwestern Baja California, Mexico. No vernal pools were observed in the BSA or work/impact areas. There is no critical habitat present in the BSA and there are no species occurrences in databases for this species within the project area.

### Arroyo Toad

This species is listed as endangered by the USFWS (1994) and is a CDFW Species of Special Concern. Arroyo toads require gravelly, sandy soils within shallow, low gradient streams with little to no vegetation to reproduce and sandy terrestrial uplands for estivation and foraging. Both habitats are necessary for this species to complete its annual life cycle. Two occurrences for arroyo toad from 1991 were documented in the BSA in USFWS and CNDDB databases. There is no designated critical habitat for arroyo toad in the BSA. All culvert replacement locations adjacent to or overlapping with creeks were surveyed for suitable breeding habitat for this species. Suitable breeding habitat was not found at any of these locations. Potential upland habitat for the species is present in the BSA.

### Western Spadefoot

Western spadefoot occurs throughout the California Central Valley and adjacent foothills. This species is found in underground burrows for the greater part of the year. Individuals may create their own burrows or use those of burrowing mammals. Grasslands where shallow, temporary vernal pools are present are ideal habitat for this species, which depends highly on seasonal rainfall. Suitable breeding habitat for this species were not observed in any temporary or permanent impact areas during general or amphibian surveys. Potential estivation habitat is present.

### California Red-Legged Frog

California red-legged frogs inhabit permanent freshwater sources and use uplands for foraging, shelter, and movement to other water resources. Critical habitat for California red-legged frog does not occur within the project limits. There were no sightings or data found suggesting occurrences of California red-legged frog within the project area.

### Southwestern Pond Turtle

Southwestern pond turtle inhabits both permanent and intermittent waters within rivers, creeks, small lakes and ponds, marshes, irrigation ditches, and reservoirs. This species was not observed in the BSA during general surveys or within any temporary or permanent impact areas. There are no occurrence records of this species within the databases. Work near potential habitat for this species will be limited to culvert inlets and outlets. Impacts to these species are not anticipated.

### California Spotted Owl

In Southern California, most California spotted owls live in riparian/hardwood forests and woodlands, live oak/big cone-fir forest, and redwood/California laurel forest (USFWS 2017). Occurrence records or suitable habitat for California spotted owls is not present in the BSA.



### Coastal California Gnatcatcher

This species is listed as threatened by the USFWS (1993) and is a CDFW Species of Special Concern. It is a non-migratory resident whose range covers the coastal plains of southern California and northern Baja California. However, there is no critical habitat for this species within the project area. There have been no recorded sightings of California gnatcatcher within the project BSA in the databases. Most of the project occurs at elevations higher than the threshold where inland populations are typically found (>1,640 feet).

### Least Bell's Vireo

The least Bell's vireo was once widespread from Tehama County in northern California to northwestern Baja California. This migratory species nests in willows, also using a variety of other shrub and tree species for nest placement. This species nest from March 15th to September 15th. Declines have occurred due to habitat loss and fragmentation, and nest parasitism by the brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*). Recent population numbers have trended upward. There have been no sightings of least Bell's vireo in the vicinity of the BSA in the databases since 1921. Least Bell's vireo was not detected during general surveys for this project. There is no critical habitat present within the BSA for this species. Typical habitat for this species (willow and riparian scrub) was not observed in any temporary or permanent impact areas. Impacts to this species are not anticipated. Appropriate AMMs for protection of migratory birds will be implemented during construction.

### Southwestern Willow Flycatcher

The southwestern willow flycatcher is listed as State and Federally Endangered; on July 22, 1997, the USFWS designated critical habitat for the subspecies. This subspecies is an uncommon spring and fall migrant and a very rare summer resident. It is found among trees or large shrubs throughout San Diego County. Nesting is restricted to willow thickets in riparian woodland; the local breeding population in San Diego County is now extremely small. Breeding occurs from May 15th – September 15th. Its diet consists of berries, insects, and some seeds. It feeds by hovering and gleaning. Nests are commonly parasitized by brown-headed cowbirds. Willow flycatchers arrive in southern California later in the spring (May) than other breeding migratory passerines. Southwestern willow flycatchers are typically found in riparian forest with open water. There have been no sightings of southwestern willow flycatcher within the BSA in the USFWS or CNDDB databases. There is no critical habitat for this species within the project area. Typical habitat for this species (willow and riparian scrub) was not observed in any temporary or permanent impact areas. Impacts to this species are not

anticipated. Appropriate AMMs for protection of migratory birds will be implemented during construction.

#### American Badger

American badgers are found throughout the western and central United States. They are typically found in grasslands and desert scrublands within the Southwest region. This species is primarily nocturnal and spends most of its time underground during the winter months. Outside of the breeding season (late summer – early fall) this species is solitary. American badgers are aggressive mammals with few natural predators. Badgers occupy large territories and may require up to 2,000 acres of suitable habitat for sufficient resources to survive and reproduce. Threats to the survival of this species include loss of habitat, and shooting/trapping. (NPS, 2022). This species or evidence of dens was not observed within or adjacent to the project impact areas. Most of the habitat within the BSA and Caltrans ROW is fragmented by private land, scattered development, and the roadway itself.

#### Peninsular Bighorn Sheep

The Peninsular bighorn sheep was listed as Federally Endangered in 1998 and State Threatened in 1971 by the State of California. It is considered a distinct population segment (DPS) of the desert bighorn sheep. The distribution of bighorn sheep spans across a band of habitat throughout Southern California and Mexico in the eastern slopes of the Peninsular Ranges of the Colorado Desert. Males, or rams, have large, curved horns that curl back into a C shape over the ears and down past their cheeks, growing up to 33 inches long. Females, or ewes, have slender and much smaller horns than rams, generally forming a half-curl shape at most. Rams are also much larger in size than ewes, with average weights of approximately 160 and 105 pounds, respectively. Peninsular bighorn sheep are muscular, medium-sized bovids ranging in color from dark brown to a pale tan (USFWS, 2011). There is no critical habitat for this species within the project area. Suitable habitat for peninsular bighorn sheep is not present within the BSA. No impacts to this species are anticipated.

#### Pallid Bat

The pallid bat is a California Species of Special Concern (SSC) and can be found in arid to semi-arid regions across the western U.S. and along the coast from Canada to Mexico. They occur in open to sparsely vegetated grasslands with rocky outcroppings and a close water source available. This species does not seem to migrate great distances between seasons. Day roosts are typically in warm, horizontal openings such as in attics, shutters or crevices; night roosts are in the open near foliage; and hibernation roosts are often found in caves, cracks in rocks, or buildings. Pallid bats are unique in that they hunt almost exclusively on the ground. (Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, 2024). Suitable habitat for this species is present within the BSA, however it is

unlikely to be impacted by the proposed work. AMMs such as pre-construction surveys will be implemented to prevent impacts to this species.

#### *Western Mastiff Bat*

The western mastiff bat, also known as the greater mastiff or greater bonneted bat, is a California SSC and the largest bat species in the United States. It can be found in the southwestern United States, northern Baja California, and north to central mainland Mexico. This species is active year-round and does not migrate or hibernate. It's a member of the "free-tailed" bat family and identifiable by its mouse-like tail and very large ears. This bat is preyed upon by various birds of prey (SDNHM, 2024). Between June and August, females give birth to single young. The western mastiff bat prefers to roost in high cliffs making it difficult to study (Arizona Game and Fish, 2024). This species was not detected within the BSA. Suitable habitat is present within the BSA but outside of project impact areas. Work is not likely to impact this species.

#### *Western Yellow Bat*

The western yellow bat is a California SSC known to occur in valley foothill riparian, desert riparian, desert wash, and palm oasis habitats. This species is uncommonly found in California and known to occur primarily in Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties south to the Mexican border at elevations below 2,000 ft (CDFW, 2008). Habitat for this species was not present within the BSA and the species is unlikely to occur within the project area. Impacts to this species are not anticipated.

#### *Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Passage*

Wildlife corridors connect large patches of natural open space that allow for the immigration and emigration of wildlife. Such movement assures the continual sharing of genetic information that helps maintain genetic diversity and reduces the probability of extinction through random events.

The BSA is primarily fragmented by the State Route 78 roadway. Bridges likely provide passage to larger animals; smaller drainages may assist in smaller mammal, reptile, and/or amphibian crossing. Riparian and wetland areas that cross State Route 78 at multiple locations may also function as corridors for wildlife.

#### ***Environmental Consequences***

The main asset for this project is pavement; for this reason, most work will occur in the existing roadway structure and disturbed areas adjacent to the roadway, where physical and biological features for state or federally listed species habitat are not found. The proposed project was designed to avoid wetland and native vegetation impacts to the maximum extent possible.

Various measures have been taken to minimize potential impacts to biological resources. Shoulder backing was reduced to an in-kind replacement to

minimize impacts to vegetation adjacent to the roadway. Various culvert locations were also removed from initial project designs to avoid additional impacts to biologically sensitive areas. Due to the need for replacement of culverts, some impacts to surrounding wetlands cannot be avoided, but would be minimized. Permanent impacts to jurisdictional wetlands were limited to 1 out of the 20 culvert locations. Impacts to native vegetation and wetlands would be mitigated by using existing mitigation bank credits and hydroseeding temporary impacts areas. The avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures (AMMs) in the subsection below will be implemented during construction to further minimize any potential impacts to sensitive species and biological resources.

### *Impacts to Sensitive Vegetation*

Impacts to sensitive vegetation communities are anticipated as a result of culvert and guardrail replacements. There is potential for impacts to the following sensitive upland vegetation communities: coastal sage scrub, chaparral, scrub oak and mixed chaparral, and coast live oak woodlands. Table 2-5 provides total acreage estimates of permanent and temporary impacts to upland vegetation. The total estimated impact areas to sensitive upland vegetation would be approximately 0.006 and 0.33 acres of permanent and temporary impacts, respectively. Impacts to sensitive upland vegetation communities would be potentially significant, and AMMs have been identified to reduce impacts to less than significant.

Impacts to disturbed or non-native habitats would also be relatively minimal. The total estimated impact areas to disturbed or non-native habitats would be approximately 0.023 and 0.54 acres of permanent and temporary impacts, respectively.

### *Coastal Sage Scrub*

Coastal sage scrub is found in patches throughout the project area. Coastal sage scrub of good quality (defined as minimal presence or total absence of nonnative species) and disturbed coastal sage scrub (defined as a mixture of native and nonnative species present) occur at various culvert locations. In the culvert replacement impact areas, good quality coastal sage scrub is found at culvert locations #9 (post mile 48.83), #11 (post mile 51.77), and #12 (post mile 51.85). Disturbed coastal sage scrub is found at locations #2 (post mile 39.85) and #5 (post mile 41.55). Table 2-5 shows total anticipated impacts. The AMMs discussed below in the section titled Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures (minimizing vegetation removal, minimizing spread of invasive weeds, and compensatory mitigation for permanent impacts) will be implemented to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate impacts to coastal sage scrub habitat. Therefore, the impact on this community would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

**Table 2-5 Total Upland Vegetation Impacts**

Land Cover Type/Habitat	Permanent Impacts (Acres)	Temporary Impacts (Acres)
<b><i>Native Habitats</i></b>		
Coast Live Oak Woodland	-	0.06
Coastal Sage Scrub	-	0.11
Disturbed Buckwheat Scrub	-	0.03
Disturbed Chaparral	-	0.01
Disturbed Coastal Sage Scrub	0.006	0.03
Scrub Oak Chaparral	-	0.03
Scrub Oak Mixed Chaparral	-	0.06
<b>Native Habitats Total</b>	<b>0.006</b>	<b>0.33</b>
<b><i>Disturbed or Nonnative Habitats</i></b>		
Bare Ground	0.003	0.04
Disturbed/Developed	0.007	0.1
Disturbed Habitat	-	0.02
Nonnative Grassland	0.001	0.32
Nonnative Grassland/Pasture	0.003	0.03
Ornamental Vegetation	0.003	0.03
<b>Disturbed or Nonnative Habitats Total</b>	<b>0.023</b>	<b>0.54</b>

**Coast Live Oak Woodland**

In the culvert replacement impact areas, coast live oak woodland habitat is present at culvert locations #3 (post mile 41.03), #13 (post mile 54.39), and #15 (post mile 55.03). Table 2-5 shows total anticipated impacts. The AMMs discussed below in the section titled Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures (minimizing vegetation removal, avoiding impacts to oak trees during metal beam guardrail replacements, minimizing spread of invasive weeds, and compensatory mitigation for any permanent impacts) will be implemented to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate impacts to coast live oak woodland habitats and individual oak trees. Therefore, the impact on this community would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

**Chaparral**

Variations of chaparral habitat are present throughout the proposed culvert replacement impact areas. These variations include disturbed chaparral, scrub oak chaparral, and scrub oak mixed chaparral. In the culvert replacement impact areas, disturbed chaparral is found at culvert location 19 (post mile 58.68), with an estimated 0.01 acre of temporary impacts. Scrub

oak chaparral is found at culvert locations #6 (post mile 46.33) and #11 (post mile 51.77). Scrub oak mixed chaparral is found at culvert locations #6 (post mile 46.33), #10 (post mile 51.62), and #11 (post mile 51.77). Table 2-5 shows total anticipated impacts. The AMMs discussed below in the section titled Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures (minimizing vegetation removal, minimizing spread of invasive weeds, and compensatory mitigation for any permanent impacts) will be implemented to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate impacts to chaparral habitat. Therefore, the impact on this community would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

#### *Impacts to State Wetlands and Waters of the U.S.*

There are six locations where temporary and/or permanent wetlands impacts are anticipated due to the proposed culvert and guardrail replacements, along with the need for USACE 404 and/or CDFW 1602 permits. A wetland delineation was performed at a culvert located in a creek crossing (Coleman Creek). This location was removed from the proposed project to minimize impacts to wetlands. Anticipated impacts to wetland habitat include those to coast live oak riparian forest, unvegetated channels, and one channel dominated by California blackberry. Total acreages of potential wetland impacts can be found in Table 2-6.

The AMMs discussed below in the section titled Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures (limiting culvert work to dry season, construction buffers for temporary use areas, appropriate erosion control and sedimentation BMPs, hydroseeding of temporary impact areas, dust minimization, use of ESAs to protect wetlands and waters, and compensatory mitigation for permanent impacts) will be implemented to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate impacts to wetlands. Therefore, the impact on wetlands would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

**Table 2-6 Potential Impacts to State Wetland Habitats and Water of the U.S.**

<b>Wetland/Water Type</b>	<b>Permanent Impacts (Acres)</b>	<b>Temporary Impacts (Acres)</b>
Blackberry Dominated Channel	—	0.007
Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest	—	0.055
Unvegetated Channel	0.001	0.006
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.001</b>	<b>0.068</b>

#### *Impacts to Special-Status Species*

There are 19 special-status species on the lists provided by the USFWS and CDFW, and no critical habitat in the BSA. The project would not impact critical habitat for federally listed species. However, impacts to arroyo toad and

western spadefoot may occur during construction, as described further in the following paragraphs.

A USFWS occurrence for arroyo toad was found in the BSA from post miles 47.86 through 48.18. A second CNDDDB occurrence overlaps with the BSA at post miles 47.93 through 48.15 and 48.26 through 48.61, approximately. Both occurrences were recorded in 1991 and are the most recent occurrences found in these databases. The occurrences are in the vicinity of Witch Creek and culverts #8 and #9. Both culverts and portions of Witch Creek adjacent to the culverts where permit to enter access was available were surveyed for suitable arroyo toad habitat. Any other culvert locations near waterways were also surveyed. Arroyo toad or suitable breeding habitat was not observed in or adjacent to the proposed culvert replacement impact areas for the project. Two surveys were performed in March and April during the breeding season, and multiple general surveys were conducted at all culverts from August 2023 to March 2024. No individuals were detected during general surveys. Upland habitat for this species is present; therefore, there may be potential for estivation of arroyo toad in the BSA. The AMMs discussed below in the section titled Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures will be implemented during construction to avoid impacts to this species, consistent with the informal Section 7 consultation received from USFWS on December 6, 2024.

An occurrence for western spadefoot is found from post miles 46.06 through 46.16, approximately. The occurrence was recorded in 2014 and occurs along a steep slope away from any waterways. A historical occurrence from 1959 is also found in the BSA. Surveys were performed at all culvert locations near waterways to determine the presence or absence of suitable breeding habitat for western spadefoot. Potential breeding habitat was observed at only one culvert location in Coleman Creek, which was removed from the project to minimize impacts. No breeding habitat for western spadefoot was observed at other culvert locations or adjacent wetland areas. Upland habitat for this species is present in the BSA. AMMs will be implemented during construction to avoid/minimize any potential impacts to western spadefoot, consistent with the informal Section 7 consultation received from USFWS on December 6, 2024.

Additionally, there is suitable habitat for Crotch's bumble bee within the project limits. There is potential for this species to occur at off-pavement impact areas. The AMMs discussed below (pre-construction surveys, protection using ESA fencing, implementing work outside of the flight season if species is present, and restoring and revegetating temporary impact areas) will be implemented to avoid/minimize any potential impacts to Crotch's bumble bee.

### ***Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures***

The measures that the proposed project would implement to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to biological resources are discussed in the following subsections.

#### ***General Avoidance and Minimization Measures***

- A biologist (Project Biologist) approved by the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office will be on site during all vegetation clearing and weekly during project construction within 500 feet of arroyo toad or spadefoot habitat to monitor compliance with all conservation measures. Caltrans will submit the biologist's name, contact information, and work schedule on the project to the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office at least 15 working days prior to initiating project impacts. The Project Biologist will be provided with a copy of all avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures and the Section 7 consultation. The Project Biologist will be available during pre-construction and construction phases to address protection of sensitive biological resources, monitor ongoing work, and maintain communications with construction personnel to facilitate the appropriate and lawful management of issues relating to biological resources.
- An employee education program will be developed and implemented by the Project Biologist. Each employee (including temporary, contractors, and subcontractors) will receive a training/awareness program prior to working on the proposed Project. They will be advised of the potential impact to the listed species and the potential penalties for taking such species. At a minimum, the program will include the following topics: occurrence of the listed and sensitive species in the area (including photographs), their general ecology, sensitivity of the species to human activities, legal protection afforded these species, penalties for violations of Federal and State laws, reporting requirements, and Project features designed to reduce the impacts to these species and promote continued successful occupation of the Project area.
- All habitat suitable for arroyo toad and spadefoot outside and adjacent to the construction limits will be designated as Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) on project maps. ESAs will be temporarily fenced during construction with orange plastic snow fence, orange silt fencing, or stakes and flagging. No personnel, equipment, or debris will be allowed within the ESAs. Temporary ESA fencing and flagging will be installed in a manner that does not impact habitats to be avoided and such that it is clearly visible to personnel on foot and operating heavy equipment. Caltrans will submit to the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, at least 5 days prior to initiating project impacts (except for impacts resulting from clearing to install temporary fencing), the final plans for initial clearing and grubbing of habitat and project construction. These final plans will include photographs that show the fenced and flagged limits of impact and all areas to be



impacted or avoided. Field maps indicating the location of temporary ESA fencing and/or staking will also be provided. If work occurs within habitat beyond the fenced or demarcated limits of impact, all work will cease until the problem has been remedied to the satisfaction of the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office. Temporary ESA fencing and markers will be maintained in good repair until the completion of project work and removed upon completion of project work.

- All sensitive habitat outside of the permanent and temporary construction areas shall be designated as an ESA on project plans.
- Rare plant surveys will be conducted in the Spring within and adjacent to off-pavement impact areas prior to commencement of construction.
- Pre-construction bat surveys will be performed at all culvert locations.
- Staging will be limited to the pavement or bare/disturbed compacted areas adjacent to the roadway, such as motor vehicle pullouts. Various suitable staging areas have been identified and included in project plans. Staging areas adjacent to sensitive vegetation and/or wetlands will require ESA fencing.
- If nighttime construction is necessary, all Project lighting (e.g., staging areas, equipment storage sites, roadway) will be selectively placed, shielded, and directed toward the construction site and away from the adjacent habitat within the river corridor. Lighting will be of the lowest illumination necessary for safety, and light glare shields will be used to reduce the extent of illumination into habitat.
- Permanent project lighting will be of the lowest illumination necessary for safety and will be directed toward paved roadway and away from sensitive habitats. Light glare shields will be used to reduce the extent of illumination into sensitive habitats. Caltrans will review the permanent lighting plans for the Project and then submit them to the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office.
- The project site will be kept as clear of debris as possible. All food-related trash items will be enclosed in sealed containers and regularly removed from the site. All spoils, invasive plant cuttings, and material disposal will be disposed of properly.
- During project construction all invasive species included on the National Invasive Species Management Plan, the State of California Noxious Weed List, and the California Invasive Plant Council's Invasive Plant Inventory list (Cal-IPC 2006) found growing within the project impact area will be identified and removed annually. Special care will be taken during transport, use, and disposal of soils containing invasive weed seeds, and all weedy vegetation removed during construction will be properly

disposed of to prevent spread into areas outside of the construction area. All heavy equipment will be washed and cleaned of debris prior to first entering the project site, upon movement to a new area, or after returning to the project site after leaving the area to minimize the spread of invasive weeds.

*Avoidance and Minimization of Impacts to Sensitive Vegetation Communities and Oak Trees*

- Vegetation removal (clearing, grubbing, mowing, and trimming) will be minimized to the maximum extent possible. The biologist will work with the design to minimize impacts to sensitive vegetation communities such as coastal sage scrub, chaparral, oak woodlands, and wetland areas.
- Design for installation, replacement, and upgrades to metal beam guardrails will be modified as needed to avoid impacts to oak trees. Modifications to design where feasible include spacing posts up to 6 feet apart to avoid tree roots, removal, or minimization of vegetation control where trees or wetlands may be impacted, and using the same post holes of existing guardrail for in-kind replacements.
- There are several invasive weed species already growing in the right-of-way along State Route 78. Special care will be taken when transporting, using, and disposing of soils with invasive weed seeds. Heavy equipment will be cleaned of debris and inspected prior to entering the native habitats in the project area to minimize spread of invasive weeds.

*Avoidance and Minimization of Impacts to Wetlands and Waters*

- Culvert work will occur during the dry season when feasible. Any culvert sliplining or other culvert work that may result in increased turbidity or material leakage downstream of the culvert will occur with no water flow present in the culverts and adjacent channels. If a noticeable spill occurs, the spill will immediately be contained, contaminated soil will be placed in barrels and removed from the site, and the spill will be documented and reported to the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office.
- The temporary construction staging areas, access roads, and equipment storage shall be strategically placed at a minimum of 100 feet away from jurisdictional waters to avoid impacts.
- All equipment maintenance, staging, and dispensing of fuel, oil, coolant, or any other such activities will be restricted to designated areas located outside of jurisdictional wetlands or waters
- A construction Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and soil erosion and sedimentation plan will be developed to identify best management practices that will be implemented during construction to minimize erosion, prevent sediment and debris from entering drainages,

and maintain water quality. Sediment will not be stockpiled in areas where material could be washed into drainages by rainfall. Erosion and sediment control devices used for the proposed project, including fiber rolls and bonded fiber matrix, will be made from biodegradable materials such as jute, with no plastic mesh, to avoid creating a wildlife entanglement hazard.

- Construction site BMPs will be implemented to minimize potential short-term water quality impacts, as required in Caltrans Standard Specification 13-1.
- The performance of the BMPs will be regularly assessed to ensure protection of the receiving waters and identify any necessary corrective measures.
- Specific BMPs will be identified and deployed during construction to protect water quality. Typical BMPs include fiber rolls or silt fences between excavation and aquatic resources, spill kits and drip pans beneath equipment, staging area run-on and run-off protections, and preservation of existing vegetation.
- Temporary impact areas around culvert replacements will be hydroseeded with native coastal sage scrub, chaparral, or wetland species, depending on the location in the footprint.
- Erosion control measures such as fiber rolls and erosion control blankets will use biodegradable materials such as jute instead of plastic mesh to avoid potential plastics pollution hazards to wildlife.
- Dust generated by proposed operations will be controlled with BMPs.
- Work in jurisdictional wetlands will be limited to the temporary and permanent impact areas identified for the project; adjacent areas with native or wetland/jurisdictional waters will be designated as ESAs in plans.
- ESA fencing should be placed around culvert work and guardrail locations adjacent to wetlands and/or native vegetation during construction, with orange snow or mesh fencing where appropriate. A qualified biologist will be present during the installation and removal of ESA fencing to ensure avoidance of sensitive species and habitat.

#### *Avoidance and Minimization of Impacts to Arroyo Toad*

The following AMMs will be implemented at locations where there is potential for upland habitat of arroyo toad:

- From postmiles 47.8 to 48.9, work and vegetation removal within the construction limits occurring in suitable habitat should be completed within

- the arroyo toad breeding season (March 15 through July 31), while toads are active and easier to find, to avoid/minimize any impacts to the species. A mandatory preconstruction survey by a qualified biologist would be conducted to ensure that no toads are present in the proposed work area. Should toads be located, appropriate measures may include designation of the location as an ESA and delaying or restricting project activities until after the breeding season.
- Prior to the start of active construction activities near identified arroyo toad populations and in potential arroyo toad upland habitat, qualified biologists will monitor installation of exclusion fencing along the perimeter of all work areas to exclude arroyo toads from the work site. The fencing will consist of woven nylon netting approximately 2 feet in height and attached to wooden stakes. The bottom of the fence will be secured with gravel bags to prevent burrowing beneath the fence. All fencing materials (mesh, stakes, etc.) will be removed following construction activities. Ingress and egress of construction equipment and personnel will be kept to a minimum, but, when necessary, equipment and personnel will use a single access point to the site. The access point will be as narrow as possible and will be closed off by exclusionary fencing when personnel are not present on the site. A minimum of a 3-night survey will be conducted in the fenced area by a USFWS-approved biologist. Surveys will continue until there have been 3 consecutive nights without arroyo toads inside the fence. Surveys will be conducted during the appropriate climactic conditions and time of day or night to maximize the likelihood of encountering arroyo toads. If the toads are found in the Project Area, and should the Biologist determine that relocation is necessary or that take is possible, construction activities shall halt and formal consultation with the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office shall occur. Construction shall not continue until formal consultation with the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office is concluded and any additional measures are put in place.
  - A USFWS-approved biologist will oversee compliance with protective measures for the biological resources in the project area during clearing and construction activities. The biologist will specifically monitor activities that may affect listed species, such as vegetation removal and the installation of BMPs and ESA fencing to ensure that all AMMs are properly constructed and followed.

*Avoidance and Minimization of Impacts to Western Spadefoot*

- From postmiles 45.5 to 46.5, a biologist with experience in western spadefoot ecology and behavior will be present during all work that could affect western spadefoot. Work may include grading and other ground disturbance during culvert replacements or guardrail removal/installation, vegetation removal, and removal/installation of ESA and exclusionary fencing.

- If nighttime work is necessary, the biologist will conduct preconstruction clearance surveys of access roads, staging areas, and work sites within 300 feet of suitable breeding habitat.
- The same exclusionary fencing and conservation measures for arroyo toad will be used for any work in suitable habitat for western spadefoot.
- Stockpiles or spoils will be covered the end of each workday, and edges of covers will be sealed tightly with sandbags or other similar material.
- Equipment and personnel will use one single access point to staging and storage areas. Access points will be as narrow as possible and closed off by exclusionary fencing when personnel are not present in the areas.
- If at any time a western spadefoot is found within the project area, and should the Biologist determine that relocation is necessary or that take is possible, construction activities shall halt and formal consultation with the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office shall occur. Construction shall not continue until formal consultation with the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office is concluded and any additional measures are put in place. Additional coordination with CDFW will occur as necessary.
- Contractors will control dust with water and not palliatives.

*Avoidance and Minimization of Impacts to Migratory Birds*

- To avoid impacts to any nesting birds, if possible, all native vegetation and nonnative shrubs and trees in the impact areas will be removed outside of the breeding season (February 15 through August 31) to avoid impacts to any nesting birds, if possible. Otherwise, a qualified biologist will thoroughly survey all vegetation prior to removal to ensure there are no nesting birds on site. If nesting birds are identified on site, vegetation removal will be delayed until the chicks have fledged, or the nest has failed. If vegetation clearing has not been completed within 7 days after the survey, an additional survey will need to be completed.

*Avoidance and Minimization of Impacts to Crotch's Bumble Bee*

- Prior to work commencing, a habitat assessment of the culvert locations with grassland, coastal sage scrub, and chaparral will be conducted by a qualified biologist to determine whether suitable habitat for the Crotch's bumble bee is present within or adjacent to the work areas. The habitat assessment shall observe and document plant diversity and potential habitat including potential foraging, nesting, or overwintering resources. Nesting resources, including bare ground and rodent borrows, will be quantified. Leaf litter and woody forest edge that could provide overwintering habitat will also be described.

- The Project Biologist will conduct protocol surveys for Crotch's bumble bee within and adjacent to off-pavement impact areas within one year prior to commencing vegetation removal for the project.
- If Crotch's bumble bee is found to occur at any culvert locations, work will occur outside of the Crotch's bumble bee flight seasons, which occur between April to August.
- Temporary ESA fencing will be installed at all culvert impact locations to protect sensitive habitat, including suitable habitat for Crotch's bumble bee. Construction personnel will be instructed to take care to avoid effects from activities including, but not limited to, trampling during construction activities and herbicide drift during restoration activities to areas with suitable Crotch's bumble bee habitat. If work occurs beyond the fenced or demarcated limits of impact, all work will cease until the Project Biologist has reviewed and approved the additional impact areas. Temporary construction fencing and markers will be removed upon project completion.
- Nectar plant species of the Crotch's bumble bee will be avoided to the extent practicable.
- Temporary impacts to 0.14 acre of coastal sage scrub habitat and 0.01 acre of chaparral habitat will be revegetated and restored with native species. Temporary impact areas will be hydroseeded as soon as possible following regrading after completion of construction to prevent encroachment by nonnative plants.

### *Compensatory Mitigation*

- Permanent impacts to 0.006 acre of native upland habitat will be offset through the deduction of 0.012 acres of habitat from a mitigation bank approved by the USFWS' Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office. Documentation that the habitat has been conserved will be provided to the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office prior to the commencement of vegetation removal and project construction.
- Where feasible, impacts to oaks and sensitive vegetation communities will be avoided. Where permanent impacts to large oak trees and jurisdictional areas (State wetlands and Waters of U.S.) cannot be avoided, they will be mitigated using existing mitigation bank credits at a minimum of a 3:1 ratio. Caltrans has several mitigation banks with available credits for all impacts associated with the project. Credits are available at Rancho San Diego, Rutherford Ranch and Go Cart mitigation banks. Temporary impact areas where grading, clearing and/or grubbing results in the removal of native vegetation will require hydroseeding of the impact area with an appropriate seed mix for the existing plant community.

- Where feasible, impacts to wetlands will be avoided. Where impacts cannot be avoided, they will be mitigated by using existing Caltrans mitigation bank credits and hydroseeding of impact areas. Compensatory mitigation is anticipated for approximately 0.001 acres of permanent impacts to jurisdictional wetlands during culvert replacement work and will be replaced at a 3:1 ratio. Caltrans has several mitigation banks with available credits for all habitats and impacts associated with the project. Credits are available at Rancho San Diego, Rutherford Ranch, and Go Cart mitigation banks. Grading, clearing, and/or grubbing of native vegetation in wetland areas may also require revegetation measures, such as hydroseeding with an appropriate seed mix for the existing plant community. Coordination with USFWS, USACE, and CDFW during acquisition of permits and Section 7 consultation may determine additional protective measures to be implemented by the project.
- Temporary impacts to 0.33 acres of native habitat and 0.068 acres of wetland habitat would be restored with native wetland or upland species of similar composition to the adjacent habitat. Temporary impact areas will be planted as soon as possible following completion of construction to prevent encroachment by nonnative plants.

### 2.1.5 Cultural Resources

Considering the information compiled by Caltrans in the Historic Property Survey Report (HPSR), dated September 2024, and the Historical Resources Evaluation Report (HRER) and Archaeological Survey Report (ASR) dated July 2024 (Caltrans 2024d), the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Cultural Resources
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	<b>Less-than-Significant Impact</b>
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	<b>No Impact</b>
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	<b>No Impact</b>

### **Regulatory Setting**

The term “cultural resources,” as used in this document, refers to the “built environment” (e.g., structures, bridges, railroads, or water conveyance systems); places of traditional or cultural importance; and archaeological sites (both prehistoric and historic), regardless of significance. Laws and regulations dealing with cultural resources are discussed below.

CEQA requires the consideration of cultural resources that are historical resources, unique archaeological resources, and tribal cultural resources. California Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 5024.1 established the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) and outlined the necessary criteria for a cultural resource to be considered eligible for listing in the CRHR and, therefore, a historical resource. Historical resources are defined in PRC Section 5020.1(j), and PRC Section 21083.2(h) as any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript which is historically or archaeologically significant, or is significant in the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California. In 2014, Assembly Bill 52 (AB 52) added the term “tribal cultural resources” to CEQA, and AB 52 is commonly referenced instead of CEQA when discussing the process to identify tribal cultural resources (as well as identifying measures to avoid, preserve, or mitigate effects to them). Defined in PRC Section 21074(a), a tribal cultural resource is a CRHR or local register eligible site, feature, place, cultural landscape, or object which has a cultural value to a California Native American tribe. Tribal cultural resources must also meet the definition of a historical resource.

PRC Section 5024 and 14 CCR 4851(a)(1) requires state agencies to identify and protect state-owned historical resources that have been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). PRC Section 5024 further requires Caltrans to inventory state-owned structures in its rights-of-way.

Information from this section was drawn from the HPSR approved for the proposed project by Caltrans in September 2024. While the HPSR is intended to fulfill Caltrans National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 responsibilities, Caltrans also uses the HPSR to fulfill both its PRC 504 and CEQA responsibilities.

### ***Affected Environment***

The proposed project’s Project Area Limits were established by qualified Caltrans archaeologists to encompass the maximum extent of ground disturbances as well as direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts. The Project Area Limits encompass 14,529 acres, including the extent of the project footprint, a one-parcel buffer of the existing right-of-way, and the boundary of the Julian Historic District townsite. Additionally, a vertical Project Area Limit was included which encompasses depths down to 15 feet for culvert replacements and up to 10 feet above grade to account for temporary construction equipment, advance signage installation, and barriers. The Project Area Limits is equivalent to the Area of Potential Effects used for Section 106 consultation.

The portion of State Route 78 in the project limits traverses the Julian Historic District, which is a registered California Historic Landmark (#412). The Julian



Historic District is currently assigned California State Office of Historic Preservation status code 7L, which indicates a California Historic Landmark that does not meet CRHR criteria. The County of San Diego listed the Julian Historic District in the County of San Diego Local Register of Historical Resources in 1979 as a 758-acre rural district, including 29 contributing resources. It was listed due to its potential to yield important information about the County of San Diego's prehistory and history. To assess for NRHP and CRHR eligibility of the Julian Historic District and potential effects of the proposed project, an architectural history survey was completed in the district. The survey included all buildings and structures more than 50 years old in 2024 (i.e., buildings constructed in 1974 or earlier).

### *Built Historical Resources*

Twenty-nine historic-period resources in the Project Area Limits were evaluated to determine eligibility for consideration as historical resources under CEQA. Four of the built historical resources were determined eligible and would also be considered historical resources under CEQA. The Julian Historic District is locally designated in the County register; thus, it is also considered a historical resource under CEQA. These findings are summarized below in Table 2-7.

**Table 2-7 Built Historical Resources in the Study Area**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address/Location/ Description</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Finding</b>
Marks Mercantile/A. Levi and Co	2130-2134 Main Street	Julian	NRHP- and CRHR-eligible and historical resource under CEQA
Swycaffer Saloon/Daley Butcher Shop	2122 Main Street	Julian	NRHP-and CRHR-eligible and historical resource under CEQA
Hotel Robinson (Julian Hotel)/ Robinson Hotel	2032 Main Street	Julian	NRHP-listed and historical resource under CEQA
Wilcox Building	2102-2110 Main Street	Julian	NRHP- and CRHR-eligible and historical resource under CEQA
Julian Historic District	Julian, CA (758 acres)	Julian	Not NRHP-eligible but historical resource under CEQA

**Notes:**

CEQA = California Environmental Quality Act; NRHP = National Register of Historic Places

### *Archaeological Resources*

To determine the presence of archaeological resources that could be affected by the proposed project, a records search and archaeological survey were

completed for the Project Area Limits. As a result of the record search and survey, 14 previously recorded archaeological resources and one newly recorded site were identified within or adjacent to the Project Area Limits. Archaeological resources in the study area consist of prehistoric habitation sites, milling sites, historic road and bridge remains, a prehistoric/ethnohistoric village complex, historic trash scatter, and historic State Route 78 alignment and elements. These 15 archaeological sites were determined to be eligible for listing in the NRHP and CRHR; thus, they would also be historical resources under CEQA.

Refer to Section 2.1.18 for additional information on Tribal Cultural Resources.

### ***Environmental Consequences***

Proposed improvements in the Julian Historic District have been designed to minimize effects on the historic character of the district, considering input from the Julian Community Planning Group. The improvements proposed in the Julian Historic District would consist of installation of ADA curb ramps and crosswalks in the Caltrans right-of-way. Design modifications were made through this outreach process to remove proposed bulb outs and high-visibility continental crosswalks due to potential conflict with the historic character of the district. As described in Section 2.1.1, the proposed project would include design features to address visual compatibility with existing building types and exterior materials. Crosswalks would consist of stamped asphalt with a colored brick pattern, similar to what is present in many of the historic buildings in Julian. New sidewalks and curb ramps in Julian would be integrally colored to match adjacent older concrete coloration. Detectable warning surfaces, the truncated dome surface pattern that sits on top of curb ramps to alert visually impaired people of the intersection, would also be selected with a color that matches the historic character of Downtown Julian.

Improvements in Julian would not involve modifications to historic structures or other alterations that could cause substantial adverse change to historical resources. Curb ramp upgrades and truncated domes are proposed near four built historical resources. These improvements are proposed adjacent to the Hotel Robinson/Julian Hotel and Marks Mercantile/A. Levis & Co. buildings. With the proposed improvements mimicking colors and materials that exist in the historic district, the visual effects would be minimized. The Swycaffer Saloon/Daley Butcher Shop and Wilcox Building are not adjacent to the improvements and are in the middle of their respective blocks. The improvements would have minimal impacts on these historic resources since the buildings are located away from the proposed improvements.

Outside of Julian, there are no built historical resources in the Caltrans right-of-way or in the staging areas adjacent to the roadway that could be affected during project construction. Therefore, the proposed project would have a less-than-significant impact on built historical resources.

As noted above, there are 15 archaeological sites in the project area that are considered historical resources under CEQA. None of these sites would be directly impacted by the project. The project area is heavily disturbed due to previous construction of State Route 78 and other infrastructure in the vicinity. Therefore, the potential for the proposed project to encounter or affect subsurface cultural materials during construction is low. If buried cultural materials, including human remains, are unearthed during construction, Caltrans will stop work in that area until a qualified archaeologist can evaluate the nature and significance of the find and make a recommendation for appropriate treatment. Known archaeological resources near the project limits would be avoided during construction through establishment of ESAs, as described in the project-specific ESA Action Plan, and monitoring will occur in select areas identified by Caltrans archaeologists. For these reasons, no impact to archaeological resources or human remains would occur.

***Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures***

The proposed project would implement the following standard measures to avoid and/or minimize effects on cultural resources:

- If cultural materials are discovered during construction, all earthmoving activity within 60 feet of the discovery area will be diverted until a qualified archaeologist can assess the nature and significance of the find.
- If human remains are discovered, State Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 states that further disturbances and activities shall cease in any area or nearby area suspected to overlie remains, and the county coroner contacted. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5097.8, if the remains are thought to be Native American, the coroner will notify the NAHC, which will then notify the Most Likely Descendant. At this time, the person who discovered the remains will contact the District 11 Native American Coordinator so that they may work with the Most Likely Descendant on the respectful treatment and disposition of the remains. Further provisions of PRC Section 5097.98 are to be followed as applicable.
- The establishment of ESAs and barriers are required and shall protect elements of designated cultural resources in place for the duration of the project. The ESAs will be marked on plans and delineated in the field by a Caltrans archaeologist.
- The establishment of archaeological monitoring areas (AMAs) shall be required. AMAs shall be established throughout the limits of the project and depicted on project plans. Archaeological monitors as assigned by Caltrans shall monitor ground-disturbing construction-related activities within AMAs. The archaeological monitoring procedures shall meet Standard Special Provisions 14-2.03 for archaeological resources, including 12-2.03A for general practices and 14-2.03B for AMAs.

- Prior to construction, a qualified architectural monitor will document the pre-construction conditions of the adjacent resources. During construction, the architectural monitor will conduct at least one field visit to ensure that none of the adjacent historic properties are adversely impacted by the proposed project. After construction, the architectural monitor will conduct a post-construction field visit to document the results of the construction and monitoring efforts. The architectural monitor will then complete a construction monitoring report.
- The proposed project will implement measures to avoid impacts to visual resources in the Julian Historic District. These measures would also serve to avoid impacting its historic character. Refer to Section 2.1.1 for additional information on aesthetic avoidance measures.

### 2.1.6 Energy

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Energy
a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during project construction or operation?	<b>No Impact</b>
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	<b>No Impact</b>

#### ***Discussion of Energy Evaluation***

Because the proposed project is not a capacity-increasing project, a qualitative analysis was performed for this section. Construction of the proposed project would result in short-term direct energy consumption due to the manufacture of construction materials, the use of heavy-duty construction equipment requiring petroleum fuels, and construction workers' motor vehicles as they travel to and from the site. Construction-related energy consumption for the proposed project would be temporary. Energy consumption would not be excessive, because construction would adhere to Caltrans Standard Specifications, which include requirements to consider environmentally friendly treatments and use materials with recycled content to the extent feasible.

Once operational, the proposed project would result in negligible changes in energy consumption along the State Route 78 corridor. The proposed project would replace or improve existing elements along the roadway, including pavement, culverts, guardrails, shoulders, crosswalks, traffic management systems, and signage. These features, as operational and safety improvements to the roadway, would not induce additional vehicle travel or otherwise consume excessive or unnecessary amounts of energy. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary

consumption of energy resources during operation, and there would be no impact.

### 2.1.7 Geology and Soils

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
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	No Impact
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	No Impact
iv) Landslides?	No Impact
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 onsite or offsite 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 waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	No Impact
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	No Impact

#### Discussion of Geology and Soils Evaluation

The proposed project is not in an Alquist-Priolo Fault Zone (California Department of Conservation 2019), and adverse effects related to earthquake fault rupture are unlikely. The proposed project would be constructed to meet Caltrans' Seismic Design Criteria, which would minimize potential risks related to seismic ground shaking and other seismic hazards. Temporary effects due to soil erosion would be addressed by compliance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction

General Permit. The proposed project would make improvements to existing Caltrans facilities without changing their overall function and is not likely to exacerbate any existing hazardous soil conditions. Furthermore, site-specific soil conditions would be evaluated during the design phase in the project Geotechnical Report, which would provide recommendations to address any soil, liquefaction, or seismic issues. Therefore, no impacts would occur due to seismic or soil hazards.

The project area is in low, marginal, and no potential paleontological sensitive zones as mapped by the County of San Diego (County of San Diego 2011b). Furthermore, work would be paused in the event of unanticipated discovery of paleontological resources, and any resources would be evaluated by a Caltrans archaeologist for recommendations on treatment prior to commencement of work. As a result, project construction activities would have no impact on paleontological resources.

### 2.1.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Considering the information in the Climate Change Technical Study dated September 2024, 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?	<b>Less-than-Significant Impact</b>
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	<b>No Impact</b>

### ***Regulatory Framework***

California has been innovative and proactive in addressing greenhouse gas emissions and climate change by passing multiple Senate Bills, Assembly Bills, and executive orders, including but not limited to those described in the following paragraphs.

#### ***Executive Order S-3-05 (June 1, 2005)***

The goal of this order is to reduce California's greenhouse gas emissions to (1) year 2000 levels by 2010, (2) year 1990 levels by 2020, and (3) 80 percent below year 1990 levels by 2050. This goal was further reinforced with the passage of AB 32 in 2006 and Senate Bill 32 in 2016.

#### ***AB 32, Chapter 488, 2006, Núñez and Pavley, The Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006***

AB 32 codified the 2020 greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals outlined in Executive Order S-3-05, further mandating that ARB create a scoping plan

and implement rules to achieve “real, quantifiable, cost-effective reductions of greenhouse gases.” The law requires ARB to adopt rules and regulations in an open public process to achieve the maximum technologically feasible and cost-effective greenhouse gas reductions.

**Executive Order B-30-15 (April 2015)**

This order establishes an interim statewide greenhouse gas emission reduction target of 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 to ensure that California meets its target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. It further orders all state agencies with jurisdiction over sources of greenhouse gas emissions to implement measures, pursuant to statutory authority, to achieve reductions of greenhouse gas emissions to meet the 2030 and 2050 greenhouse gas emissions reductions targets.

**Senate Bill 743, Chapter 386 (September 2013)**

This bill changes the metric of consideration for transportation impacts pursuant to CEQA from a focus on automobile delay to alternative methods focused on vehicle miles traveled; this is intended to promote the state’s goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and traffic-related air pollution and promoting multimodal transportation, while balancing the needs of congestion management and safety.

**Executive Order B-55-18 (September 2018)**

This order sets a new statewide goal to achieve and maintain carbon neutrality no later than 2045. This goal is in addition to existing statewide targets of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

**Affected Environment**

Greenhouse gas emissions from transportation projects can be divided into those produced during operation of the State Highway System and those produced during construction. The primary greenhouse gases produced by the transportation sector are CO<sub>2</sub>, methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), and hydrofluorocarbons. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are a product of the combustion of petroleum-based products, like gasoline, in internal combustion engines. Relatively small amounts of CH<sub>4</sub> and N<sub>2</sub>O are emitted during fuel combustion. In addition, a small amount of hydrofluorocarbons emissions is attributable to the transportation sector.

The proposed project is in a rural/semi-urban area of San Diego County. The primary land uses in the area include rural residential, retail, service commercial, and open space. Greenhouse gas emissions in the project area are mainly generated through fuel consumption (e.g., vehicle exhaust) along the highway and regional/local roads. In 2021, State Route 78 had annual average daily traffic ranging from approximately 1,350 to 8,400 vehicle trips within the general project limits (Caltrans 2021). Energy use for building

electricity, heating, and cooling also contributes to the regional greenhouse gas emissions portfolio. A Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy by SANDAG guides transportation and land use development in the proposed project area to target greenhouse gas reductions.

### **Environmental Consequences**

The proposed project would generate greenhouse gas emissions during construction due to material processing and transportation, construction equipment, and traffic delays. These emissions would be produced at different levels throughout the construction phase. Temporary construction emissions would be reduced with BMPs and Caltrans Standard Specifications, which are described further below in the section titled Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures.

Greenhouse gas emissions associated with construction activities were estimated using the Caltrans Construction Emissions Tool (CAL-CET version 2021v1.0.2). Table 2-8 shows the anticipated construction-related greenhouse gas emissions for the proposed project. Construction of the project would generate approximately 1,181 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e, after accounting for the global warming potential of each greenhouse gas.

**Table 2-8 Total Construction-Related Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

<b>Greenhouse Gas</b>	<b>Total Emissions (tons)</b>
CO <sub>2</sub>	1,071
CH <sub>4</sub>	0.01
N <sub>2</sub> O	0.09
BC	0.02
HFC	0.05
<b>Total CO<sub>2</sub>e (Metric Tons)</b>	<b>1,181</b>

**Notes:**

Global warming potential values, relative to 1 ton of CO<sub>2</sub>e, are assumed as follows: N<sub>2</sub>O is 298, CH<sub>4</sub> is 25, BC is 460, HFC is 1,430.

BC = black carbon; CH<sub>4</sub> = methane; CO<sub>2</sub> = carbon dioxide; CO<sub>2</sub>e=carbon dioxide equivalent; HFC = hydrofluorocarbons; N<sub>2</sub>O = nitrous oxide

**Source:** Caltrans 2024e

As standard practice for all projects, Caltrans incorporates required measures that limit greenhouse gas emissions during construction to the extent feasible. With implementation of these measures (listed below) as part of the project, project construction would be completed efficiently and with minimal energy and material waste, in alignment with a TMP, to minimize excess fuel



consumption during temporary lane closures. Therefore, project construction would not generate substantial greenhouse gas emissions that would have a significant impact on the environment, and the impact would be less than significant.

Once operational, the proposed project would not have a measurable effect on regional greenhouse gas emissions. The project would replace or rehabilitate existing transportation facilities without an increase in vehicle capacity or induced travel, and operational emissions would remain similar to existing conditions. Therefore, operation of the proposed project would not generate greenhouse gas emissions that would have a significant impact on the environment.

### ***Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures***

All construction contracts include Caltrans Standard Specifications to reduce temporary greenhouse gas emissions. Contractors are also required to comply with all laws applicable to the project and to certify they are aware of and will comply with all ARB emission reduction regulations.

### **2.1.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials**

Considering the information in the hazardous waste memorandum prepared by Caltrans dated August 2024 (Caltrans 2024f), the following significance determinations have been made:

<b>Question—Would the project:</b>	<b>CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials</b>
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	<b>Less-than-Significant Impact</b>
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?	<b>No Impact</b>
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	<b>Less-than-Significant Impact</b>
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?	<b>No Impact</b>

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials
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?	<b>No Impact</b>
f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<b>No Impact</b>
g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?	<b>No Impact</b>

### ***Regulatory Setting***

California regulates hazardous materials, waste, and substances under the authority of the California Health and Safety Code and is also authorized by the federal government to implement the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act in the state. California law also addresses specific handling, storage, transportation, disposal, treatment, reduction, cleanup, and emergency planning of hazardous waste.

Worker and public health and safety are key issues when addressing hazardous materials that may affect human health and the environment. Proper management and disposal of hazardous material are vital if hazardous materials are found, disturbed, or generated during project construction.

### ***Affected Environment***

Multiple facilities with onsite and nearby hazardous waste/unauthorized releases were identified in the project area through the Cortese List. The Cortese List is a database that provides information about hazardous materials release locations. Four open cases are located in Downtown Julian; these cases are all related to gasoline releases on private properties.

Soil screening and statistical analysis for aerially deposited lead was performed in September 2022 and July 2023. Based on the statistical analysis results, soil in the proposed project would be considered unregulated for aerially deposited lead. Existing wooden posts are present in the project limits; removal would generate treated wood waste. Treated wood waste products contain hazardous chemical preservatives, and treated wood waste is considered hazardous waste. The proposed project also would include cold planing of paved surfaces, including roadway surfaces with thermoplastic striping or other pavement marking. Paint and thermoplastics may include residue containing lead or other hazardous waste residue.

### ***Environmental Consequences***

The primary potential hazards to the public or environment related to transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials would occur during construction of the proposed project. Construction activities would be focused in the Caltrans right-of-way on State Route 78, mostly involving the use of concrete and other hardscape materials. Typical hazardous materials used during construction (e.g., solvents, paints, and fuels) would be managed in accordance with Caltrans' standard measures and other regulatory requirements, and are not anticipated to compromise workers' health and safety.

However, soil disturbance would be required for the proposed project, which may unearth previously undiscovered hazardous materials. As described previously, there are Cortese-listed sites in the immediate project vicinity through Julian, which are related to prior releases and groundwater impacts. The proposed project would only entail excavation to a limited depth to complete improvements to the roadway surface in the vicinity of these sites. Construction activities would likely not encounter groundwater, which ranges from 28 to 290 feet below grade in the area. For these reasons, impacts from these hazardous materials sites are not expected. With adherence to standard practices, the proposed project would not create a significant hazard due to routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials. Therefore, the impact would be less than significant.

Any hazardous materials determined to be present during construction would require special handling, reuse, and disposal because of their potential to harm human health and the environment. To avoid adverse environmental effects related to the accidental release of these toxins into the environment during construction, a debris containment and collection plan would be required for proper containment during disturbance activities. Additionally, based on the statistical analysis for aerially deposited lead, a lead compliance plan would be prepared.

The proposed project would generate treated wood waste for activities involving removal of existing wooden posts from either guardrail or signs. Accordingly, the proposed project would implement Caltrans Standard Special Provision 14-11.14, Treated Wood Waste, to manage the handling and disposal of this hazardous waste in accordance with standard practices.

During pavement rehabilitation (cold planing), the proposed project would remove traffic striping and pavement parking that may contain lead. If traffic striping and/or pavement markings will not be removed prior to cold planing, Standard Special Provision 36-4, Residue Containing Lead from Paint and Thermoplastic, would be required. If yellow striping paint, yellow thermoplastic traffic stripe, or yellow pavement markings will be removed from paved surfaces prior to and separately from cold planing, Standard Special Provision 14-11.12, Removal of Yellow Traffic Stripe and Pavement Marking

with Hazardous Waste Residue, would be required. Also, if removal of any traffic striping or pavement markings other than yellow is performed prior to and separately from cold planing, Standard Special Provision 84-9.03B, Remove Traffic Stripes and Pavement Markings Containing Lead, would be required.

In accordance with standard Caltrans construction protocols, staging areas for construction equipment and materials would be in specifically designated areas in the Caltrans right-of-way or immediately adjacent properties (if determined necessary due to safety or site constraints). A spill prevention plan would be implemented to reduce risk of accidental spills of fuels, solvents, or other regularly used hazardous materials during construction activities. Soil stockpiles would not be permitted to contain hazardous materials or be located in ESAs, in accordance with Caltrans Standard Specifications 14-11.05. With adherence to applicable state and federal regulations, permit conditions, and Caltrans Standard Special Provisions and Non-Standard Special Provisions, the proposed project would not create a significant hazard through upset and accident conditions involving release of hazardous materials into the environment. Therefore, there would be no impact.

The proposed project would take place within 0.25 mile of existing schools, including Julian Community Nursery School (0.02 mile north of State Route 78); Witch Creek School (0.02 mile south of State Route 78); and Julian High School, Julian Junior High School, and Julian Charter School (co-located approximately 0.13 mile north of State Route 78). The proposed project would take place in the State Route 78 right-of-way or immediately adjacent parcels, and would not infringe on the boundaries of any schools. As mentioned above, Caltrans' provisions related to hazardous materials, along with applicable state and federal regulatory requirements, would be adhered to by the project to ensure that hazardous materials are properly contained during construction activities. Therefore, potential impacts from emitting or handling hazardous materials within 0.25 mile of existing schools would be less than significant.

### ***Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures***

The proposed project would implement the following standard measures to avoid or minimize effects from hazardous materials:

- Caltrans is designated as the generator of hazardous waste produced from work activities, in accordance with Caltrans Standard Specifications 14-11.07.
- For hazardous waste generated on the job site, the Water Pollution Control manager must be knowledgeable of proper handling and emergency procedures for hazardous waste, as demonstrated by submitting a training certificate that indicates completion of training

required under 22 California Code of Regulations Section 66265.16, in accordance with Caltrans Standard Specifications 14-11.01.

- A Lead Compliance Plan under Caltrans Standard Specifications 7-1.02K(6)(j)(ii) would be required during construction when handling lead-contaminated soils, as well as removal of lead-based paint, thermoplastic, painted traffic stripe, and/or pavement marking.
- Caltrans will follow all requirements for aerially deposited lead treatment and disposal pursuant to Caltrans Standard Special Provision 7-1.02K(6)(j)(iii).
- Removal of any treated wood waste (e.g., wooden posts for guardrails, signs, barriers, or piles) would require proper handling and disposal, in accordance with Caltrans Standard Special Provision 14-11.14. Treated wood waste products contain hazardous chemical preservatives; therefore, treated wood waste is considered a California Hazardous Waste.
- The construction contractor, upon discovery of unanticipated asbestos and/or hazardous substance, is required to immediately stop working in the area of the discovery and notify Caltrans Environmental Engineering, in accordance with Caltrans Standard Specification 14-11.02. Environmental Engineering will use the on-call Construction Emergency Response Contract to perform any required work for the proposed project.
- The construction contractor is required, in accordance with Caltrans Standard Specifications 14-11.03, to handle, store, and dispose of hazardous waste under 22 California Code of Regulations Division 4.5.
- Excavation, transportation, and handling of material containing hazardous waste or contamination must result in no visible dust migration. When clearing, grubbing, and performing earthwork operations in areas containing hazardous waste or contamination, a water truck or water tank must be provided on the job site, in accordance with Caltrans Standard Specifications 14-11.04.
- The construction contractor is not permitted to stockpile material containing hazardous waste or contamination unless ordered by Caltrans or a regulatory agency. Stockpiles containing hazardous waste or contamination must not be placed where affected by surface run-on or run-off. Stockpiles are not permitted in ESAs. Stockpiled material must not enter storm drains, inlets, or Waters of the State. These requirements are provided in Caltrans Standard Specifications 14-11.05.
- The construction contractor is designated the generator of hazardous waste produced from materials the construction contractor has brought to the job site, in accordance with Caltrans Standard Specifications 14-11.06.

- Imported local materials from a (1) noncommercial source or (2) source not regulated under California jurisdiction must be evaluated and approved for use by Environmental Engineering Branch, in accordance with Caltrans Standard Specifications 6 1.03B.

### 2.1.10 Hydrology and Water Quality [This section has been updated]

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 water or groundwater quality?	No 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 onsite or offsite;	No Impact
(ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding onsite or offsite;	No 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	No Impact
(iv) impede or redirect flood flows?	No 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

### **Regulatory Setting**

#### **Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management)**

Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management) directs all federal agencies to refrain from conducting, supporting, or allowing actions in floodplains unless it is the only practicable alternative. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requirements for compliance are outlined in 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 650 Subpart A.

### ***Affected Environment***

The project is in the San Diego River and San Dieguito watersheds (County of San Diego 2024). Within the project limits, State Route 78 crosses several streams throughout both watersheds, including Hatfield Creek, Witch Creek, San Diego River, Bailey Creek, Coleman Creek, and Banner Creek (USGS 2024). Streams cross beneath bridges or in culverts under the roadway.

The proposed project would occur primarily in existing developed roadways and Caltrans facilities, with some culvert improvement work occurring immediately adjacent to the roadway. The project extends over several areas mapped as floodplains, which are summarized below along with the corresponding Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Map:

- Witch Creek, Flood Insurance Rate Map 06073C1154G
- Santa Ysabel Creek, Flood Insurance Rate Map 06073C1156G
- Coleman Creek, Flood Insurance Rate Map 06073C1159G
- Coleman Creek, Flood Insurance Rate Map 06073C1178G

The proposed project includes one feature in the mapped floodplain for Witch Creek. Project improvements would primarily occur in existing developed facilities.

### ***Environmental Consequences***

The proposed project would make improvements to existing facilities along State Route 78 without modifying existing drainage patterns. A portion of one culvert located at post mile 48.0 is within the floodplain. However, the culvert is being replaced in-kind with no changes besides material type. This improvement would have no impact on the floodplain.

#### **2.1.11 Land Use and Planning**

<b>Question—Would the project:</b>	<b>CEQA Significance Determinations for Land Use and Planning</b>
a) Physically divide an established community?	<b>No Impact</b>
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?	<b>No Impact</b>

### ***Discussion of Land Use and Planning Evaluation***

The proposed project would not construct any barriers or inhibit access to and from the unincorporated communities of Ramona, Ballena, Witch Creek, Santa Ysabel, Wynola, and Julian. During construction, the proposed project would implement a TMP to ensure that community access is retained throughout construction. The project complies with the County of San Diego

General Plan, Ramona Community Plan, and Julian Community Plan because the project replaces or improves existing facilities and maintains the existing land use and community boundaries. Therefore, there would be no impact.

### 2.1.12 Mineral Resources

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

#### ***Discussion of Mineral Resource Evaluation***

There are no existing mines or mineral resource recovery sites in the project footprint, as identified by the County of San Diego and the California Department of Conservation. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in the loss of mineral resources or mineral resource recovery sites. There would be no impact.

### 2.1.13 Noise

Question—Would the project result in:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Noise
a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	No Impact
b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	No 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

#### ***Discussion of Noise Evaluation***

The proposed project is classified as a Type III project, which is exempt from analysis under 23 CFR 772; accordingly, no noise abatement analysis is included herein (Caltrans 2020a). The proposed project would take place on



State Route 78 in the Caltrans right-of-way, in both rural and urban areas, in the communities of Ramona, Ballena, Witch Creek, Santa Ysabel, Wynola, Whispering Pines, and Julian. State Route 78 is a highly traveled roadway, with an average annual daily traffic ranging from approximately 2,500 to 10,000 vehicle trips within the general project limits. The proposed improvements would not modify the roadway in a way that would bring traveling vehicles (and associated roadway noise) closer to sensitive receptors, and no widening or capacity increase would occur. Therefore, the proposed project would not increase noise levels above existing conditions.

Construction noise for the proposed project would be temporary and would be controlled by Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-8.02, which states the following:

- Do not exceed a maximum sound level of 86 A-weighted decibels at 50 feet from the job site activities from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m.
- Equip an internal combustion engine with the manufacturer-recommended muffler. Do not operate an internal combustion engine on the job site without the appropriate muffler.

Construction noise would be short term, intermittent, and often overshadowed by local traffic noise. All construction equipment would be inspected at periodic intervals to ensure proper maintenance and presence of noise control devices. Any idling equipment would also be turned off when not in use. Thus, substantial temporary noise increases during construction would not occur, and there would be no impact.

There would be no operational change in use of the roadway, and vibration levels would remain the same as existing conditions. The proposed project would result in intermittent, localized vibration in the project area during construction processes such as grading, excavation, and earthwork, along with equipment movement. The vibration levels created by the normal movement of vehicles—including graders, front loaders, and backhoes used for construction—are the same order of magnitude as the groundborne vibration created by heavy vehicles traveling on streets and highways. Therefore, operating equipment would not generate excessive groundborne noise or vibration, and there would be no impact.

#### 2.1.14 Population and Housing

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)?	<b>No Impact</b>

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Population and Housing
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	No Impact

### ***Discussion of Population and Housing Evaluation***

The proposed project would improve various assets along State Route 78 without increasing the capacity of the highway or providing new access to the area. The proposed project would improve operational efficiency and safety of the highway but would not induce substantial unplanned population growth. The project would not result in any residential or commercial property relocations; thus, no displacement of people would occur, and no replacement housing would need to be constructed. Therefore, there would be no impact.

#### **2.1.15 Public Services**

Question—Would the project result in:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Public Services
a) 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, 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
Parks?	No Impact
Other public facilities?	No Impact

### ***Discussion of Public Services Evaluation***

The proposed project would include the rehabilitation and enhancement of multiple assets on State Route 78, from post miles 37.2 through 60, in the communities of Ramona, Ballena, Witch Creek, Santa Ysabel, WYNOLA, Whispering Pines, and Julian. Construction of the proposed project would be in the existing developed Caltrans right-of-way and would be temporary and of short duration. During construction, a TMP would be in place to identify any needed closures and establish alternate routes to public facilities, such as schools and parks. Public roads would remain open to emergency vehicles at all times. Emergency service providers and first responders would be notified

of construction sequencing and the potential for temporary lane closures and/or changes to traffic circulation. Therefore, no new or physically altered governmental facilities would be needed to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or performance objectives.

Once operational, the proposed project would improve travel efficiency and safety along State Route 78. No additional burden would be placed on public services due to an increase in the local population or change in travel patterns. Therefore, there would be no impact.

### 2.1.16 Recreation

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

### ***Discussion of Recreation Evaluation***

The proposed project would include the rehabilitation and enhancement of multiple assets on State Route 78, from post miles 37.2 through 60.0, in the unincorporated communities of Ramona, Ballena, Witch Creek, Santa Ysabel, Wynola, Julian, and Whispering Pines. These improvements would not increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facilities would occur. Equipment and materials storage sites would be sited as far away from park uses as feasible. Staging areas would be in the Caltrans right-of-way or immediately adjoining properties and would not require use of any recreational sites. The proposed project does not include recreational facilities and would not require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities. Therefore, the proposed project would have no impact on recreation.

### ***Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures***

The proposed project would implement the following standard measure to avoid or minimize effects on recreation:

- Equipment and materials storage sites would be located as far away from residential and park uses as feasible.

**2.1.17 Transportation [This section has been updated]**

<b>Question—Would the project:</b>	<b>CEQA Significance Determinations for Transportation</b>
a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	<b>No Impact</b>
b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	<b>No Impact</b>
c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	<b>No Impact</b>
d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	<b>No Impact</b>

***Discussion of Transportation Evaluation***

Existing transit facilities along State Route 78 include several bus stops for San Diego Metropolitan Transit System's Routes 891/892 in Santa Ysabel, Wynola, and Julian. Pedestrian facilities include sidewalks and crosswalks that are primarily in town centers for nearby communities; the rural areas that make up the majority of the project area do not contain sidewalks. The project area does not currently contain any bicycle lanes; however, there are bicycle facilities planned in the area separate from this project. The County of San Diego has identified several bicycle improvements planned for future implementation in its Active Transportation Plan, including Class II bicycle lanes between Ramona and Julian within the project limits (County of San Diego 2018).

During construction, a TMP would be implemented to minimize any vehicle and transit delays along the roadway and identify alternate routes as needed for all transportation modes. Once operational, the proposed project would improve operational efficiency and safety along the roadway. No transit or roadway facilities would be removed or inhibited by the proposed project.

Additionally, the proposed project would be compatible with existing and planned pedestrian and bicycle facilities because it would implement Complete Streets improvements and result in negligible change in use of the roadway. The proposed project would improve mobility for pedestrians in the area through ADA upgrades of curb ramps, sidewalks, and crosswalks in Downtown Julian. Crosswalks would be installed on State Route 78 at eight locations to enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety. The proposed project would not preclude future implementation of bicycle improvements in the County's Active Transportation Plan. Therefore, there would be no conflict with existing or planned pedestrian or bicycle facilities.

### 2.1.18 Tribal Cultural Resources

Considering the information compiled by Caltrans in the Historic Property Survey Report (HPSR), dated September 2024, and the Historical Resources Evaluation Report (HRER) and Archaeological Survey Report (ASR) dated July 2024 (Caltrans 2024d), the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project result in:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Tribal Cultural Resources
<p>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:</p> <p>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</p>	<b>No Impact</b>
<p>b) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.</p>	<b>Less-than-Significant Impact</b>

### ***Affected Environment***

In compliance with AB 52, a Sacred Lands File search request of the initial project area was submitted to the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) on March 10, 2023, by Caltrans. It was returned with positive results on March 28, 2023. The NAHC provided Caltrans with a list of 24 Native American contacts who may have additional knowledge of cultural resources in the project area. Consultation letters were sent out on April 11, 2023. On August 2, 2023, updated project information and an updated project scope were sent out via email, and by mail the following day.

Replies were received from the following six contacts: San Pasqual Band of Diegueño Mission Indians deferred to Mesa Grande on June 18, 2024; Fort Yuma Reservation deferred to local tribes on May 11, 2023; Jamul Indian Village deferred to Mesa Grande and Santa Ysabel on August 30, 2023; La Posta Band of Diegueño Mission Indians requested monitors during ground-disturbing activities on August 2, 2023; Campo Band of Diegueno Mission Indians replied on June 10, 2024, with the interest of initiating consultation;

and Mesa Grande Band of Diegueño Mission Indians also requested monitoring on February 2, 2024, with specific concerns for the areas between post miles 42.8 through 43.4 and post miles 44.6 through 45.5. Responses were not received from Iipay Nation of Santa Ysabel.

### ***Environmental Consequences***

As described above, tribal consultation has been undertaken for the proposed project in compliance with AB 52. The information and recommendations provided by local tribes has been considered during project development. The proposed project would be required to implement AMMs in alignment with the recommendations of Native American tribes. These measures would include tribal monitoring and evaluation, avoidance, or treatment of potentially significant resources if encountered. Consultation will continue throughout the duration of the project to further refine the measures required during construction activities.

If buried cultural materials are encountered during construction, it is Caltrans' policy that work stop in that area until a qualified archaeologist can evaluate the nature and significance of the find. Additional survey will be required if the project changes to include areas not previously surveyed. Therefore, the impact would be less than significant.

### ***Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures***

The proposed project would implement the following measures to avoid or minimize impacts to tribal cultural resources during project construction:

- Recommendations for appropriate treatment of tribal cultural resources shall be identified through the consultation process with interested tribes. Native American monitors shall be present during construction activities that involve ground disturbance in sensitive areas. If potentially significant resources are discovered, coordination with tribal representatives shall be required to determine the appropriate treatment methods. Buffer zones around significant tribal cultural resources shall be delineated using ESA fencing to the satisfaction of tribal monitors.
- If cultural materials are discovered during construction, all earthmoving activity within 60 feet of the discovery area will be diverted until a qualified archaeologist can assess the nature and significance of the find.
- If human remains are discovered, State Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 states that further disturbances and activities shall cease in any area or nearby area suspected to overlie remains, and the county coroner contacted. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5097.8, if the remains are thought to be Native American, the coroner will notify the NAHC, which will then notify the Most Likely Descendant. At this time, the person who discovered the remains will contact the District 11 Native American Coordinator so that they may work with the Most Likely

Descendant on the respectful treatment and disposition of the remains. Further provisions of PRC Section 5097.98 are to be followed as applicable.

- The establishment of ESAs and barriers are required and shall protect elements of designated cultural resources in place for the duration of the project. The ESAs will be marked on plans and delineated in the field by a Caltrans archaeologist.

### 2.1.19 Utilities and Service Systems

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

#### ***Discussion of Utilities and Service Systems Evaluation***

The proposed project would improve various components on State Route 78 to maintain the service life of the highway. The project would not create a new demand for utilities and service systems that would require construction of new or expanded facilities. There are existing utilities in the project area, such as overhead electrical distribution lines in the highway shoulder and sewer lines and pump stations in Downtown Julian. Avoidance of existing utilities and minimization of conflicts and relocations would be a key component of the design process. Temporary interruptions to service are not anticipated; however, if determined necessary during final design, they would be scheduled during non-use or off-peak service periods to minimize disruption, and notifications to any affected parties would be made in advance by the

utility provider and/or Public Information Officer. This standard practice would ensure that any service disruptions are understood by the public and do not pose a health or safety risk to individual customers.

The proposed project would not result in any population growth or subsequent increase in water demand, wastewater generation, or solid waste disposal needs. The proposed project may use a limited amount of water if necessary for dust control during construction; however, these demands would be negligible and would not exceed available supplies. Similarly, wastewater disposal would only be temporarily required during construction and would not exceed the treatment capacity of the Santa Maria Wastewater Reclamation Plant or the Julian Water Pollution Control Facility, which can treat up to 1 million gallons per day (mgd) and 0.040 mgd, respectively (Ramona Municipal Water District 2024; County of San Diego 2013). Solid waste disposal, including construction demolition debris recycling, would occur in accordance with Caltrans Standard Specifications 14-10 and would not exceed state or local standards or conflict with applicable statutes. The project would not require the construction of any new or expanded water, wastewater treatment, or solid waste disposal facilities. The project proposes replacement or rehabilitation of stormwater drainage facilities (culverts), the environmental effects of which are assessed throughout this document by resource area. Therefore, there would be no impact.

### 2.1.20 Wildfire

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?	<b>No Impact</b>
b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?	<b>No Impact</b>
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?	<b>No Impact</b>
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?	<b>No Impact</b>



### **Discussion of Wildfire Evaluation**

The proposed project would take place in areas classified as Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (CAL FIRE 2024). Project construction activities would occur in the existing developed Caltrans right-of-way that is operated and maintained by Caltrans. Emergency access could be temporarily affected by construction delays or road closures. However, the proposed project would implement a TMP to ensure that emergency vehicle access for fire responders is maintained throughout construction.

The project would adhere to Caltrans Standard Specifications 7-1.02M(2) to manage fire risk during construction, which requires preparation of a fire prevention plan. Wildfire risk would not be exacerbated by the proposed project due to slope, prevailing winds, or other factors. The proposed project would not require the installation of any infrastructure that could exacerbate wildfire risks or result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment. The proposed project would not change the grade of the roadway or surrounding areas in a manner that could result in post-fire instability. Once operational, the proposed project would not introduce new uses or develop facilities that could exacerbate wildfire risks. Therefore, there would be no impact.

#### **2.1.21 Mandatory Findings of Significance**

<b>Question:</b>	<b>CEQA Significance Determinations for Mandatory Findings of Significance</b>
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?	<b>Less-than-Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated</b>
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.)	<b>No Impact</b>
c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	<b>No Impact</b>

### ***Affected Environment***

Cumulative impacts are those that result from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, combined with the potential impacts of the proposed project. A cumulative effect assessment looks at the collective impacts posed by individual land use plans and projects. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively substantial impacts taking place over a period of time.

Cumulative impacts to resources in the project area may result from residential, commercial, industrial, and highway development, as well as from agricultural development and the conversion to more intensive agricultural cultivation. These land use activities can degrade habitat and species diversity through consequences such as displacement and fragmentation of habitats and populations, alteration of hydrology, contamination, erosion, sedimentation, disruption of migration corridors, changes in water quality, and introduction or promotion of predators. They can also contribute to potential community impacts identified for the project, such as changes in community character, traffic patterns, housing availability, and employment.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 describes when a cumulative impact analysis is necessary and what elements are necessary for an adequate discussion of cumulative impacts. The definition of cumulative impacts under CEQA can be found in Section 15355 of the CEQA Guidelines.

Caltrans internal records and the State Clearinghouse CEQANet web portal were reviewed to find cumulative projects occurring along State Route 78, or projects planned to occur in the future, that could overlap with the project footprint or otherwise affect similar resource areas. Caltrans is undertaking various planned projects along State Route 78, including the State Route 78 Ramona Asset Management Project, State Route 78 Culvert and Road Rehabilitation Project, and the Interstate 15/State Route 78 Managed Lanes Direct Connectors Project. These projects also involve improvements to State Route 78 in San Diego County but do not overlap with the project footprint. Also, routine maintenance projects (e.g., tree trimming or facility repairs) occur on an as-needed basis; these projects may occur in the project area, depending on the maintenance required.

### ***Environmental Consequences***

The proposed project is in a rural/semi-urban setting and does not involve significant changes to the existing use of the infrastructure or surrounding land uses. As described in this Initial Study, the proposed project would not substantially degrade the environment or eliminate important examples of California history. The proposed project involves construction activity in existing developed Caltrans facilities. Construction would result in minor temporary and short-term activities, which would not substantially reduce habitat or restrict the range of special-status plant or animal species (see

Section 2.1.4, Biological Resources). The proposed culvert replacements would result in small areas of permanent and temporary impact to wetlands, upland and other sensitive natural communities. Avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures would be implemented during construction to address significant impacts, including the use of mitigation banks to offset permanent impacts. Furthermore, the proposed project would not affect current operations and maintenance activities and would not result in a substantial change to the environment once constructed. Therefore, these impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Construction of the proposed project would result in temporary and short-term impacts that would be limited to the project site and immediate vicinity. Although impacts related to resources such as air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, and traffic would contribute to regional impacts, these impacts would not make a cumulatively considerable contribution to any significant cumulative impact resulting from other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects in the vicinity of the site. This is due to the scale of the proposed project activities, limited nature of construction-related impacts over a relatively short construction period, minimal operational change, and the proposed AMMs that would limit the potential for any significant impacts. Furthermore, there are no cumulative projects planned or under construction that have been identified in the project footprint that could overlap with project effects on other resources.

As discussed in this Initial Study, the proposed project would result in less-than-significant impacts or no impacts on the following resource areas: Aesthetics, Agriculture and Forestry Resources, Energy, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation, Utilities and Service Systems, and Wildfire. AMMs are included as part of the proposed project to limit the potential for any significant impacts. Therefore, all impacts would be avoided or minimized, and the proposed project would not make a cumulatively considerable contribution to significant cumulative impacts on any of these resource areas. The incremental effect of the proposed project would not be cumulatively considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. Therefore, there would be no impact.

The analysis conducted in this Initial Study concluded that the proposed project would not have a significant adverse effect on human beings. Air quality emissions during construction would be minimized through Caltrans Standard Specifications for dust control, proper equipment use, idling limits, and compliance with SDAPCD rules and regulations. Hazardous materials used during construction would similarly be controlled through Caltrans Standard Specifications for proper storage, transport, and disposal of all materials. The proposed project is considered a Type III project, which would

not require noise abatement, and operational noise levels would remain similar to existing levels. Therefore, there would be no significant adverse effect on human beings.

***Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures***

No additional measures are required beyond those already discussed by resource area in this Initial Study.

## Chapter 3 Coordination

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The Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration for this project was distributed to federal, state, regional, and local agencies and elected officials; tribal groups; and interested groups, organizations, and individuals.

The Notice of Intent was also sent to property owners within a 200-foot buffer of the State Route 78 centerline within the project limits. A full distribution list for the project is available upon request at the Caltrans District 11 office.

Native American consultation has been completed for the proposed project pursuant to AB 52. Refer to Section 2.1.18 for additional details.

Caltrans coordinated with SHPO to determine concurrence with findings of effect for historic resources. Caltrans, pursuant to Section 106 PA, Stipulation X.B.2, determined that a Finding of No Adverse Effect is appropriate for the proposed project. Concurrence was received from SHPO for this finding on October 17, 2024.

Coordination with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for an informal section 7 consultation and conference was initiated on October 3, 2024. USFWS responded on December 6, 2024 with concurrence of the determination that the proposed project is not likely to adversely affect arroyo toad or spadefoot.

Additionally, coordination on the proposed project with local community planning groups has been ongoing. On February 29, 2024, Caltrans sent an outreach email to Julian Planning Group member Kiki Skagen Munshi. Munshi responded on February 29, 2024, and directed the inquiry to President of the Historical Society Julie Davis and Town Historian David Lewis. Lewis replied via telephone on March 4, 2024, and provided additional information. Munshi also asked Caltrans to attend the Julian Planning Group meeting on March 11, 2024. A Caltrans Project Manager and Public Information Officer attended the meeting and received feedback regarding the proposed design in the local County register-listed Julian Historic District. Caltrans also hosted a separate public meeting during the public review period for the Draft Environmental Document to facilitate additional community feedback on the project.

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# Appendix A Title VI Policy Statement

CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

GAVIN NEWSOM, GOVERNOR

## California Department of Transportation

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



September 2023

### 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 non-discriminatory 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) 639-6392 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 PO Box 942874, MS-79, Sacramento, CA 94274-0001; (916) 879-6768 (TTY 711); or at [Title.VI@dot.ca.gov](mailto:Title.VI@dot.ca.gov).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Tavares'.

TONY TAVARES  
Director

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

## **Appendix B** Comment Letters and Responses

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This appendix contains the comments received during the public circulation and comment period from October 18, 2024 to November 22, 2024, retyped for readability. The comment letters are stated verbatim as submitted, with acronyms, abbreviations, and any original grammatical or typographical errors included. Attachments to letters may have been removed to avoid repetition and are available upon request. A Caltrans response follows each comment presented.

The following is a list of the persons, organizations, and public agencies that commented during the public review period, and the date comments were received.

<b>Comment #</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Title/Organization/Affiliation</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	Jackson Hurst	N/A	October 21, 2024
2	Glenn Gaarder	N/A	October 21, 2024
3	Lesley McClelland	N/A	November 12, 2024
4	Rebecca Morales	N/A	November 12, 2024
5	Dennis Cantor	N/A	November 13, 2024
6	Jennifer Kazmer	Chief, Long Range Planning Division, County of San Diego	November 20, 2024
7	Patrick Brown	Chairman, Julian Community Planning Group	November 21, 2024
8	Heather A. Pert	Environmental Program Manager, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, South Coast Region	November 21, 2024

### **Comment #1: Jackson Hurst**

Comment – I approve and support Caltrans SR-78 Asset Management through Julian Project. I have reviewed and I support the findings and the build alternative laid out in the SR-78 Asset Management through Julian Initial Study with Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) Document.

### **Response to Comment #1**

Caltrans acknowledges this comment and thanks Mr. Hurst for taking the time to comment on the Draft IS/MND for the proposed project.

### **Comment #2: Glenn Gaarder**

Hi,

I read, or tried to read (it's laborious), State Route 78 Julian Asset Management Project (PDF). We own 27541 Hwy 78. The report goes into great detail about, well, details. I would like to make some more general comments.

- 1) The type of pavement used dramatically affects (effects? Gosh, English!) the level of tire noise. We had lived there for 30 some years. We have owned, and used the property since 1987. They have repaved it with smooth asphalt. That is very nice and quiet. It has been chip-sealed on several occasions. That is horribly noisy. Our house was higher than the highway. We still spend time there. The noise is reflected up off the surface and is particularly bad on property above grade. Please consider the comfort of your neighbors when selecting a pavement. Sure the big trucks and motorcycles with non-stock exhaust are really really annoying, but you could at least make normal everyday traffic easier to live with.
- 2) I would like to point out the nuisance that the large turnout in front of our property causes. It invites people to stop. They try to climb my fence and cause problems. Once someone trying to steal copper cut the wellhead on our well which caused the pump to fall into the bottom of the well. This caused ~\$7,000 to repair. Is there any way Caltrans can do something to make these turnouts non attractive to dirtbags? Could Caltrans install a taller, more sturdy fence than my 6 foot tall chain link? It's a continual nuisance that people who own property not adjacent to a turnout don't have to deal with. (yes, double negatives are confusing but I don't know how else to word that). It would also be nice if Caltrans picked up trash, poop, toilet paper, diapers, etc that people constantly drop off there. I really don't think that should be the property owner's responsibility. We're not the ones inviting them to stop there, you are! To reiterate, a huge, open, flat turnouts says "hey stop here and cause trouble while you're here"
- 3) There is the old foundation, and its nonnative trees, of the Ballena gas station across the highway and to the west a little. There's not much left, but that is historic and should be protected.
- 4) Your people, over the years, have used fine gravel to fill in ruts along the highway. I have had to fill a major rut in with 4" rock and concrete after your gravel washed out when your culvert clogged. In my opinion, nothing smaller than 1-1/2" crushed should be used to fill ruts. It would also be nice if Caltrans repaired washed out ruts. I had to fill that rut in so I had room to pull my trailer into my gate.
- 5) The transition to my driveway would be nice if it was addressed when repaving. I had to buy ~10 bags of asphalt from Home Depot to smooth

the transition from my driveway to the highway. My little car's nose will still drag when trying to pull out on the highway.

I'm often out of town, but it might be fun to meet out there and have a conversation.

Thanks for reading

Glenn

### **Response to Comment #2**

Caltrans acknowledges this comment and thanks Mr. Gaarder for taking the time to comment on the Draft IS/MND for the proposed project. This document is focused on analyzing the proposed project features. One of the main assets that this project aims to restore is pavement on already paved surfaces. Section 1.4.1 has information about the pavement rehabilitation that is proposed to provide a smooth driving surface.

Further, during the environmental analysis, the project's impacts on historic resources were evaluated and it was determined that historic structures outside of Downtown Julian would not be impacted. More information on historic properties is presented in Section 2.1.5 of this document.

Caltrans is committed to the continued maintenance of its facilities for the safety of all users in alignment with its maintenance policies and programs. More information on these programs, including contact information, can be found online here: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/maintenance>. In addition, a customer service request may be submitted at the following website: <https://csr.dot.ca.gov/>

### **Comment #3: Lesley McClelland**

Much better compromise. Please do not start project until late spring! Close before fall. Not convinced the ramps are needed. Stamped concrete is a great idea.

### **Response to Comment #3**

Caltrans acknowledges this comment and thanks Ms. McClelland for taking the time to comment on the Draft IS/MND for the proposed project. As noted in Section 1.4, construction in Downtown Julian would only occur between May and August. The proposed curb ramps are required to be enhanced to meet state and federal ADA standards. Caltrans will continue to consider different design options to meet ADA standards which includes removal of curb extensions from the project.

#### **Comment #4: Rebecca Morales**

I believe there should be no action taken. The proposed plan will disrupt traffic in an already high traffic area. Delivery trucks park in the middle of Washington and Main making it difficult to get around if curb extensions were put in. We have a blind person who lives in town and who walks this area all of the time. He has never had a problem. Coming up with an ADA solution for which there has been no stated problem is crazy.

#### **Response to Comment #4**

This comment pertains to the proposed curb extensions at the intersection of Washington Street and Main Street. In response to the community concerns raised, Caltrans has modified the design to include standard curb ramp upgrades at three of the four corners of the intersection (instead of curb extensions), and no change is now proposed for the northwest corner curb and sidewalk where the Julian Market & Deli building is located. An exception to ADA requirements has been approved for this location. See response to Comment #7 for additional details.

Regarding disruption of traffic, temporary effects to circulation during construction would be addressed through development of a Traffic Management Plan, as described in Section 2.1.17 of this document. Effects on operational traffic flow are expected to be minimal with the proposed standard curb ramp upgrades because there would be no change to traffic volumes, travel patterns, or use of the roadway.

#### **Comment #5: Dennis Cantor**

Thanks so much for sending your team to Julian on November 12 to explain the most-recent plan to modify the intersection at Main and Washington Streets in Julian.

The plan presented November 12 now provides two lanes of traffic on both sides of Washington, south of Main Street. This is as our community requested and will address issue of traffic entering and departing Julian during crowded tourist days. Thank you for incorporating this change.

The plan also modified the curb extensions which will now balance a shorter crossing distance with ample space for pedestrians to gather on the sidewalk and been seen when crossing the streets. Again, well done!

The additions of cross walks made of stamped asphalt with a brick-like appearance, ADA tactile paving in a color to match the appearance and concrete colored to look like old pavement and all welcome additions and should blend well with our historic district.

In my opinion, the intersection modification is a winner for both visitors and locals.

I look forward to these changes and believe they will enhance the appearance and safety of our community.

Best regards,

Dennis Cantor  
A Julian resident since 1998

### **Response to Comment #5**

Caltrans acknowledges this comment and thanks Mr. Cantor for taking the time to comment on the Draft IS/MND for the proposed project. See response to Comment #7 in the following pages for additional details on further design modifications made in response to community feedback.

### **Comment #6: Jennifer Kazmer, Chief, Long Range Planning Division, Planning and Development Services, County of San Diego**

Dear Mr. Voss,

The County of San Diego (County) staff reviewed the Caltrans Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for the State Route 78 Julian Asset Management Project (Project), dated October 18, 2024.

County staff appreciates the opportunity to review the Project and offers the following comments for your consideration. Please note that none of these comments should be construed as County support for the Project.

#### **GENERAL**

The County's Land Use and Environment Group has developed Guidelines for Determining Significance that are used to determine the magnitude of environmental impacts and mitigation options for addressing potentially significant impacts in the unincorporated portions of the county. Project impacts that could have potentially significant adverse effects to the unincorporated county or County facilities should be evaluated using the County's Guidelines for Determining Significance. These guidelines are available online at: <http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/pds/procguid.html>.

#### **DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND QUALITY (DEHQ)**

The County's DEHQ Hazardous Materials Division (HMD) is responsible for the protection of public health and the environment by ensuring hazardous materials, hazardous waste, medical waste, aboveground tanks, and

underground storage tanks are properly managed. The HMD has completed its review and has the following comments regarding the Project.

1. Any and all construction/improvement-related hazardous wastes to be generated (i.e., used oil, paint waste, lead paint debris, waste materials containing asbestos) must be classified, labeled, and handled in a manner as to prevent release to the environment. Contract(s) must ensure that hazardous wastes are properly disposed of by a California-registered hazardous waste hauler and maintain documentation of proper disposal dating back 3 years. More information on hazardous wastes can be found here:  
<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/deh/hazmat/hazwaste.html>
2. If construction sites will be storing hazardous materials in reportable quantities ( $\geq 55$  gallons of a liquid,  $\geq 500$  pounds of a solid, or  $\geq 200$  cubic feet of a compressed gas) such as diesel fuel, lubricating oils, paint, etc. for greater than 30 days, Caltrans must apply for a Unified Program Facility Permit (UPFP) with the HMD. Hazardous materials and wastes must be reported online in the California Environmental Reporting System (CERS). An application can be found on the County's website at: HMF-1000 CERS Application Form (08-22).pdf (sandiegocounty.gov)
3. Anytime during construction and after completion of the Project, the HMD has the authority pursuant to state law and County Code to regulate facilities that handle or store hazardous materials, and/or generate or treat hazardous waste. The HMD will apply that authority as necessary to protect public health and the environment. Additional regulatory guidance information can be found on the County's website at: Hazardous Materials Division (sandiegocounty.gov).
4. Please contact Rita Raphael, Office Support Specialist, at [rita.raaphael@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:rita.raaphael@sdcounty.ca.gov), or 619-756-5388.

#### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS (DPW)

DPW Wastewater provides sewer service to nearly 37,000 customers in the unincorporated areas of the county. The District sanitary sewer system is comprised of approximately 432 miles of sewer lines, 8,200 maintenance holes, 8 pump stations, several pressurized force mains, and 3 wastewater treatment plants. Wastewater has completed its review and offers the following comments:

1. The proposed Project has a potential to impact the County Sanitation District's (hereinafter "District") sanitation infrastructure. Portions of the proposed Project are either adjacent to or overlap with the District's



sewer lines (see Exhibit A for locations), which could impact County sanitation facilities.

2. The District requests Caltrans to conduct an analysis and identify potential impacts to the District's sanitation infrastructure and easements. An analysis report must be submitted to the District for review and concurrence that identifies how the District's facilities may be affected and remediated by the Project.

DPW Field Engineering supports stormwater pollution prevention and environmental regulatory programs, and providing maintenance management support including scheduling, coordination and productivity of road maintenance activities. Field Engineering has completed its review and offers the following comments:

1. The proposed Project has a potential to impact County-owned stormwater facilities and divert flood flows.
2. A description of the proposed pavement rehabilitation suggests that, for most of the Project's alignment, no pavement grinding would occur prior to pavement overlay. If so, without prior grinding of pavement material of an equal height, this could result in a potential stormwater runoff diversion, leading to an impact, as defined in California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Hydrology and Water Quality, Section 2.1.10, (c)(iv). Please explain and substantiate why flood flows would not be impeded or redirected and why no impact would occur.
3. Identify and provide locations of culverts that would be replaced in-kind and those that would be repaired. Please provide additional information and substantiate why culverts' replacements and repairs would not create a stormwater runoff diversion, as defined in CEQA Hydrology and Water Quality, Section 2.1.10, (c)(iv), and why no impact would occur.
4. County's Field Engineering, Pavement Management division requests to review the Project as it gets closer to construction, in order to identify potential conflicts and determine avoidance measure in relation to future resurfacing projects of County-maintained roadways that intersect the proposed Project corridor of SR-78.
5. Identify the curb ramp locations proposed for improvements along the Project alignment.

DPW Transportation division promotes safe, viable, and livable communities and make it easier for residents to lead healthy lives. The proposed Project has a potential to impact County-maintained roadways. The County's DPW, Transportation Division, requests Caltrans' coordination and additional information/reports addressing the following items:

1. Provide traffic control plans for the proposed Project, detailing traffic detours and how they will be implemented, to ensure no impact to County-maintained roadways occurs during construction.
2. Provide design plans and/or applicable reports detailing the proposed Complete Streets Improvements (i.e. sidewalks, bike lanes, trails, etc.), to ensure consistency with the County's existing and/or proposed Complete Streets features/projects.
3. Identify if the proposed Project will require acquisition of any privately-owned or County-owned Right-of-Way.
4. Coordinate with the County's Transportation Division regarding any improvements along the 22.8-mile Project corridor along SR-78 that would intersect with the County-maintained roadways, to help ensure consistency with the County's design standards.
5. Identify if any SR-78 shoulder improvements or widening are proposed as part of the Project.
6. Provide a figure showing locations of existing sidewalks and bikeway facilities along the SR-78.
7. Verify that all bikeway improvements would be consistent with the County's Mobility Element Plan and Active Transportation Plan.
8. Verify that Caltrans will be responsible for long-term maintenance of all improvements under this Project.
9. Confirm that none of the proposed bikeway improvements within the Julian town center / Historic District area would result in the loss of existing on-street parking.
10. Identify what upgrades are proposed for the 15 curb ramps and provide a list and a map figure identifying locations of these curb ramps.
11. Identify locations and provide examples of the type of decorative crosswalks that would be installed. Please coordinate with the local Community Planning Groups on the selection of the decorative crosswalks.

DPW Flood Control is responsible for the maintenance of existing stormwater drainage facilities, construction of new district facilities, flood warning, hydrologic data collection and assuring private development projects meet flood control objectives and compliance with Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) guidelines. Flood Control has completed its review and has the following comments regarding the Project.

1. Coordinate closely with DPW's Flood Control division for any proposed work within the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) - mapped floodway/floodplain of the Coleman Creek – FEMA, Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) Panels 06073C1159G and 06073C1178G – Zone AE (see Exhibit C). Any work within the mapped floodway requires a “no-rise” certification and analysis.
2. Additionally, any work within the floodplain requires a hydraulic analysis to determine impacts to the floodplain and adjacent properties / public roads and may require a Conditional Letter of Map Revision / Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR/LOMR) prior to any work or permit issuance, in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and County Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance (FDPO).
3. The County maintains a flood control channel near the intersection of SR-78 and Casner Road (see Exhibit B). The channel is regulated by the resource agencies as a jurisdictional feature and is permitted under the County's Regional General Permit 53 (RGP-53). Under the permit, the site is designated as Facility #39-169. Any impacts to this channel must be avoided, including the proposed Project improvements, construction staging, vehicle parking, or construction access routes.

DPW's Watershed Protection Program helps to ensure that our waterways are protected by preventing pollutants from entering the County's storm drain system in compliance with our Municipal Stormwater permit. Watershed has completed its review and has the following comments regarding the Project.

1. The Project must comply with the San Diego Municipal Storm Water Permit Order No. R9-2013-0001, (as amended by Order Nos. R9-2015-0001 and R9-2015-0100). The Project should consider implementing permanent Site Design, Source Control, Pollutant Control, and Hydromodification Management, in accordance with the County's Best Management Practices (BMP) Design Manual.
2. Provide and include in Project design applicable BMP (e.g., construction avoidance and minimization measures) and associated plans, for conformance with the County's Grading Ordinance, Watershed Protection Ordinance, and State of California's Construction General Permit.

The County appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Project. We look forward to receiving future documents related to the Project and providing additional assistance, at your request. For further coordination regarding the DEHQ HMD comments please contact Rita Raphael, Office Support Specialist, at [rita.raaphael@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:rita.raaphael@sdcounty.ca.gov), or 619-756-5388. For further coordination regarding the DPW comments above, please contact Masha Landau, Land Use/Environmental Planner III, at [masha.landau@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:masha.landau@sdcounty.ca.gov), or 619-

385-7591. If you have any general questions regarding these comments, please contact Timothy Vertino, Land Use / Environmental Planning Manager, at (858) 505-6677, or via e-mail at [timothy.vertino@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:timothy.vertino@sdcounty.ca.gov).

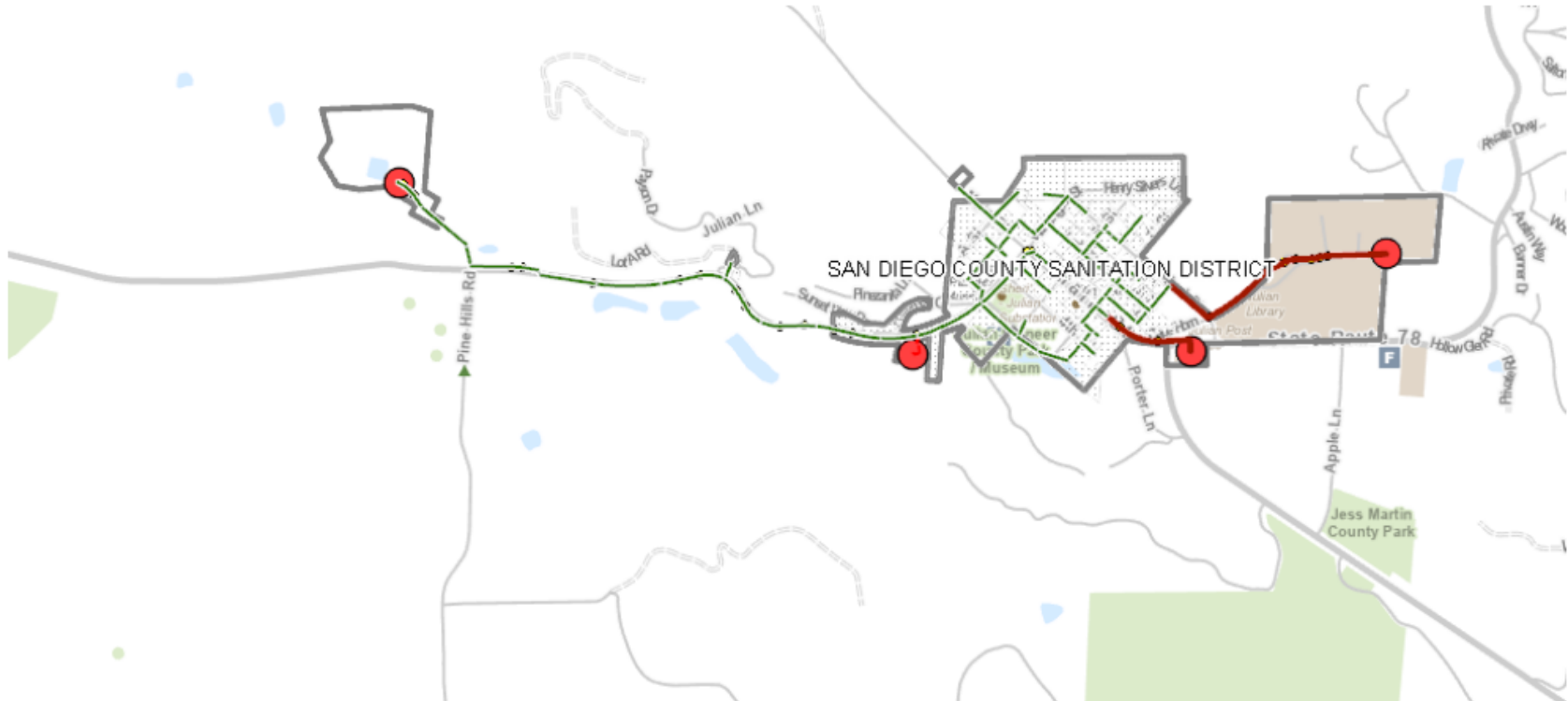
Sincerely,

Jennifer Kazmer, Chief  
Long Range Planning Division  
Planning & Development Services

Enclosures: Exhibit A – County Sanitation District's Sewer Facilities Locations  
Exhibit B – County RFP-53 Flood Control Facility  
Exhibit C – County Flood Control FEMA Floodplain/Floodway Zone AE  
Cc: Gregory Kazmer, Land Use Director, Board of Supervisors, District 2

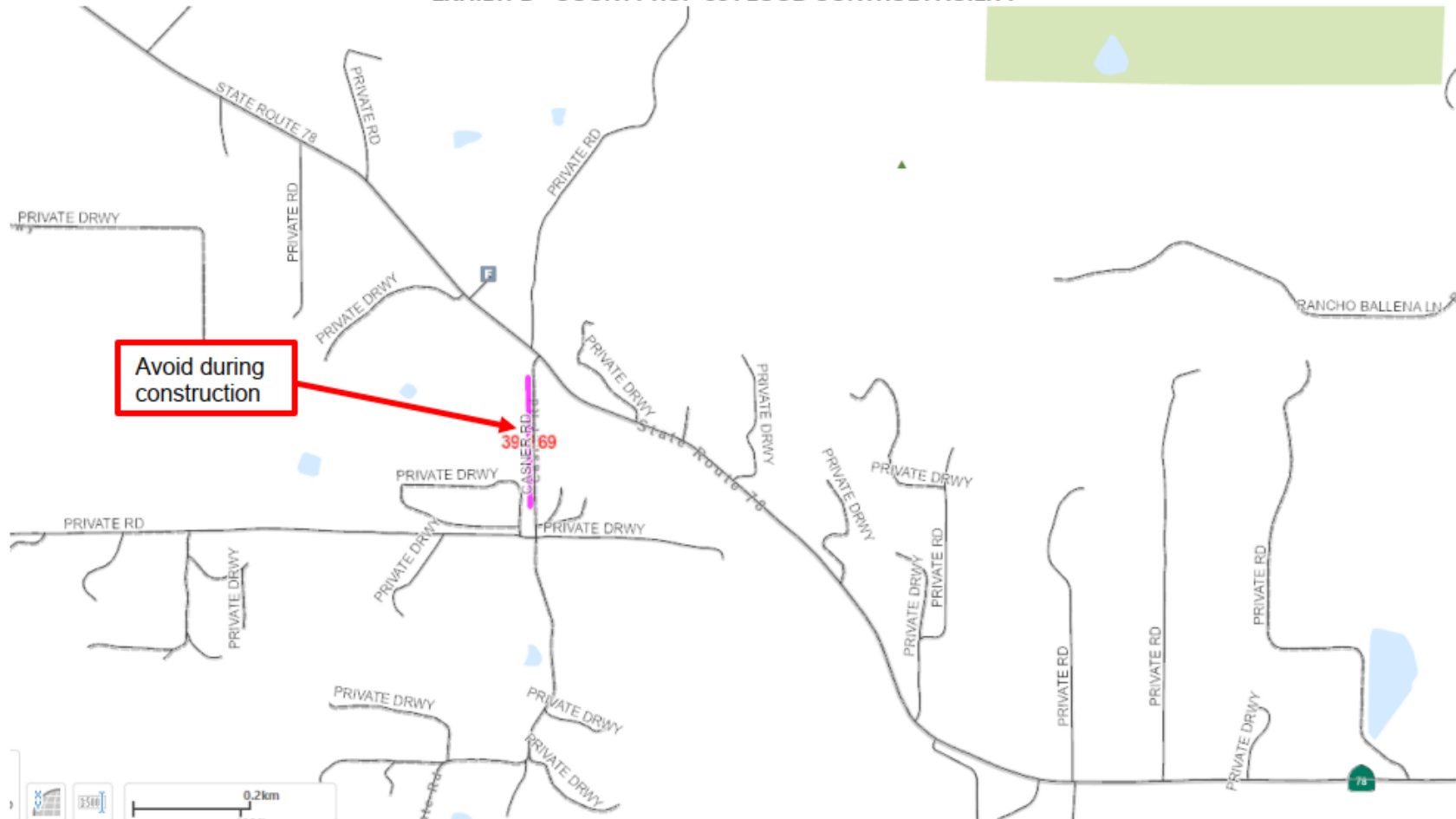
Hunter McDonald, Policy Advisor, Board of Supervisors, District 5  
Jacob Boerboom, CAO Staff Officer, LUEG  
Timothy Vertino, Land Use/Environmental Planning Manager, PDS  
Rita Raphael, Office Support Specialist, DEHQ  
Masha Landau, Land Use/Environmental Planner, DPW

**EXHIBIT A – COUNTY SANITATION DISTRICT'S  
SEWER FACILITIES LOCATIONS**



SANDIEGOCOUNTY.GOV

**EXHIBIT B – COUNTY RGP-53 FLOOD CONTROL FACILITY**



SANDIEGOCOUNTY.GOV

**EXHIBIT C – COUNTY FLOOD CONTROL  
FEMA FLOODPLAIN/FLOODWANY ZONE AE**



SANDIEGOCOUNTY.GOV

## **Responses to Comment #6**

### **Responses to Department of Environmental Health and Quality Comments**

**Response #1:** Any hazardous waste generated during project construction activities would be classified, labeled, and handled in accordance with all applicable hazardous materials regulations, as established in Caltrans Standard Specifications and Standard Special Provisions.

**Response #2:** Caltrans will comply with all applicable hazardous materials regulations during project construction and operation. These will be identified through Caltrans Standard Special Provisions and identified in the Environmental Commitments Record.

**Response #3:** Comment noted.

**Response #4:** Caltrans will reach out to the County Department of Environmental Health and Quality for any further coordination needs.

### **Responses to Department of Public Works (Wastewater) Comments**

**Response #1:** As acknowledged in Section 2.1.19 of the Initial Study, avoidance of existing utilities is a key parameter in ongoing project design. Prior to final design, Caltrans will coordinate with the County to ensure existing sewer facilities are mapped and avoided as part of design or restored to meet County specifications following construction.

**Response #2:** See Response #1 above.

### **Responses to Department of Public Works (Field Engineering) Comments**

**Response #1:** The project proposes to overlay existing pavement with no more than 2.4 inches of gap graded hot mix asphalt within the existing pavement footprint and restore existing shoulder backing in limited and isolated locations. The overlay process would not alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, nor would it increase the rate or amount of surface runoff. Therefore, the proposed project would not have the potential to impact County-owned stormwater facilities, nor would it divert flood flow.

**Response #2:** This comment is correct in that most of the pavement within the project limits would be rehabilitated by overlaying approximately 2.4 inches of new asphalt over existing pavement without pavement grinding. However, the proposed pavement rehabilitation would not change the existing roadway geometry. Existing pavement would be replaced in-kind. The overlay process would not alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, nor would it impede, redirect, or increase the rate or amount of surface runoff.



Therefore, the proposed project would not result in a potential stormwater runoff diversion and would have no impact as defined in Section 2.1.10 (c)(ii-iv).

**Response #3:** Most culverts are proposed for in-kind replacement. Culvert locations and sizing are identified in Table 1-1. Culvert repairs are not proposed. Replacement of culverts in-kind means that culverts are being replaced in the same alignment as the existing culvert. Culvert replacement would not alter the existing drainage patterns of the site or area, increase the rate or amount of surface runoff, or impede or redirect flood flows.

During construction, a SWPPP would be in place with BMPs to manage stormwater runoff.

For these reasons, the proposed project would have no impact as defined in Section 2.1.10 (c)(ii-iv).

**Response #4:** Caltrans will continue to coordinate with County Department of Public Works staff throughout final design to avoid or address any conflicts with County-maintained roadways along the SR-78 corridor. A TMP will be coordinated with the County to ensure there are no conflicts between Caltrans and County construction and/or maintenance schedules.

**Response #5:** As described in Section 1.4.1, curb ramps would be upgraded on State Route 78 at intersections with Washington Street, Coleman Circle, B Street, and C Street. The number of curb ramp upgrades has been reduced from 15 to 11 based on design input.

### **Responses to Department of Public Works (Transportation Division) Comments**

**Response #1:** A Traffic Management Plan will be prepared for the proposed project and provided to the County for review in advance of construction.

**Response #2:** Complete Street improvements under the proposed project are limited to decorative crosswalks within Downtown Julian (see Section 1.4.1). Most of these improvements would occur within Caltrans right-of-way; however, there would be connectivity with adjacent County roads and facilities. Caltrans will provide design plans and coordinate with the County to ensure there is no conflict with any applicable design standards for these adjacent facilities.

**Response #3:** No acquisition will be required for the proposed project. Temporary construction easements will be required in specific locations to complete culvert replacements.

**Response #4:** See Responses #1 and #2 to Department of Public Works (Transportation Division) comments.

**Response #5:** Shoulder rehabilitation is included in the proposed project. Locations where the roadway shoulder is in poor condition have been identified for in-kind replacement. Shoulder rehabilitation would occur within Caltrans right-of-way. No widening is proposed.

**Response #6:** As discussed in Section 2.1.17, there are no bicycle facilities in the project area. Sidewalks are limited to Downtown Julian. The project limits mostly contain rural highway with no sidewalks.

**Response #7:** The proposed project does not include any bikeway improvements.

**Response #8:** Caltrans will continue to maintain existing and improved facilities within its right-of-way, including those under the proposed project.

**Response #9:** The proposed project would not result in loss of any on-street parking.

**Response #10:** As described in Section 1.4.1, curb ramps would be upgraded on State Route 78 at intersections with Washington Street, Coleman Circle, B Street, and C Street. Caltrans will provide the County with design plans showing the proposed curb ramp upgrades.

**Response #11:** See Section 2.1.1 for detailed description on the decorative crosswalk measures to be incorporated into the project. As above, design plans will be provided to the County for review prior to final design. Coordination with the Julian Community Planning Group has been ongoing for the project.

### **Responses to Department of Public Works (Flood Control) Comments**

**Response #1:** Proposed improvements within the mapped floodway of Coleman Creek (Flood Insurance Rate Map Panels 06073C1159G and 06073C1178G) are limited to pavement rehabilitation at three locations within the existing developed highway facility (at approximately post miles 54.6, 57.0, and 57.65). According to FEMA Map Center Dynamic Mapping, the upstream and downstream water surface elevations at these locations are lower than the roadway elevation of SR-78. Thus, the roadway surface is not within the floodway, and there would be no impact. Furthermore, the definition of a FEMA defined Regulatory Floodway is (in part) "the channel of a river or other watercourse and the adjacent land areas that must be reserved in order to discharge the base flood without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevation more than a designated height." As SR-78 is an active highway, it cannot be reserved in order to discharge the base flood.

**Response #2:** Highway projects are compliant with Code of Federal Regulations Title 23 Part 650 subpart A - Locations and Hydraulic Design of Encroachment on Floodplains. No impacts to the floodplain and adjacent

properties are anticipated because the project would replace existing facilities in-kind. As described in Section 2.1.10, a portion of one culvert would be replaced in the mapped floodplain at post mile 48.00. Once replaced, there would be no changes besides material type; thus, there would be no impacts on the floodplain. The hydraulic analysis documenting these findings will be provided to the County.

**Response #3:** The proposed project does not include work that could impact the flood control channel indicated in Exhibit B.

### **Responses to Department of Public Works (Watershed Protection Program) Comments**

**Response #1:** Caltrans is not a permittee under the San Diego Municipal Storm Water Permit Order No. R9-2013-0001. Caltrans is required to comply with a separate MS4 Permit, Order No. 2012-0011-DWQ to manage stormwater and non-stormwater discharges on all facilities. To comply with the permit, Caltrans developed the Statewide Storm Water Management Plan, which addresses stormwater pollution controls related to highway planning, design, construction, and maintenance activities throughout California. The proposed project would be programmed to follow the guidelines and procedures outlined in the latest Statewide Storm Water Management Plan to address stormwater runoff.

**Response #2:** The proposed project would implement BMPs to manage stormwater runoff in compliance with its MS4 permit and the NPDES Construction General Permit.

### **Comment #7: Patrick Brown, Chairman, Julian Community Planning Group**

Dear Mr. Voss,

The Julian Community Planning Group (JCPG) is an organization consisting of elected officials tasked with advising and assisting the County of San Diego and other governmental entities (such as Caltrans) on matters of planning and land use affecting our small, rural historic community.

We have had several informational meetings with Caltrans staff regarding the improvements proposed within our town center, specifically alteration of the intersection of Washington and Main streets and State Routes 78/79 east to beyond our established Historic District. We have also reviewed the project Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration.

The Julian Community Group met this last Monday (November 18, 2024) and voted unanimously to oppose any and all of the proposed “improvements” within our community and urge Caltrans to abandon this portion of the project.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments for the record.

Sincerely,

Patrick Brown, Chairman JCPG

JCPG: Patrick Brown, Chair, William Everett, Vice-Chair, Kiki Skagen Munshi, Secretary, Eric Jones, Rebecca Morales, Katherine Moretti, Kenny Mushet, Rudy Rikansrud, Harry Seifert, Romulus Smith, members.

**Response to Comment #7:**

Caltrans thanks Patrick Brown and the Julian Community Planning Group for their input on the project, and for taking the time to comment on the IS/MND. As referenced in the letter, Caltrans has held several meetings with the Julian Community Planning Group throughout 2024 to gain feedback on the project design. The community has expressed opposition to the curb extensions at the Washington Street and Main Street intersection based on concerns about disruption of traffic flow and effects on the traditional appearance and character of the Julian Historic District. The curb extensions would preserve the existing building columns and historic character of the Julian Market and Deli building at the northwestern corner of the intersection while providing curb ramps that meet state and federal ADA requirements. Additionally, the curb extensions would increase the visibility of pedestrians with fewer pavement markings and signs; shorten pedestrian crossings; improve the overall intersection operations; and provide extra pedestrian space to accommodate crowds. However, in consideration of community concerns, Caltrans has modified the project design. The proposed project would leave the northwestern corner curb ramp and sidewalk as-is and an exemption to ADA compliance has been approved at this location. Standard curb ramp designs (i.e., no curb extensions) are now proposed for the other three corners of the intersection. Caltrans will present the modified design to the Julian Community Planning Group during the next phase of the project.

**Comment #8: Heather A. Pert, Environmental Program Manager,  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife, South Coast Region**

Dear Cristina Graciano:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) reviewed the Mitigation Negative Declaration (MND) from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for the State Route 78 Asset Management Project (Project) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations regarding those activities involved in the Project that may affect California fish and wildlife. Likewise, CDFW appreciates the opportunity to provide

comments regarding those aspects of the Project that CDFW, by law, may be required to carry out or approve through the exercise of its own regulatory authority under the Fish and Game Code.

## CDFW ROLE

CDFW is California's Trustee Agency for fish and wildlife resources and holds those resources in trust by statute for all the people of the State (Fish & G. Code, §§ 711.7, subd. (a) & 1802; Pub. Resources Code, § 21070; CEQA Guidelines § 15386, subd. (a)). CDFW, in its trustee capacity, has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species (Fish & G. Code, § 1802). Similarly, for purposes of CEQA, CDFW is charged by law to provide, as available, biological expertise during public agency environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on Projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

CDFW may also act as a Responsible Agency under CEQA. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21069; CEQA Guidelines, § 15381). CDFW expects that it may need to exercise regulatory authority as provided by the Fish and Game Code. As proposed, for example, the Project may be subject to CDFW's lake and streambed alteration regulatory authority (Fish & G. Code, § 1600 et seq.). Likewise, to the extent implementation of the Project as proposed may result in "take" as defined by State law of any species protected under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish & G. Code, § 2050 et seq.) or the Native Plant Protection Act (NPPA; Fish & G. Code, §1900 et seq.), the Project proponent may seek related take authorization as provided by the Fish and Game Code.

CDFW also administers the Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) program, a California regional habitat conservation planning program (Fish and Game Code 2800 et seq.). San Diego County (County) participates in the NCCP program by implementing the Fully Signed Third Restated and Amended Planning Agreement (Planning Agreement; March 2021) for the draft North and East County Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Plans. The Project area is located within the County's draft North and East County Plan areas. Therefore, the Project is subject to ensuring the provisions and policies of the draft North and East County Plans will not be negatively impacted regardless of whether Caltrans is a signatory to these plans. In addition, the MND should also address any biological issues that are not addressed in the Planning Agreement, such as specific impacts to and mitigation requirements for sensitive species that are not covered by the Planning Agreement.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Proponent: Caltrans

Objective: The objective of the Project is to rehabilitate and enhance various transportation components within 22.8 miles of State Route 78. This Project proposes to improve 45.6 lane miles of deteriorated pavement, rehabilitate 20 culverts, enhance mobility for pedestrians by upgrading sidewalks and crosswalks, and update safety elements with signs and guardrails.

Location: The Project in San Diego County, California, on State Route (SR) 78 between postmiles 37.2 and 60.0 (33.051135, -116.843307 to 33.092658, -116.595797). The Project includes unincorporated areas including the communities of Ramona and Julian. A portion of the Project occurs within the County's draft North County Plan (33.0498856, -116.8381892 to 33.076520, -116.594120) and another portion of the Project occurs within the draft East County Plan (33.076520, -116.594120 to 33.0879140, -116.5920048).

Timeframe: Construction is proposed to begin in winter 2025 and end in 2029.

Biological Setting: SR-78 is a rural two-lane highway serving eastern San Diego County. The project begins in Ramona and extends east past Santa Ysabel and WYNOLA, ending in Julian. The Project area lies within two physiographic provinces: foothills and mountains. There is scattered development present throughout the Project area including areas more developed adjacent to Ramona, Downtown Julian, and various residential neighborhood and private properties. There exist private livestock pastures along some of the Project area.

Vegetation immediately adjacent to the SR-78 roadway is primarily composed of non-native grasses or disturbed habitat. Various sensitive vegetation communities are within the Project area including coastal sage scrub, chaparral, coast live oak woodland, and riparian forests. Suitable habitat in creeks and upland habitat for sensitive species is present within the Project area. There are seven major creeks (Hatfield Creek, Witch Creek, San Diego River, Bailey Creek, Jim Green Creek, Coleman Creek, and Banner Creek) and various unnamed tributaries that occur within or adjacent to the Caltrans right of way. The primary watersheds are San Diego and San Felipe Creek. Two tributaries to the Santa Ysabel Creek also cross under SR-78 at two locations.

The Project area overlaps with portions of the County's draft North and East County Plans and borders the Santa Ysabel West County Preserve and Santa Ysabel East County Preserve.

The Project proposes temporary impacts to 0.33 acres of the following native habitats: coast live oak woodland, coastal sage scrub, buckwheat scrub, chaparral, coastal sage scrub, scrub oak chaparral, scrub oak mixed

chaparral. The Project proposes permanent impacts to 0.006 acres of coastal sage scrub habitat.

There are several sensitive species that have the potential to occur in the Project area including, but not limited to, arroyo toad (*Anaxyrus californicus*; Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed as endangered and Species of Special Concern (SSC)), western spadefoot (*Spea hammondi*; SSC and a proposed ESA-listed as threatened), southwestern pond turtle (*Actineys pallida*; proposed ESA-listed as and SSC), southern California legless lizard (*Anniella stebbinsi*; SSC), coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*; SSC), Crotch's bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii*; candidate for CESA-listing as endangered), western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*; SSC); western yellow bat (*Lasiurus xanthinus*; SSC); pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*; SSC), badger (*Taxidea taxus*; SSC), southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*; ESA-listed and CESA-listed as endangered), California gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica californica*; ESA-listed as threatened and SSC), least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*; ESA-listed and CESA-listed as endangered), velvety false lupine (*Thermopsis californica*; California Native Plant Society (CNPS) rank of 1B.2), San Diego gumplant (*Grindelia hallii*; CNPS rank 1B.2), bottle liverwort (*Sphaerocarpos drewiae*; CNPS rank 1B.1), and San Diego thornmint (*Acanthomintha ilicifolia*; ESA-listed as threatened and CESA-listed as endangered).

The Project proposes compensatory mitigation for 0.0006 acre of permanent impacts to coastal sage scrub habitat at Permittee responsible mitigation banks (Rancho San Diego, Rutherford Ranch, or Go Cart). Compensatory mitigation is also anticipated for approximately 0.001 acre of impacts to streams resulting from culvert replacement work at permittee responsible mitigation banks. Impacts to large oak trees will also be mitigated using existing permittee responsible mitigation banks. Temporary impacts to 0.40 acre of native vegetation is proposed to be hydroseeded with a seed mix for existing plant community and restored with native species of similar composition to the adjacent habitat.

## COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CDFW offers the comments and recommendations below to assist Caltrans in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the Project's significant, or potentially significant, direct and indirect impacts on fish and wildlife (biological) resources and maintaining consistency with the County's draft North and East County Plans. Additional comments or other suggestions may also be included to improve the document.

### COMMENT #1: Insufficient Biological Information for Impact Assessment

The MND must provide sufficient information for meaningful review. Thorough surveys of biological conditions in and around the Project site, including

pecially designated species and habitats, is required by CEQA in the Initial Study to provide the necessary information to foster meaningful review (CEQA Guidelines §§ 15063, subds. (a)(3), (b)(2), (c)(5), & (d)(3).)

Per the MND, the Project area consists of 671.87 acres, yet the number of survey days was insufficient to adequately survey the whole Project site. The general surveys were conducted within four days (August 22, 2023, October 10, 2023, November 6, 2023, and December 28, 2023), the vegetation surveys were conducted within two days (February 22, 2024 and March 1, 2024), and the amphibian surveys were conducted within two days (March 25, 2024 and April 23, 2024). This equates to 168 acres surveyed per day for general surveys and 336 acres per day surveyed for vegetation and amphibian surveys. It is unlikely that an accurate and complete description of the existing biological conditions in and around the Project site can be determined based on the limited amount of survey effort conducted. CDFW is concerned that conclusions based on insufficient survey data may be inaccurate.

In addition, there were no protocol level surveys or specific bird surveys conducted to determine if special-status birds could possibly occur within the Project area. Therefore, four days of general surveys were used to make determinations on presence/absence of the CESA-listed and ESA-listed bird species, such as southwestern willow flycatcher, coastal California gnatcatcher, and least Bell's vireo. CDFW considers four days to be insufficient for conducting adequate surveys on 671.87 acres. Furthermore, three of the four survey days were not within the appropriate time of year to be surveying for those species.

For the purposes of CEQA, the survey effort is unlikely to form a complete inventory of the species present in the Project area. Therefore, CDFW is concerned that Caltrans has not provided factually supported, sufficient information within the MND for meaningful review as to the level of impacts to fish and wildlife resources.

#### Recommended Potentially Feasible Mitigation Measure(s)

Given the lack of evidence regarding the potential biological resources that may occur within the Project site, the CDFW recommends that Caltrans conduct additional surveys to provide a current and factually-supported assessment of Project impacts to biological resources.

Recommendation #1: Additional details about surveys conducted. Caltrans should explain how they confirmed the absence of the species that have suitable habitat in the Project area and which have been historically observed in the Project area. Caltrans should include details necessary for CDFW to understand the extent of the information collected, including survey methods used and the time of day each survey was conducted. CDFW recommends



that the MND should be recirculated with this additional information to facilitate meaningful review of potential impacts to fish and wildlife resources.

Recommendation #2: Protocol-level or similar surveys. Prior to Project activities and during the appropriate time of the year, Caltrans should conduct protocol-level or similar surveys to determine presence/absence of the following species: least Bell's vireo, coastal California gnatcatcher, southwestern willow flycatcher, and Crotch's bumble bee. Depending on survey results, Caltrans should then reanalyze the Project impacts and proposed avoidance measures prior to recirculation.

Recommendation #3: Bat surveys. To determine if daytime, nighttime, wintering (hibernacula), and maternity roost sites are present, a qualified biologist should conduct focus surveys during the appropriate time of year. Surveys should be conducted during favorable weather conditions at each season to understand the extent of bat usage. Each survey should consist of one dusk emergence survey (start one hour before sunset and last for three hours) and one daytime visual inspection of all potential roosting habitat on the Project site. Visual inspections should focus on the identification of bat sign (i.e., individuals, guano, urine staining, corpses, feeding remains, scratch marks and bats squeaking and chattering). Bat detectors, bat call analysis, and visual observation should be used during all dusk emergence surveys.

Recommendation #4: Reassess project impacts prior to MND adoption. CDFW recommends that Caltrans reassess project impacts based on additional protocol level, appropriate surveys to determine appropriate avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures. Prior to the adoption of the MND, CDFW recommends Caltrans collaborate with CDFW for review of mitigation measures.

#### COMMENT #2: Consistency with NCCPs

Issue: The Project has not demonstrated coordination with the County's draft North and East County Plan.

Specific Impact: The MND does not address direct and indirect impacts to the County's draft North and East County Plan core resource areas and linkages and does not discuss the interim review process for the draft East County Plan.

Why impact would occur: While the CDFW acknowledges that Caltrans will not be signatory to the draft North and East County Plans, the Project area is located within the current boundaries of the draft North and East County Plans, and activities occurring off-site of the Caltrans' right of way is subject to NCCP obligations. Therefore, the Project is subject to ensuring the planning efforts and objectives of the draft North and East County Plans will not be negatively impacted regardless of whether Caltrans is a signatory to these

plans. The MND states that the Project will not conflict with the provisions of an adopted HCP or NCCP, which includes draft NCCPs with an approved Planning Agreement (page 16). However, the MND does not demonstrate how it has evaluated project impacts on the NCCP nor does it indicate that Caltrans has consulted with the County. Furthermore, it does not provide details supporting this conclusion. Therefore, section 15125(d) of the CEQA Guidelines, which require that CEQA documents discuss any inconsistencies between a proposed Project and applicable habitat conservation plans and natural community conservation plans, was not effectively fulfilled.

The Project area is located within anticipated Priority Conservation Areas (PCA) in the North County Planning Area and Focused Conservation Areas (FCA) in the East County Planning Area. These FCAs and PCAs support a high concentration of sensitive biological resources which, if lost or fragmented, could not be replaced or mitigated elsewhere (Planning Agreement, Section 6.2.5). In addition, the Project area lies within several anticipated key linkages of the County's draft North and East County Plans. Linkages not only provide connectivity between the FCAs and PCAs but also provide breeding and foraging habitat for resident species (County of San Diego, USFWS, California Department of Fish and Game, 1997). These areas are considered "very high" habitat value within the draft Plan areas and considered high priority areas to conserve. Project activities that occur in these areas should be compliant with the draft North and East County Plans; however, Caltrans has not demonstrated compliance. Without a discussion of how the Project affects these anticipated FCAs, PCAs and linkages, CDFW is concerned that Project activities may conflict with the draft North and East County Plans.

All surveys required by the Planning Agreement should be conducted and survey results analyzed in the MND. However, the surveys on which the MND relied were inadequate and no analysis was conducted on the impact to the proposed policies and procedures of the MSCP.

Evidence impact may be significant: Compliance with habitat plans, such as the draft North and East County plans, is discussed in CEQA. Specifically, section 15125(d) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that the CEQA document discuss any inconsistencies between a proposed Project and applicable general plans and regional plans, including habitat conservation plans and natural community conservation plans. An assessment of the impacts is necessary to address CEQA requirements and ensure compliance with CDFW's NCCP Approval and Take Authorization. Lands with biological resources important to the Plan may be impacted by exempting lands from the discretionary permit approval process.

Recommended Potentially Feasible Mitigation Measure(s)

Recommendation #5: Assessment of consistency with NCCPs. Caltrans should consult with the County on the Project's consistency with the draft North and East County Plans and complete the interim review process for draft North and East County Plans.

Recommendation #6: Recirculate with additional NCCP information. Caltrans should include additional analysis about Project's impacts to the resource areas of the County's the draft North and East County Plan. Caltrans should then recirculate the MND describing the impacts to the Project and any inconsistencies with the NCCPs.

### COMMENT #3: Impacts to Crotch's bumble bee

Issue: The Project could impact suitable habitat for Crotch's bumble bee (a CESA candidate species), and ground disturbing activity may result in take of these species.

Specific impact: Project activities resulting in ground disturbance or vegetation disturbance could result in loss of foraging resources, burrow collapse, reduced nest success, and/or direct take. There is no mention of Crotch's bumble bee in the MND or NES.

Why impact would occur: The California Natural Diversity Database shows historic sightings of Crotch's bumble bee within the Project area. In addition, chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and grasslands are suitable habitat for Crotch's bumble bee, and the Project will have temporary impacts on these habitats (MND, page 40). However, neither the NES nor MND mention any survey or analysis of Crotch's bumble bee.

Crotch's bumble bee may be present if the following nesting areas are present: abandoned small mammal burrows, perennial bunch grasses or thatched annual grasses, brush piles, old bird nests, and dead trees or hollow logs (Williams et al. 2014; Hatfield et al. 2012). Crotch's bumble bee may also be present if overwintering sites such soft, disturbed soil (Goulson 2010) and/or leaf litter or other debris (Williams et al. 2014) are present. Therefore, specific surveys should have been conducted to determine if Crotch's bumble bee are present within the Project site. Surveys should occur between April and August and should be spaced two to four weeks apart. However, only one of Caltrans four general surveys were within that time frame. Therefore, adequate surveys were not conducted.

Project-related activities involving ground and vegetation disturbance could result in potential significant impacts, including loss of foraging resources, changes in foraging behavior, burrow collapse, nest abandonment, reduced nest success, reduced health and vigor of eggs, young, and/or queens, and direct mortality. Ground disturbance and vegetation removal associated with Project implementation during the breeding season could result in the

incidental loss of breeding success or otherwise lead to nest abandonment in areas adjacent to the Project site. Habitat loss resulting from Project activities will contribute to a cumulative decrease of foraging habitat for this species, as urban development continues to eliminate tracts of native vegetation. Therefore, the MND should include appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for Crotch's bumble bee and their habitat.

Evidence impact may be significant: Crotch's bumble bee is CESA candidate species, and take of any endangered, threatened, or candidate species that results from the Project is prohibited, except as authorized by State law (Fish & G. Code, §§ 86, 2062, 2067, 2068, 2080, 2085; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 786.9). CDFW considers impacts to species that are candidates for CESA listing to be significant under CEQA. Accordingly, the Project may 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 CDFW or USFWS. The Project may substantially reduce and adversely modify habitat as well as reduce and potentially impair the viability of populations of Crotch's bumble bee. The Project may also reduce the number and range of the species without considering the likelihood that special status species on adjacent and nearby natural lands may rely upon the habitat that occurs on the Project site.

#### Recommended Potentially Feasible Mitigation Measure(s)

Recommendation #7: Disclosure of potential impacts to Crotch's bumble bee. The MND should include an analysis the Project's impact on floral resources, nesting habitat, and overwintering habitat for Crotch's bumble bee. The MND should also provide full disclosure of the presence of Crotch's bumble bee within the Project site, and the MND should be recirculated.

Recommendation #8: Incidental take permit for Crotch's bumble bee. CDFW recommends that Caltrans consider applying for an incidental take permit if the find that the Project will result in take of Crotch's bumble bee.

Mitigation Measure #1: Crotch's bumble bee habitat and resource assessment. Prior to Project implementation, a qualified biologist shall conduct a habitat assessment to determine if the Project area or its immediate vicinity contains habitat suitable to support Crotch's bumble bee. The habitat assessment shall observe and document plant diversity and potential habitat including potential foraging, nesting, and/or overwintering resources. The habitat assessment shall quantify which plant species are in bloom and determine the percent cover of that species. Foraging resources should be quantified across multiple site visits, corresponding with the colony active season (April - August). Recorded foraging resources should not be limited to the preferred plant species known to be favored by Crotch's bumble bee but should include all flowering plants, including non-natives and invasives. Nesting resources can include bare ground, rodent burrows, and

other potential nesting sites that may support bumble bee colonies should be quantified. Leaf litter and woody forest edge that could provide overwintering habitat should also be described. The assessment shall include data regarding historical and current species occurrences as well as the Project's proximity to the last known sighting. The results of the assessment shall be provided to CDFW prior to initiating Project activities.

Mitigation Measure #2: Crotch's bumble bee surveys. A qualified entomologist familiar with the species' behavior and life history shall conduct surveys within one year prior to vegetation removal and/or ground disturbance to determine the presence/absence of Crotch's bumble bee. Caltrans shall consult Survey Considerations for California Endangered Species Act (CESA) Candidate Bumble Bee Species when making their survey plan and shall send the plan to CDFW for approval before conducting Crotch's bumble bee surveys. If Crotch's bumble bee is detected, the qualified biologist shall notify CDFW immediately as further coordination will be required to avoid significant impacts. Caltrans shall conduct surveys each year that Project activities will occur.

#### COMMENT #4: Wildlife Connectivity

Issue: Connectivity is not adequately addressed within the MND.

Specific impact: The MND does not describe the culvert restoration of the Project in enough detail to determine if the Project will have impacts on connectivity. It is unclear whether the Project degrades, maintains, or improves connectivity within the Project area. Additionally, Project activities may affect connectivity through key linkages anticipated for the draft North and East County Plans.

Why impact would occur: It is unclear how impacts to wildlife connectivity were analyzed and taken into consideration for the Project. The MND acknowledges that SR-78 fragments the study area and that animals are assisted by streams, riparian areas, and bridges to cross the road. However, no further evaluation or analysis is provided and no determination on whether the Project will impact connectivity is provided. Therefore, Caltrans should analyze Project impacts to connectivity and include an analysis within the MND.

The MND does not contain sufficient detail about the existing culverts or proposed maintenance. Therefore, CDFW cannot adequately assess whether construction on these culverts would maintain connectivity, reduce connectivity, or improve connectivity.

Roadways and associated culverts may increase population fragmentation, reduce survival by impeding movement to refugia habitat (i.e., disperse to adjacent habitat, locate food sources) or reproductive habitat (i.e., breeding

habitat), and impede recolonization of potential habitat (Haddad, et al., 2015). In addition, the ecological footprint of roads extends beyond its physical footprint due to road mortality, habitat fragmentation, and indirect impacts (Spencer, et al., 2010). Cumulatively, limiting movement and passage of species can lead to the reduction of genetic fitness in populations making them more vulnerable to changing or extreme conditions, the inability for populations to recolonize habitat after disturbance events (e.g. fires, floods, droughts), the loss of resident wildlife populations by altered community structure (e.g. species composition, distribution), and/or partial or complete loss of populations of migrant species due to blocked access to critical habitats (Nicholson, et al., 2006; Haddad, et al., 2015; CDFW, 2009). Studies indicate that due to climate change, connectivity to thermal refugia is increasingly becoming more important for conserving populations as well as genetic diversity (Chen, Hill, Roy, & Thomas, 2011; Morelli, et al., 2017). Habitat connectivity is essential for the survival of many species and providing adequate habitat connectivity is necessary to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions, which put people and wildlife at risk of injury and death (Fish & G. Code, § 1955, subds. (d & e).) Therefore, reducing culvert size, increasing culvert length; or preserving current culvert size, location, and invert without wildlife movement analyses may maintain existing barriers where an opportunity is present to design structures that allow for improved movement conditions. In conclusion, further analysis is needed within the MND for CDFW to determine if the Project will impact the connectivity for native wildlife at the Project site.

Evidence impact would be significant: Changes to culverts that impact wildlife access are reasonable potential direct changes in the environment that will likely impact wildlife connectivity. Habitat conversion and fragmentation forces many California species to migrate in search of replacement habitat, and it also risks continued survival of species by compromising genetic diversity, among other things. (Fish & G. Code, § 1955, subd. (b).) California wildlife is losing the ability to move as habitat conversion and built infrastructure disrupt species habitat and cut off migration corridors (Fish & G. Code, § 1955, subd. (c).) Habitat connectivity and wildlife migratory corridors are essential to the continued survival of many California species. (Fish & G. Code, § 1955, subd. (d).) CDFW, in its trustee capacity, has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species (Fish & G. Code, § 711.7.)

#### Recommended Potentially Feasible Mitigation Measure(s)

Recommendation #9: Provide additional culvert details. The MND should clarify the work to occur at each culvert location. Caltrans should include the specifications of the culverts planned for replacement and clarify the sizes of each of the culverts in the Project in order to better assess their uses in wildlife connectivity.

Mitigation Measure #3: Culvert design. Culverts shall be designed large enough that the culvert can support a natural substrate bottom and include a line-of-sight throughout the culvert. Caltrans shall coordinate with CDFW on designs for wildlife connectivity. In addition, Caltrans shall determine if low-level illumination and/or a wildlife shelf should be installed within the culvert in coordination with CDFW. Caltrans shall install wildlife fencing based on guidance from Measures to Reduce Road Impacts on Amphibians and Reptiles in California: Best Management Practices and Technical Guidance. Caltrans shall also incorporate the following recommendations for culverts analyzed in the 2020 UC Davis connectivity study of Interstate 15 and closely associated roadways:

- Caltrans shall install fencing to prevent wildlife entry to the roadway and install wildlife crossing signs at the culvert at PM 41.55.
- Caltrans shall increase the diameter of the culvert at PM 41.13, improve access to the culvert on the westbound side, install directional fencing to funnel wildlife to this widened culvert and around northside structures.
- Caltrans shall increase the diameter of the culvert at PM 41.03, install directional fencing to funnel wildlife into eastbound entrance and to direct wildlife east and west along creek bed which lies on westbound side.
- Caltrans shall install a rumble strip, fencing to prevent wildlife entry to the roadway, and wildlife crossing signs at the culvert at PM 46.33.
- Caltrans shall add connectivity approximately 200 meters west of P120 (PM 46.249) or modify the existing culvert located 200 meters west for connectivity in coordination with CDFW.

Mitigation Measure #4: Traffic calming measures. Caltrans shall install reduced speed limits and wildlife crossing signs to slow cars near known wildlife crossing areas.

COMMENT #5: Additional protection measures for special-status species

Issue: Sufficient avoidance and minimization measures to protect existing and potential fish and wildlife resources were not present within the MND.

Specific impact: Without sufficient avoidance and minimization measures, fish and wildlife resources may be impacted.

Why impact would occur: The NES and MND mentioned several special-status species that have habitat present yet were not likely to be impacted by Project activities. However, sufficient detail was not provided in the MND or NES leading to this conclusion nor were avoidance or protection measures provided within the MND. Without sufficient detail and analyses, CDFW is not confident in the conclusion and suggest protection measures be developed

and included within the MND to ensure special-status species and their habitats are protected, especially for special-status species that have historically been found on the Project site, as indicated in databases such as CNDDDB, and have habitat present.

Evidence impact would be significant: The MND needs to include mitigation measures. Including measures to repair, rehabilitate, or restore the impacted environment (CEQA Guidelines §§ 15370, 15171(e)). For habitat restoration, the MND does not identify actions that can will be considered, analyzed, and potentially incorporated in the mitigation measure”(CEQA Guidelines § 15126.4(a)(1)(A)), The MND must demonstrate 1) that revisions in the Project plans or proposals made by, or agreed to by, the applicant before the proposed negative declaration and initial study are released for public review would avoid the effects or mitigate the effects to a point where clearly no significant effect on the environment would occur, and 2) there is no substantial evidence in light of the whole record before the public agency that the Project, as revised, may have a significant effect on the environment. (CEQA Guidelines, § 15369.5)

#### Recommended Potentially Feasible Mitigation Measure(s)

CDFW recommends that the following measures are incorporated into the MND.

Mitigation Measure #5: Special-status plant pre-construction surveys. A qualified biologist with experience with the local flora shall conduct pre-construction surveys for special-status plants (e.g., San Diego thornmint, velvety false lupine, San Diego gumplant, bottle liverwort, etc.), locally rare plants, and any other species ranked by CNPS with the potential to occur in the Project area, prior to the planned commencement of Project activities, in accordance with the CDFW Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special-Status Native Plant Populations and Natural Communities. If a special-status plant or population of special-status plants is discovered on-site, Caltrans shall notify CDFW within 24 hours. Caltrans shall provide survey results to CDFW no less than 14 days prior to the planned commencement of Project. No activities with the potential to impact special-status plants shall occur until CDFW is notified and provides further direction and written concurrence for those activities to begin. Absent take authorization, Caltrans shall fully avoid impacts to CESA-listed or State Rare plants.

Mitigation Measure #6: Special-status herpetofauna species monitoring. A qualified biologist shall be present during all portions of Project activities that have the potential to impact special-status herpetofauna species (e.g., staging, equipment operation, vegetation clearing, etc.) to survey immediately prior to each workday's Project activities, and to constantly monitor and ensure that special-status herpetofauna species are not impacted or taken during the course of Project activities. This includes that a qualified biologist



take measures to avoid indirect impacts to special-status herpetofauna species such as, but not limited to: placing four-foot-long by three-foot-wide plywood boards at the Project areas within 14 days prior to Project activities with a qualified biologist checking under plywood boards daily prior to the start of each workday; checking underneath staged equipment prior to operation; and checking potential habitat areas prior to commencement of vegetation removal or modification. If any special-status herpetofauna species are found during the course of Project activities, the individual shall first be allowed to leave the Project area under its own volition.

Mitigation Measure #7: American badger protection. A qualified biologist shall conduct a focused survey for American badger burrows prior to the start of each Project activity that may impact burrows. If burrows occur within the Project footprint, no Project activities shall occur within 100 feet of the burrow, and burrow(s) shall be monitored for two weeks to determine usage. Occupied burrows shall be avoided until they are determined to be unoccupied. Only after the burrow has been determined to be unoccupied shall the burrow be excavated, as needed, under the direction of a qualified biologist.

Mitigation Measure #8: Bat protection. If active hibernacula or maternity roosts are identified within 500 feet from the work area, Project construction will only occur between September 1st and March 31st, outside of the maternity roosting season when young bats are present but are not yet ready to fly out of the roost. Maternity roosts shall not be evicted, excluded, removed, or disturbed. A minimum 500-foot no-work buffer shall be provided around hibernacula. Buffers shall be left in place until the end of Project construction and activities or until a qualified bat biologist determines that the hibernacula are no longer active. Project-related construction and activities shall not occur between 30 minutes before sunset and 30 minutes after sunrise. Hibernacula roosts shall not be evicted, excluded, removed, or disturbed. Based on survey results, if maternity roosts are not present, but day roosting bats are likely, a Bat Exclusion Plan shall be developed by a qualified biologist and reviewed by CDFW prior to construction activities.

Mitigation Measure #9: Least Bell's vireo protection. If active nests are identified within 500 feet of noise-generating construction activities and construction noise exceeds ambient noise levels, Caltrans shall implement measures to reduce noise to ambient levels at the nest location. Caltrans shall revegetate and restore habitat for least Bell's vireo with the native seed mix. Caltrans shall seed temporarily impacted areas as soon as possible following regrading after completion of construction to prevent encroachment by nonnative plants.

Mitigation Measure #10: Employee education program. The Project Biologist shall develop and implement an employee education program. Each employee will receive a training and awareness program prior to working on

the proposed Project. They will be advised of the potential impact to special-status species potentially found at the Project site and the potential penalties for taking such species. At a minimum, the program will include the following: 1) Occurrence of the listed and sensitive species in the area (including photographs), their general ecology, and sensitivity to human activities; 2) The legal protection afforded to the listed and sensitive species, penalties for non-compliance with Federal and State laws and reporting requirements; and 3) Project features designed to reduce the impacts to the listed and sensitive species and promote continued successful occupation of the Project area. Caltrans shall provide interpretation for non-English-speaking workers, and the same instruction shall be provided to any new workers before they are authorized to perform Project activities.

Mitigation Measure #11: Invasive species removal. During Project construction, Caltrans shall remove all invasive species included on the National Invasive Species Management Plan<sup>8</sup>, the State of California Noxious Weed List, and the Cal-IPC Invasive Plant Inventory found growing within the Project right-of-way. Caltrans shall conduct weed removal within the Project right-of-way as needed during the construction and restoration period. Caltrans shall take special care during transport, use, and disposal of soils containing invasive weed seeds, and shall properly dispose of weedy vegetation removed during construction to prevent spread into areas outside of the construction area.

Mitigation Measure #12: Compensatory mitigation. CDFW recommends Caltrans revise the following mitigation measure by removing the language in strikethrough and adding the underlined language:

- Where feasible, impacts to oaks and sensitive vegetation communities will be avoided. Where permanent impacts to large oak trees and jurisdictional areas (State wetlands and Waters of U.S.) cannot be avoided, they will be mitigated using existing mitigation bank credits at a minimum of a 3:1 ratio. Caltrans has several mitigation banks with available credits for all impacts associated with the project. Credits are available at Rancho San Diego, Rutherford Ranch and Go Cart mitigation banks. Temporary impact areas where grading, clearing and/or grubbing results in the removal of native vegetation will require hydroseeding of the impact area with an appropriate seed mix for the existing plant community. Compensatory mitigation is anticipated for approximately 0.06 acres of permanent impact to coastal sage scrub. Coastal sage scrub will be mitigated at a minimum ratio of 5:1.
- Where feasible, impacts to wetlands will be avoided. Where impacts cannot be avoided, they will be mitigated by using existing Caltrans mitigation bank credits and hydroseeding of impact areas. Compensatory mitigation is anticipated for approximately 0.001 acres of permanent impacts to jurisdictional wetlands during culvert replacement work and will

be replaced at a 3:1 ratio. Caltrans has several mitigation banks with available credits for all habitats and impacts associated with the project. Credits are available at Rancho San Diego, Rutherford Ranch, and Go Cart mitigation banks. Grading, clearing, and/or grubbing of native vegetation in wetland areas may also require revegetation measures, such as hydroseeding with an appropriate seed mix for the existing plant community. Coordination with USFWS, USACE, and CDFW during acquisition of permits and Section 7 consultation may determine additional protective measures to be implemented by the project.

## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Mitigation and Monitoring Reporting Plan. CDFW recommends the Project's environmental document include mitigation measures recommended in this letter. CDFW has provided comments via a mitigation monitoring and reporting plan to assist in the development of feasible, specific, detailed (i.e., responsible party, timing, specific actions, location), and fully enforceable mitigation measures (CEQA Guidelines, § 15097; Pub. Resources Code, § 21081.6). The Lead Agency is welcome to coordinate with CDFW to further review and refine the Project's mitigation measures. Per Public Resources Code section 21081.6(a)(1), CDFW has provided a summary of our suggested mitigation measures and recommendations in the form of an attached Draft Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (see Attachment A).

## ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

CEQA requires that information developed in environmental impact reports and negative declarations be incorporated into a database which may be used to make subsequent or supplemental environmental determinations. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21003, subd. (e).) Accordingly, please report any special status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB). The CNDDB website provides direction regarding the types of information that should be reported and allows on-line submittal of field survey forms.

In addition, information on special status native plant populations and sensitive natural communities, should be submitted to CDFW's Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program using the Combined Rapid Assessment and Relevé Form.

Caltrans should ensure data collected for the preparation of the MND is properly submitted.

## FILING FEES

The Project, as proposed, would have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of environmental document filing fees is necessary. Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and

serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW. Payment of the environmental document filing fee is required in order for the underlying Project approval to be operative, vested, and final. (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 14, § 753.5; Fish & G. Code, § 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, § 21089.)

## CONCLUSION

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the MND to assist Caltrans in identifying and mitigating Project impacts on biological resources. CDFW requests an opportunity to review and comment on any response that the Caltrans has to our comments and to receive notification of any forthcoming hearing date(s) for the Project (CEQA Guidelines, § 15073(e)). Given the lack of sufficient information to facilitate a meaningful review of the Project's consistency with the draft North and East County Plan, the impacts of culvert restoration on wildlife connectivity, and impacts to Crotch's bumble bee, CDFW recommends that Caltrans recirculate the MND (CEQA Guidelines, §15073.5(b)). Questions regarding this letter or further coordination should be directed to Victor Torres, Environmental Scientist and Andrew Domingos, Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist).

Sincerely,

Heather A. Pert  
Environmental Program Manager  
South Coast Region

## ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Draft Mitigation , Monitoring, and Reporting Program

Attachment B: County of San Diego MSCPs

ec: California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Heather A. Pert, Environmental Program Manager  
Jennifer Turner, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisory)  
Melanie Burlaza, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisory)  
Erika Cleugh, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisory)

California Department of Transportation  
Matthew Voss, matthew.voss@dot.ca.gov

Office of Planning and Research  
State.Clearinghouse@opr.ca.gov

## **Responses to Comment #8**

### **Response #1 (Insufficient Biological Information for Impact Assessment):**

CDFW presented concerns about the number of surveys and assessment used to determine potential impacts to biological resources. Four recommendations were presented that are summarized below:

1. A request for additional details about the surveys conducted for the project;
2. A request for additional surveys for specified species;
3. A request for focused bat surveys; and
4. Reassessment of project impacts prior to adoption of the MND.

As described in Section 2.1.4, the Biological Survey Area was identified as the project footprint and a 100-foot buffer, amounting to approximately 672 acres in total. Most of the proposed work would be pavement rehabilitation that would occur within the developed highway facility and outside of sensitive habitat. The total disturbance area off pavement would amount to 1.66 acres, of which an even smaller subset (approximately 0.40 acres) would be within sensitive habitat in small slivers adjacent to the roadway at discrete and disjunct locations. Given these factors, a reconnaissance level survey to assess habitat was completed for the project area instead of protocol surveys because special-status species inhabiting the small impact footprints (i.e., 100-500 square feet at each location) directly adjacent to the road is considered low potential. Species occurring adjacent to the impact footprints are unlikely to be indirectly impacted by project activities relative to ambient conditions. The habitat assessment for special-status species was focused on areas with proposed work, such as the culvert and guardrail replacement locations. The Project Biologist also used previous surveys of the area and historical presence to infer listed species potential presence and suitable habitat. Table 6 in the NES shows historically occurring special-status species with suitable habitat present and the rationale for all determinations. To be conservative, if species have potential to occur based on the habitat assessment, they were assumed to be present, and measures were developed to avoid/minimize impacts.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), through informal Section 7 consultation with Caltrans dated December 6, 2024, determined the project would have no effect to the federally endangered San Diego button celery (*Eryngium aristulatum* var. *parishii*), San Diego fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta sandiegonensis*), least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*), southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*), Peninsular bighorn sheep (=Nelson bighorn sheep) [Peninsular Range distinct population segment (*Ovis*

*canadensis nelsoni*); the proposed endangered California spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis occidentalis*); the federally threatened San Diego thornmint (*Acanthomintha ilicifolia*), spreading navarretia (*Navarretia fossalis*), California red-legged frog [*Rana draytonii* (*R. aurora d.*)], coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*); the proposed threatened southwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys pallida*); or the federal candidate monarch butterfly (*Danaus Plexippus*).

USFWS also determined the project is not likely to adversely affect the federally endangered arroyo toad {a. southwestern t. [*Anaxyrus californicus* (*Bufo microscaphus c.*)];} or the proposed threatened western spadefoot (Southern distinct population segment [*Spea hammondi*]) through implementation of avoidance and minimization measures outlined in the informal consultation. The measures in Section 2.1.4 are consistent with the informal consultation, which include requirements for pre-construction protocol surveys for arroyo toad and western spadefoot.

The culverts within the project site range from 18 to 36 inches in diameter. These are too small to allow for bat roosting because the height of the culvert above ground is too low to protect bats from predators. Given the scope of work for this project and the culvert sizes, Caltrans does not anticipate any impacts to bats. To be conservative, Caltrans will conduct pre-construction surveys for bats at all culvert locations to confirm bats are not present. This requirement has been added to the AMMs in Section 2.1.4.

Lastly, it should be noted that the construction timeframe was incorrectly stated in the Project Description Summary; construction is proposed to begin in 2026, not in winter 2025.

## **Response #2 (Consistency with NCCPs):**

CDFW identified that the proposed project is located within the limits of the County's draft North and East County Multiple Species Conservation Program Plans (North County Plan and East County Plan, respectively). Two recommendations were presented that are summarized below:

1. A request for consultation with the County on the consistency of the project with the North County Plan and East County Plan; and
2. Recirculation of the MND with additional analysis.

Caltrans provided the County of San Diego an opportunity to comment on the draft environmental document. The County did not express any concerns related to project consistency with North and East County Plans. Neither of these plans have been formally adopted by the County or wildlife agencies, although there is a Planning Agreement in place which reflects the mutual intent to move forward with the plans. Project activities would take place primarily within areas defined as "Excluded Lands" per Section 4.1.3 of the

Planning Agreement (lands owned or managed by non-signatory state agencies). As noted in the Planning Agreement, “excluded lands will not be relied upon for conserving and gaining coverage from the Wildlife Agencies for listed and other sensitive species”.

The proposed project would occur on an existing transportation facility with the purpose to rehabilitate, restore, and preserve existing facilities. The majority of the project would occur within Caltrans right-of-way. It is understood that the project limits are within an area providing habitat connectivity between key conservation areas in the North and East County Plans; however, the proposed improvements would not change existing conditions relative to habitat connectivity. The road would not be widened and no new barriers to wildlife movement would be introduced. The proposed project would repair the existing facilities while containing project activities within developed or disturbed areas, such as the existing pavement or roadway shoulder, to the greatest extent possible. Caltrans anticipates minimal permanent impacts and would mitigate all permanent impacts using mitigation credits at existing Caltrans-owned mitigation banks. All temporary impact areas will be restored to pre-construction conditions and reseeded. Therefore, no conflicts with the draft HCPs or NCCPs are anticipated.

### **Response #3 (Impacts to Crotch’s bumble bee):**

CDFW identified potential impacts to Crotch’s bumble bee based on suitable habitat within the project limits. Potentially feasible mitigation measures were recommended to address impacts to this species.

The analysis in Section 2.1.4 has been supplemented with this information and additional avoidance and minimization measures included per CDFW recommendations. Caltrans does not anticipate direct impacts to Crotch’s bumble bee with implementation of the avoidance and minimization measures described herein, including pre-construction surveys, use of ESAs to protect any suitable habitat areas, avoidance of the flight season if species is present, and revegetation of temporary impact areas immediately following construction.

### **Response #4 (Wildlife Connectivity):**

CDFW expressed concern that wildlife connectivity was not analyzed adequately in the IS/MND. Additional culvert details and an analysis of project effects on linkages between areas of high habitat value on both sides of SR-78 was requested. The effects of habitat fragmentation due to existing road footprints was emphasized, along with the potential for culvert replacements to improve wildlife connectivity. Culvert design and traffic calming measures were also recommended for select locations.

As noted in Response #2, the proposed improvements would not change existing conditions relative to wildlife connectivity. The road would not be widened and no new barriers to wildlife movement would be introduced. Additional culvert details have been added to Table 1-1 in Section 1.4.1. As shown in the table, most culverts would be replaced in-kind, with minor increases in diameter from 18 inches to 24 inches planned at four locations (PMs 47.33, 51.62, 51.77, and 51.85). The sizes of replacement culverts were informed by specific hydraulic design criteria and flows. Culverts within the project limits are in poor condition and, if not repaired, could result in unanticipated safety and environmental effects, such as washout of the roadway or shoulder, erosion and sedimentation in nearby waterways, and direct or indirect impacts to adjacent sensitive habitats.

Regarding traffic calming measures, Caltrans Traffic Operations uses the most current design speed standards for roadways. Caltrans will investigate the feasibility of installing wildlife crossing signage at the locations proposed by CDFW.

**Response #5 (Additional protection measures for special-status species):**

CDFW raised concerns about the habitat assessment and impact conclusions in the IS/MND. CDFW suggests conservation measures that are not identified as required CEQA mitigation that would be added to the Mitigated Negative Declaration Determination section at the beginning of this document.

Caltrans agrees with the suggested conservation measures to provide additional protection for special-status species that have historically been found on the project site and may have habitat present. Each additional suggested measure or revision is listed below, followed by Caltrans' response:

- Special-status plant pre-construction surveys

Work would only occur off pavement for culvert and guardrail replacements. Vegetation immediately adjacent to the guardrail locations is disturbed/non-native. No perennial rare plants were observed during the habitat assessment at the culvert replacement locations and the potential for other rare plants is considered low. Nonetheless, rare plant surveys would be conducted in the Spring within and adjacent to the off-pavement impact areas prior to commencement of construction. This measure has been added to the AMMs in Section 2.1.4.

- Special-status herpetofauna species monitoring

Caltrans will implement avoidance and minimization measures for herpetofauna species as described in Section 2.1.4 of this IS/MND, the NES,



and in alignment with the conservation measures described in the informal consultation issued by USFWS.

- American badger protection

Badger burrows were not observed during field surveys within or adjacent to the project impact areas and given their secretive nature, they are unlikely to burrow directly adjacent to the road.

- Bat protection

The culverts within the project site range from 18 to 36 inches in diameter. These are too small to allow for bat roosting because the height of the culvert above ground is too low to protect bats from predators. Given the scope of work for this project and the culvert sizes, Caltrans does not anticipate any impacts to bats. To be conservative, Caltrans will survey for bats at all culvert locations prior to construction to confirm bats are not present. This measure has been added to the AMMs in Section 2.1.4.

- Least Bell's vireo protection

Most Least Bell's vireo are found at elevations of less than 2,000 feet. The riparian areas impacted by the proposed project would occur at elevations of 2,100 feet or greater. There are no data for Least Bell's vireo in the CNDDDB or USFWS databases in the project limits. USFWS concurred with a no effect determination for Least Bell's vireo during informal Section 7 consultation.

- Employee education program

Caltrans has included an employee education program as an avoidance and minimization measure in Section 2.1.4.

- Invasive species removal

Weeding will occur within the project impact areas annually as agreed upon during Section 7 consultation with USFWS. Invasive weed removal has been included as an avoidance and minimization measure in Section 2.1.4.

- Revisions to compensatory mitigation measures

Caltrans concurs with the suggested revisions and changes have been made to Section 2.1.4, with the exception of the suggested 5:1 ratio for coastal sage scrub. Caltrans typically compensates for permanent impacts to coastal sage scrub at a 2:1 ratio, which is consistent with the conservation measures provided by USFWS and with other regional and local agencies, such as the

San Diego County Biological Mitigation Ordinance (BMO) (County of San Diego 2010)<sup>1</sup>.

**Response #6 (Additional comments):**

Caltrans has incorporated CDFW's suggested conservation measures and revisions into the IS/MND where relevant. The added conservation measures are not considered to be required CEQA mitigation. The avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures identified in this document will become part of the Environmental Commitment Record and provided to the Project Development Team and all contractors to ensure compliance.

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<sup>1</sup> County of San Diego. 2010. Biological Mitigation Ordinance, An Excerpt From The San Diego County Code Of Regulatory Ordinances, as amended on April 2, 2010.