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Road Division

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MATT H. MAY
COUNTY CLERK

By Lea Z. H. H. H.
Deputy Clerk

**NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION
FOR ATWATER JORDAN AT ATWATER CANAL BRIDGE REPLACEMENT**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the County of Merced, as lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), has prepared a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) and supporting Initial Study for the Atwater Jordan at Atwater Canal Bridge Replacement Project (project).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Project Purpose

The purpose of the project is to improve public safety by providing a safe, permanent crossing over the Atwater Canal on Atwater Jordan Road. The project would utilize federal Highway Bridge Program (HBP) funding and a toll credit match. The project was listed in the Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) 2013 Federal Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (FSTIP), Administrative Modification No. 21, as Project ID 4126 on the 2012/13 – 2017/18 HBP project listing (MCAG, 2013). The project has since been updated in the MCAG FSTIP 2022/23-2027/28 HBP project listing (MCAG, 2025).

Project Need

The existing bridge was built in 1928 with a projected ADT of 181 vehicles per day by the year 2038. The project is needed because there is substantial deterioration from corrosion and rust on the bridge's steel girders. In addition, the existing bridge railings do not meet current standards, and the bridge does not provide guardrail transition, approaches, or ends.

Existing Bridge and Setting

The project area is located in a rural area of Merced County. Within the project area, Atwater Jordan Road is a 2-lane roadway that is functionally classified as a Minor Collector, with a design speed of 50 miles per hour. The Atwater Canal is a channelized, un-lined waterway with gravel/dirt canal access roads at the tops of the banks. Flows in the canal are controlled artificially to meet the agricultural needs of adjacent properties. The areas adjacent to the canal are disturbed and consist of either agricultural or rural-residential use. A residence is located adjacent to and southwest of the project area and another residence is approximately 300 feet northeast of the project area. Vegetation in and around the project area is limited to sparse, weedy roadside vegetation, urban landscaping in the residential areas, or orchards in

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the agricultural areas. There is also limited vegetation within and along the banks of the canal.

Proposed Replacement

The existing bridge structure consists of two vehicle lanes, one in the eastbound direction and one in the westbound direction. There are no shoulders on either side of the roadway. The County proposes to replace and widen the existing bridge by approximately 10 feet along the existing horizontal and vertical alignment to provide two 11-foot lanes, a 3-foot shoulder on each side of the roadway, and new concrete barrier bridge rails similar to those on the existing bridge. In addition, the embankment will be covered with rock slope protection to mitigate scour within the limits of the bridge approach fills. Improvements to the canal access roads may also be needed to accommodate the widened bridge.

The County assessor maps do identify a 40 foot roadway right of way (ROW) for Atwater Jordan Road. Therefore, the existing roadway and bridge are within the presumed County easements (Quincy Engineering, 2013). Additional ROW and temporary construction easements (TCE) from surrounding properties may be required to complete the project. Any ROW acquisition and/or TCEs will be included in the project impact analysis.

Construction Schedule

Construction is anticipated to begin in October of 2027 and end March 2028.

Construction Methods

Construction of the project would be conducted during non-irrigation season and last Construction of the project would be conducted during non-irrigation season and last approximately five months. It is anticipated that construction would begin in October and end in March. No night work would be required during construction.

Construction would begin with the fencing and clearing of the project area; minor vegetation removal would be required. The demolition of the existing bridge would follow. Work inside the canal would be completed during the removal of the existing bridge and construction of the replacement bridge. Temporary water diversion would be required to move low-flow water around the construction area; cofferdams and pipe diversions would be used. Bridge removal would be performed with a medium-sized excavator, hydraulic breakers, and dump trucks which would be placed in the canal. Following bridge removal, the replacement concrete bridge would be constructed. The foundation of the replacement bridge would require an excavator to grade out abutments and excavate footing locations to install piles. Ten steel piles, 14 inches in diameter, would be driven into the ground utilizing a pile-driving hammer attached to leads on a hydraulic crane. RSP would be placed on the embankment of the canal. Construction of the project would require excavation to a maximum depth of 10 feet. Falsework would be erected in order to construct the bridge deck. Concrete for the bridge deck would be cast-in-place utilizing timber and steel forms, concrete boom pumps, and concrete trucks. Cranes or lifts would be utilized for hoisting materials. Following the completion of in-canal work, the water diversion would be removed, and the bridge barrier and roadway approach would be constructed. Construction staging would be on the existing

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roadway and road shoulders as well as the levee roads, if needed.

Utilities

Overhead PG&E electrical distribution and transmission lines run along the north side of Atwater Jordan Road. In addition, an underground telecommunications cable line owned by Frontier Communications runs along the south side of Atwater Jordan Road west of the bridge, crosses to the north side of Atwater Jordan Road just west of the bridge, is attached to the existing bridge's north edge of deck, and then continues running east along Atwater Jordan Road on the north side of the road. Overhead PG&E power poles within the project area would be relocated. The Frontier telecommunication cable would be detached from the bridge during construction and either run overhead to cross the canal or reattach to the new bridge. All utility relocations would be conducted in coordination with the service providers.

Right-of-Way

In order to accommodate proposed improvements, partial ROW acquisitions and temporary construction easements would be required from Accessor Parcel Numbers (APN) 056-074-008 and 056-074-009. Roadway easements and temporary construction easements would also be required from MID (Merced Irrigation District) which owns the canal.

Detour Route

Within the project area, Atwater Jordan Road would be closed for the duration of construction. Access to adjacent driveways would be maintained throughout construction. A detour (approximately 1.5 miles in length) would be required to allow traffic access around the project area. Expected roads to be used for the detour include Steinberg Road, Sunset Drive, and Central Avenue.

PUBLIC REVIEW:

The Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) is available for a 30-day public review period beginning September 8, 2025, and ending October 8, 2025. Copies of the MND are available to review at the County's website at <https://www.countyofmerced.com/DocumentCenter/Index/1005> and at the Merced County Department of Public Works (715 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Merced, CA 95341).

AGENCY/PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Written comments on the MND for the proposed project must be received no later than 5:00 pm on October 8, 2025. Comments may be sent by mail to Merced County Department of Public Works (715 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Merced, CA 95341) or by email to Alvaro.Buenrostro@countyofmerced.com. If you require additional information, please contact Alvaro Buenrostro at (209) 385-7601 ext. 4632.