San Benito U.S. Route 101 Pavement Rehabilitation Project

On U.S. Route 101 from the Monterey County line to the Santa Clara County line

05-SBt-101-PM 0.0/7.55

Project Number 0518000079/EA 05-1J840

State Clearinghouse Number 2025091293

Initial Study with Mitigated Negative Declaration

Volume 1 of 2

Prepared by the

State of California Department of Transportation

June 2026

General Information About This Document

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), as assigned by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), has prepared this Initial Study with Mitigated Negative Declaration for the proposed project located in San Benito County, California. Caltrans is the lead agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Caltrans is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The document tells you why the project is being proposed, what alternatives have been considered for the project, how the existing environment could be affected by the project, the potential impacts of each of the alternatives, and the proposed avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures. The Initial Study circulated to the public for 30 days between September 26, 2025, and October 27, 2025. Comments received during this period are included in Appendix C. Changes made to the document since the draft document circulation are shown using the phrase "[The following text has been updated (or added) since the draft environmental document was circulated.]" Minor editorial changes and clarifications are not shown. A copy of this document and the related technical studies are available for review at the Caltrans district office at 50 Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo, California 93401, Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Additional copies of the document are available for review at the San Benito County Free Library, 470 5th Street, Hollister, California 95023, hours of operation Monday-Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Saturday 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m; and at the Council of San Benito County Governments offices, 650 San Benito Street, Suite 120, Hollister, California 95023, hours of operation Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. This document may be downloaded at the following website: https://dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-5/district-5-current-projects/05-1j840.

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State Clearinghouse Number 2025091293
05-SBt-101-PM 0.0-7.55
Project ID Number 0518000079 / Project EA 05-1J840

Rehabilitate pavement, restore and/or rehabilitate and drainage systems, upgrade traffic safety systems, replace or repair transportation management system elements, and improve wildlife connectivity on U.S. Route 101 in San Benito County from post miles 0.0 (Monterey-San Benito County line) to 7.55 (San Benito-Santa Clara County line)

INITIAL STUDY
with Mitigated Negative Declaration

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

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

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CEQA Lead Agency

June 10, 2026

Date

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Mitigated Negative Declaration

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

State Clearinghouse Number: 2025091293

District-County-Route-Post Mile: 05-SBt-101-PM 0.0-7.55

EA/Project Number: EA 05-1J840/Project ID 0518000079

Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to rehabilitate 30.290 lane miles of existing pavement, restore and/or rehabilitate 28 culverts at 12 locations, upgrade traffic safety systems, replace or repair Traffic Management Systems, and improve wildlife connectivity along a 7.55-mile section of U.S. Route 101 from just southwest of the San Juan Road overcrossing (Monterey-San Benito County line) to a point just northeast of the Betabel and Y Road overcrossing (San Benito-Santa Clara County line). Improvements will be made using various construction methods, including cold planing, asphalt overlay, dig outs, cut and cover, and pipe jacking. [The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Within the project limits, the project will replace thrie beam barrier and non-standard metal beam guardrail and end treatments, replace concrete barriers, cold plane bridge structure approaches and on-/off-ramps, replace one existing traffic census station and repair two additional traffic census station loops (sensors embedded in the pavement), restripe existing traffic stripe and pavement markings where necessary, upgrade rumble strip, and construct shoulder backing. Two wildlife undercrossing structures will be constructed by improving two existing culvert locations, with directional fencing and escape ramps (“jump outs”) installed as well.

Determination

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] An Initial Study has been prepared by Caltrans District 5 for this project. On the basis of this study, it is determined that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

The project will have no effect on agricultural and forest resources, energy, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, mineral resources, population and housing, and recreation.

The project will have less than significant effects to aesthetics/visual resources, air quality, cultural resources, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, noise, public services, tribal cultural resources, transportation, utilities and service systems, and wildfire.

With the following mitigation measures incorporated, the project will have less than significant effects to biological resources, and geology and soils:

- Coast live oak trees will be replaced onsite at a 1-to-1 ratio in non-jurisdictional areas. Coast live oak trees that occur within jurisdictional areas will be replaced at a 3-to-1 ratio. Replacement plantings will be detailed in the project Landscape Planting Plans. [The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Tree plantings will be monitored to ensure successful revegetation at six months and then once a year for five years. Off-site mitigation is not anticipated.

- Restoration (re-establishment) is proposed at a 1-to-1 ratio of acreage for temporary impacts to jurisdictional areas. Compensatory mitigation is proposed at a 3-to-1 ratio of acreage for permanent impacts to jurisdictional areas and a 1.5-to-1 ratio of acreage for degradation impacts to jurisdictional areas, for example, installation of rock slope protection over gravel filter. Replacement plantings will include appropriate native tree and understory species. In order to ensure success, some locations will require a one-year plant establishment period, and others may require a three-year plant establishment period. Both will include monitoring, semiannual inspections, weeding, and replacement of dead plants. [The following text has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] It is anticipated that these revegetation areas will be monitored for success for five years.

- Caltrans anticipates that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife will require compensatory mitigation for potential California tiger salamander upland habitat impacts. Caltrans will mitigate for these impacts at a 1-to-1 ratio onsite, through restoration of impacted habitats. Permanent impacts to suitable habitat are proposed for mitigation at a 3-to-1 ratio, or as required by regulatory agencies, using mitigation credits at a California Department of Fish and Wildlife-approved California tiger salamander mitigation bank.

- Caltrans shall retain a Principal Paleontologist that meets Caltrans qualifications to prepare or oversee preparation of a Paleontological Mitigation Plan during the project Plans, Specifications, and Estimates phase. The Paleontological Mitigation Plan provides detailed information about the implementation of mitigation fieldwork (construction monitoring, fossil recovery), laboratory techniques for fossil preparation and identification, and the designation of a curation facility, also known as a repository, to receive the fossils. Elements of the Paleontological Mitigation Plan shall conform to Caltrans guidelines. Paleontological Monitoring during construction will be required as a component of the Paleontological Mitigation Plan.

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Office Chief for Environmental Analysis
California Department of Transportation, District 5

June 10, 2026

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Chapter 1 Proposed Project

1.1 Introduction

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to restore 30.290 lane miles of existing pavement, restore and/or rehabilitate 28 culverts at 12 locations including construction of two wildlife undercrossing structures and directional fencing at two existing culverts, upgrade metal beam guardrail, upgrade guardrail to bridge transition railing, upgrade concrete barriers and end treatments, cold plane (grind down) bridge structure approaches to conform to asphalt surfacing, cold plane on-/off-ramps, replace one existing traffic census station, and repair two additional traffic census station loops on U.S. Route 101 in San Benito County. Work will take place along U.S. Route 101 between post mile 0.0 and post mile 7.55 in San Benito County, which stretches from the Monterey-San Benito County line just southwest of the San Juan Road overcrossing to the San Benito-Santa Clara County line, just northeast of the Betabel and Y Road overcrossing. This section of U.S. Route 101 runs north-south and is classified as a 4-lane curvilinear Expressway from post mile 0.0 to 1.8, a Freeway from post mile 1.8 to 7.52, and an Expressway from post mile 7.52 to 7.55.

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] The project is programmed in the adopted 2024 State Highway Operation and Protection Program and is funded in the 201.122 Roadway Preservation Program for delivery in Fiscal Year 2029-2030. The total cost for the project is $70,613,500, which includes $69,829,000 for construction and $784,500 for right-of-way costs. The start of construction is expected in July 2030, and completion is anticipated in January 2034.

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Caltrans is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (known as CEQA). As the lead agency, Caltrans has prepared this Initial Study with Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project.

1.2 Purpose and Need

1.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this project is to preserve and extend the life of the existing pavement, restore drainage systems, maintain an efficient transportation

system, upgrade guardrail and other barrier systems to current standards, and improve wildlife connectivity within project limits.

1.2.2 Need

The project is needed because the existing pavement condition within the project limits is deteriorating, exhibiting distress and unacceptable ride quality. If left untreated, deterioration will continue and result in increasingly higher maintenance costs in the future. Within the project limits, 28 culverts exhibit corrosion and scouring which has led to damaged inverts, shape loss, joint separation, sedimentation, and undermined backfill. Continued culvert deterioration could lead to roadway and embankment failure. To maintain U.S. Route 101 traffic information that is currently collected, one existing traffic census station near the end of its service life needs replacement and two additional traffic census stations will have their loops repaired. Sections of guardrail and other barriers within the project limits do not meet current standards. Additionally, this section of U.S. Route 101 is a California Department of Fish and Wildlife-identified wildlife movement barrier and Caltrans has identified a priority remediation site within the project limits.

1.3 Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to rehabilitate pavement, restore and/or rehabilitate drainage systems, upgrade traffic safety systems, replace transportation management system elements, and improve wildlife connectivity on U.S. Route 101 in San Benito County, from post miles 0.0 (Monterey-San Benito County line) to 7.55 (San Benito-Santa Clara County line).

The project proposes a 0.15-foot rubberized hot mix asphalt overlay of 30.290 lane miles of flexible Class 2 pavement, and upgrades to metal beam guardrail, concrete barriers, and end treatments to meet Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware standards. [The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] The project also proposes replacement of one traffic census station and repair of loops at two additional traffic census stations. In addition, the project proposes the restoration of 28 culverts at 12 locations, including installation of two wildlife undercrossing structures at existing culvert locations (post miles 0.43R and 0.48L) and directional fencing to direct animals to the crossing structures.

Improvements will be made using various construction methods, including cold planing, asphalt overlay, dig outs, cut and cover, and pipe jacking. Within the project limits, the project will replace thrie beam barrier and non-standard metal beam guardrail and end treatments. The project will also replace concrete barriers, cold plane bridge structure approaches and on-/off-ramps,

restripe existing traffic stripe and pavements markings where necessary, upgrade rumble strip, and construct shoulder backing.

The project will require work off the paved roadway; trenching, grading, and other ground disturbance; construction of access roads; right-of-way acquisition for temporary construction easements and permanent drainage and maintenance access easements; drainage work/alterations; night work; and tree and vegetation removal.

Figure 1-1 is a map of the general project vicinity within San Benito County; Figure 1-2 shows the project location in greater detail.

Figure 1-1 Project Vicinity Map

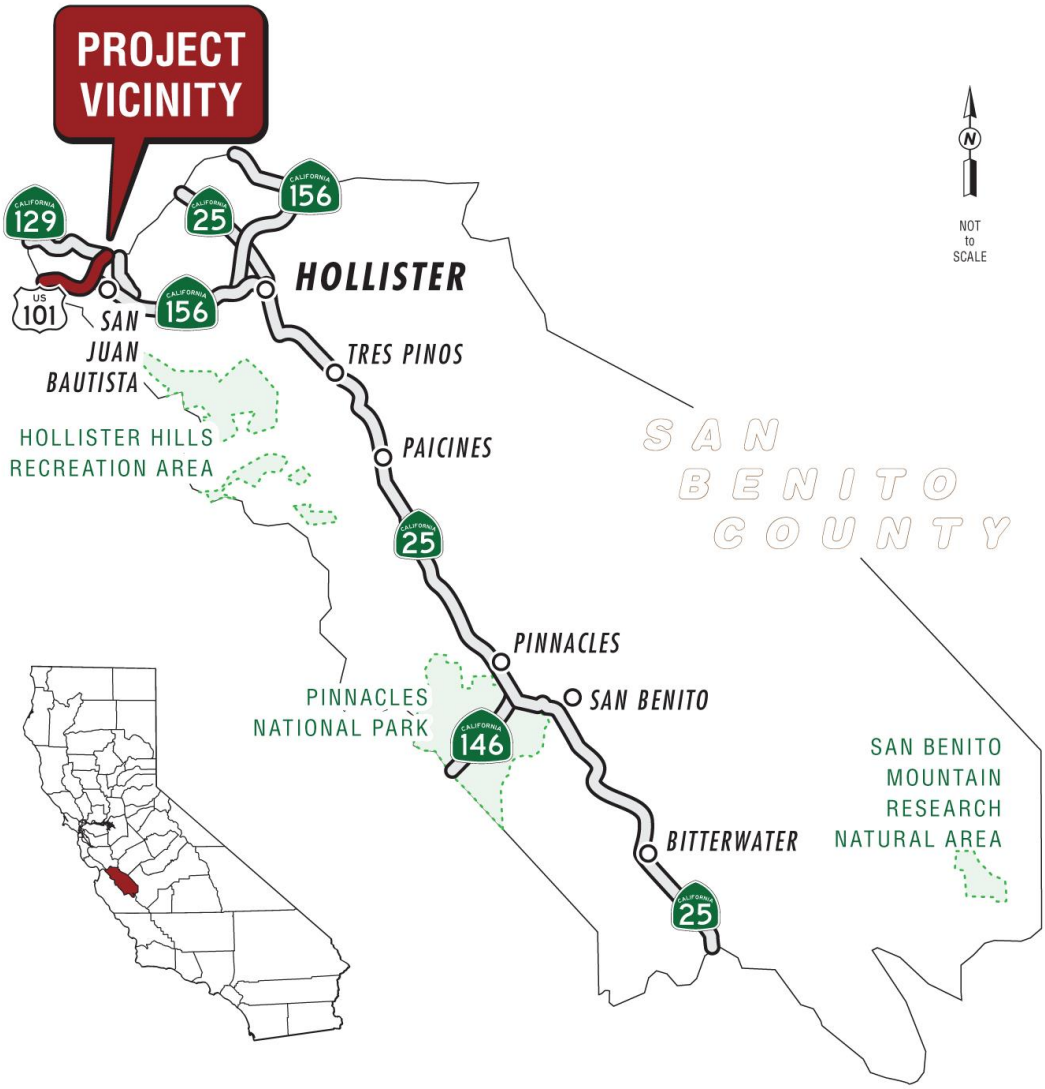
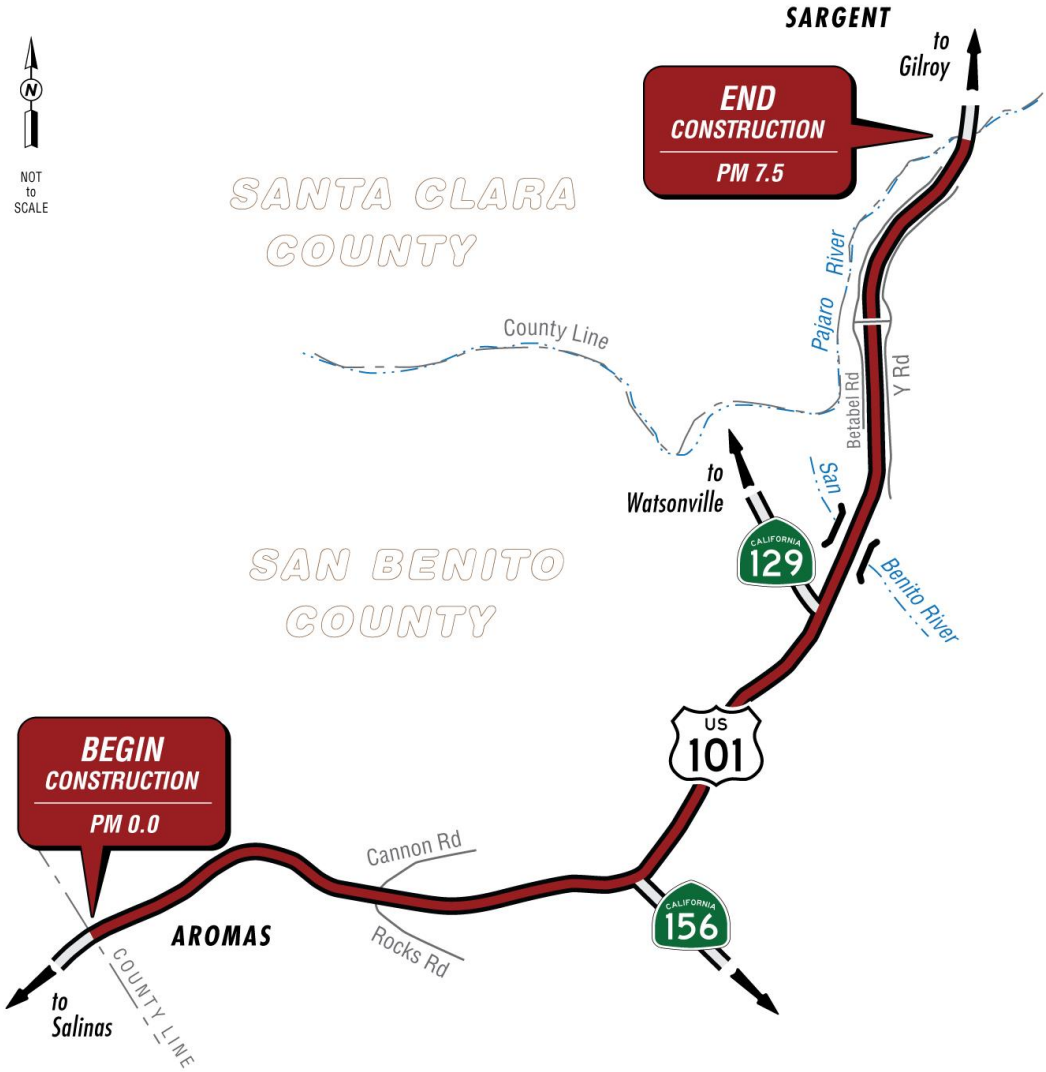


Figure 1-2 Project Location Map



1.4 Project Alternatives

This section outlines the proposed action and the project alternatives designed to fulfill the project's purpose and need, while minimizing or avoiding environmental impacts. Two alternatives were considered: the build alternative and the no-build alternative.

1.4.1 Build Alternative

The build alternative will preserve and extend the service life of the pavement on the four-lane curvilinear expressway. The concrete pavement will be improved by overlaying the mainline with 0.15-foot-thick layer of rubberized hot mix asphalt. In addition, bridge structure approaches, on-ramps, off-ramps, and possibly other areas within the project limits will be cold planed.

Cold planing, also referred to as asphalt milling, is a process that uses specialized equipment to precisely grind and remove existing pavement to a specified depth and grade with control and accuracy. Cold planing will occur up to but not over bridge structures, ensuring that bridge notches and tapers conform to the road. Cold planing may also be necessary to maintain vertical clearance at overhead signs; this will be assessed during the project's Plans, Specifications, and Estimates phase. All cold planed areas will subsequently be resurfaced with a 0.15-foot rubberized hot mix asphalt overlay. Heavily distressed pavement will be rehabilitated with dig outs. Preliminary project plans have been developed and are included in Appendix B.

Within the project limits, the Build Alternative will restore and/or rehabilitate 28 culverts at 12 locations. The Build Alternative will also remove and upgrade non-standard guardrail and end treatments; non-standard concrete barriers; and traffic stripe and pavement markings. In addition, the Build Alternative will remove and replace rumble strip and the existing dike, replace one traffic census station, repair loops at two additional traffic census stations, and construct shoulder backing where feasible. [The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Finally, the Build Alternative will improve wildlife connectivity by constructing two wildlife undercrossing structures and directional fencing at two existing culvert locations.

Mainline Improvements

The Build Alternative will use cold planing to remove the existing top layer of asphalt in certain locations, as described above. Following this, a 0.15-foot-thick layer of rubberized hot mix asphalt will be applied to the existing concrete pavement between post miles 0.00 and 7.55 in both the northbound and southbound lanes, for a total of approximately 30.290 lane miles.

The Build Alternative will also use dig outs to fix pavement at locations with excessive damage. Dig outs are used when areas of pavement have failed to the extent that the underlying supporting materials have fragmented, been infiltrated with fine-grained materials, or otherwise lost their load-bearing capacity. Dig outs generally require the removal of all the underlying base materials to properly rehabilitate the heavily damaged pavement. Dig out location details will be determined during the Plans, Specifications, and Estimates phase of the project.

Approaches to bridge decks will be cold planed to conform the asphalt surfacing at the bridge deck edges. Areas underneath overhead signs may be cold planed, if needed. Additionally, drainage inlets may need to be raised to meet the higher elevation of the new roadway surfacing.

Ramp Improvements

Similar to the mainline, all on-ramps and off-ramps within the project limits will be cold planed followed by a 0.15-foot rubberized hot mix asphalt overlay.

Rumble Strips and Striping

The proposed project will remove existing rumble strips as part of the cold planing operation and replace them in kind with new rumble strips after the 0.15-foot rubberized hot mix asphalt overlay on both the inside and outside shoulders. Additionally, the project will remove and upgrade existing traffic striping and pavement markings to meet current standards.

Culvert Improvements

The project will restore and/or rehabilitate 28 culverts at 12 locations. The Culvert Inspection Program conducted inventory and hydraulic analysis in 2016/2017 and identified drainage culverts within the project area in varying states of deterioration requiring repair or replacement. The existing culverts are constructed of two types of material, concrete and corrugated steel pipe. Replacements and upgrades of existing culverts will use concrete, corrugated steel, and welded steel.

Initial preparation for culvert work will include minimal clearing and grubbing. The installation of new pipes will involve a crane or boom truck to place equipment and materials, jack and bore or cut and cover (trenching) operations, disposal of removed earthen material, and slope stabilization at culvert locations. The jack and bore construction method involves creating construction pits at one or both ends of the culvert to remove the existing culvert and install the new culvert. The cut and cover construction method involves cutting the culvert out from the road surface and temporarily covering the cut so traffic can travel over the cut until construction is complete. Each culvert exhibits differing degrees of damage, requiring tailored strategies based on individual site conditions. Table 1-1 details the drainage locations, existing conditions, and proposed restoration/rehabilitation strategy. [The following text has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Note that culvert system numbers and nodes, drainage IDs, and descriptions listed in Table 1-1 have changed slightly since release of the draft environmental document.

Table 1-1 Drainage Culvert Locations and Restoration/Rehabilitation Strategies

Drainage System	Outlet Post Mile	Culvert System Number	Inlet Number	Outlet Number	Proposed Improvements
1	0.43R	431014100043	2	1	Rehabilitate culvert with a 20-foot wide by 10-foot high three-sided bottomless structure with a clear span of the channel for wildlife crossing.
2	0.48L	431012100048	2	1	Rehabilitate culvert with an approximately 20-foot wide by 10-foot high three-sided bottomless structure with a clear span of the channel for wildlife crossing. This culvert was extended as part of the San Juan Road Interchange project, 05-315801.
3	0.80	431014000080	3	1	Repair culvert inlet headwall. Due to the poor condition of the culvert's invert, small diameter, and shallow depth, recommend upsizing the 145-foot culvert with new 48-inch corrugated steel pipe by cut and cover to match nodes 5 and 4.
4	1.12	431014000112	2	1	Due to the poor condition of the culvert's corrugated steel pipe invert and its shallow depth, recommend upsizing 60 feet of culvert with new 48-inch corrugated steel pipe by cut and cover to match nodes. May require rock slope protection for outlet scour protection.
5	2.65	431014000265	4	3	Since the concrete box culvert is in fair condition but the invert state of the extended corrugated steel pipe portion is in poor condition and the culvert is at a shallow depth, recommended rehabilitating the 18-

					foot corrugated steel pipe with a 4-foot by 4-foot box to match the rest of the system, by cut and cover.
5	2.65	431014000265	2	1	Concrete repair. May require rock slope protection for outlet scour protection.
6	2.82	431014000282	6	5	Due to the poor state of the culvert's invert, recommend rehabilitating the 14-foot corrugated steel pipe with a 4-foot by 4-foot box to match downstream nodes. Construction is recommended to be done by jacking if possible due to depth.
6	2.82	431014000282	8	7	Due to the poor state of the culvert's invert, recommend rehabilitating the 240-foot culvert with new 48-inch welded steel pipe by jacking to help improve drainage system. Also, may require rock slope protection for outlet scour protection.
7	3.13	431018000313	5	4	Repair culvert inlet and outlet headwall along with full length replacement of existing culvert by upsizing with new 36-inch welded steel pipe using jack and bore method. May require rock slope protection for outlet scour protection.
7	3.13	431018000313	2	1	Rehabilitate culvert with a full-length replacement by upsizing of existing culvert with new 36-inch welded steel pipe using jacking method.
7	3.13	431018000313	3	2	Repair culvert inlet and outlet headwall along with a full-length replacement by upsizing of existing culvert with new 36-inch welded steel pipe using jacking method. Also, some outlet modifications and flared end section additions will be necessary to stabilize

					channel drainage. May require rock slope protection for outlet scour protection.
8	3.33	431014100333	2	1	Due to the poor condition of the culvert's invert, a system flush is necessary before upsizing the 70-foot culvert with new 42-inch welded steel pipe by jacking to help improve drainage system. Also, modify outlet of pipe with a flared end section to improve drainage system. May require rock slope protection for outlet scour protection.
8	3.33	431014100333	5	4	Since the culvert's corrugated steel pipe invert is in poor condition, rehabilitate by upsizing the 75-foot culvert with new 42-inch welded steel pipe by jacking, and replace flared end section treatment to help improve drainage system. May require rock slope protection for outlet scour protection.
8	3.33	431014100333	7	6	Repair culvert inlet headwall, and due to the poor condition of the culvert's invert and its shallow depth, recommend upsizing the 30-foot culvert with new 42-inch corrugated steel pipe by cut and cover to help improve drainage system. Also, some outlet modification, regrading, and adding a flared end section will be necessary to stabilize channel drainage. May require rock slope protection for outlet scour protection.
9	3.52	431010100352	2	1	Due to the poor condition of the corrugated steel pipe culvert invert, upsize the 27-foot culvert with new 66-inch welded steel pipe by jacking to help improve drainage system. May require rock slope protection for outlet scour protection.

9	3.52	431010100352	3	2	Due to the poor condition of the corrugated steel pipe culvert invert, upsize the 228-foot culvert with new 66-inch welded steel pipe by jacking to help improve drainage system.
9	3.52	431010100352	4	3	Since the corrugated steel pipe invert is in poor condition and the culvert is shallow, upsizing the 134-foot culvert with new 66-inch welded steel pipe by jacking will be enough to help improve drainage system.
10	3.71	431014100371	2	1	This location is a two parallel barrel culvert. Due to the poor condition of both corrugated steel pipe inverts and their shallow depth, upsizing both of the 255-foot culverts with new 66-inch corrugated steel pipe by cut and cover will be enough to help improve drainage system. May require rock slope protection for outlet scour protection.
10	3.71	431014100371	5	2	Upsize the 80-foot culvert with 66-inch welded steel pipe by jacking.
10	3.71	431014100371	7	2	Upsize the 103-foot culvert with 66-inch welded steel pipe by jacking.
10	3.71	431014100371	8	7	Upsize the 50-foot culvert with 66-inch welded steel pipe by jacking.
10	3.71	431014100371	3	2	Upsize the 15-foot culvert with 24-inch corrugated steel pipe by cut and cover.
10	3.71	431014100371	4	2	Upsize the 15-foot culvert with 24-inch corrugated steel pipe by cut and cover.

11	4.00	431014100400	4	3	Since the culvert's corrugated steel pipe invert is poor condition and is at a shallow depth, rehabilitating the 115-foot culvert with new 48-inch corrugated steel pipe by cut and cover will be enough to help improve drainage system.
12	4.40	431014100440	2	1	There will be some inlet modification, regrading, and system flushing and due to the poor condition of the corrugated steel pipe invert. Upsizing the 526-foot culvert with new 120-inch welded steel pipe by jack and bore will help improve the drainage system. May require rock slope protection for outlet scour protection.
12	4.40	431014100440	3	2	There will be some inlet modification, regrading, and system flushing and due to the poor condition of the corrugated steel pipe invert. Upsizing the 478-foot culvert with new 120-inch welded steel pipe by jack and bore will help improve the drainage system
13	6.40	431010000640	7	6	Since the corrugated steel pipe culvert is in fair condition and shallow depth, rehabilitating the 166-foot culvert with a 4-foot by 4-foot box by jacking is enough to help improve drainage system.
13	6.40	431010000640	6	5	Since the corrugated steel pipe culvert is in fair condition, rehabilitating the 90-foot culvert with a 4-foot by 4-foot box by cut and cover is enough to help improve drainage system.

Wildlife Connectivity Improvements

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] The proposed project will create two wildlife undercrossings by improving existing culverts on the northbound side of U.S. Route 101 at post mile 0.43R and the southbound side of U.S. Route 101 at post mile 0.48L. The existing culverts will be replaced with three-sided bottomless structures 20 feet wide and 10 feet high. The culvert installation work will use the cut and cover installation method. Temporary dewatering or stream diversion may be required. The undercrossings will be constructed over one to two seasons. Some small-diameter oak trees will need to be removed for construction of the undercrossings, but tree removals will be avoided to the greatest extent feasible.

Additional infrastructure for wildlife connectivity improvements will include the installation of permanent wildlife directional fencing to direct animals towards the crossing structures, as well as escape ramps which will function as exits for wildlife should they enter the roadway.

Guardrail Improvements

Work associated with guardrail improvements will include removing the existing non-standard guardrail and replacing it with Midwest Guardrail System. This will involve widening the fill choker, the area that the guardrail will anchor to, to a 4-foot width. Additionally, the project will upgrade the guardrail connections to structures by installing anchor blocks, West Bound connections, and ensuring all other standard requirements are met. The project will also upgrade all end treatments to comply with Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware requirements, with particular attention to in-line systems that already meet these standards.

Median Barrier Improvements

The project limits contain a 32-inch-tall concrete barrier median, along with a combination of single thrie beam and double thrie beam barrier within the medians. [The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] At select locations, concrete barrier that does not meet current safety standards will be replaced with 42-inch or taller concrete barrier to meet Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware standards. Current 28-inch thrie beam barriers will be replaced at the standard height of 31 inches.

Dike Improvements

The proposed project will remove existing dikes, which are low roadside embankments that help direct water off the road, overlay these areas with 0.15 foot of rubberized hot mix asphalt, and replace the dikes as necessary.

Shoulder Improvements

Shoulder backing will be installed throughout the project limits to account for overlay and to eliminate drop-offs from the edge of traveled way. Shoulder backing is a thin course of granular material used to protect the edge of pavement from erosion and weathering, by preventing cracking along the pavement edge. Installation of shoulder backing will not exceed a five-foot-wide disturbed soil area adjacent to the existing pavement.

Transportation Management System Improvements

Caltrans utilizes Transportation Management Systems to monitor, regulate, and improve the flow of vehicle traffic and improve safety. One traffic census station will be replaced within the pavement (TMS ID 05903 at post mile 7.21). Two additional traffic census stations will receive repairs to their loops, which are sensors embedded in the pavement: TMS ID 05416 at post mile R3.36, and TMS ID 05512 at post mile 2.647L.

Utility Relocation

No utility relocations or impacts are currently anticipated. However, communication, electrical, gas, and water utilities exist within the project limits. Caltrans will perform Positive Location vacuum excavation, also known as potholing, along U.S. Route 101 in San Benito County to locate utilities and identify any potential utility-related conflicts that may arise during construction. If any utilities are found to conflict with construction activities and proposed improvements, Caltrans will provide for any State share of utility relocation and will work closely with utility providers to facilitate relocation prior to or during construction.

1.4.2 No-Build (No-Action) Alternative

Under the no-build alternative, no improvements would be made to the pavement, culverts, traffic safety systems, or transportation management systems elements. Pavement distress would continue to increase if left untreated which would require costly major pavement rehabilitation in the future. Culverts in poor condition would continue to deteriorate from corrosion, perforation, deformation, and sediment accumulation which could lead to future roadway failure. Additionally, collection of multimodal traffic data would remain deficient and the project would not improve wildlife connectivity. The no-build alternative would not meet the project’s purpose and need.

1.5 Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in the Build Alternative

The proposed project will include Caltrans standard measures that are typically used on all Caltrans projects. Caltrans standard measures are considered

features of the project and are evaluated as part of the project. Caltrans standard measures are not implemented to address any specific effects, impacts, or circumstances associated with the project but are instead implemented as part of the project's design to address common issues encountered on projects.

The measures listed below are those related to environmental resources and are applicable to the project. These measures can be found in the Caltrans 2024 Standard Specifications document.

- 7-1 Legal Relations and Responsibility to the Public
- 10-5 Dust Control
- 10-6 Watering
- 12-1 Temporary Traffic Control
- 12-3 Temporary Traffic Control Devices
- 12-4 Maintaining Traffic
- 13-1 Water Pollution Control
- 13-2 Water Pollution Control Program
- 13-4 Job Site Management
- 13-6 Temporary Sediment Control
- 13-7 Temporary Tracking Control
- 13-10 Temporary Linear Sediment Barriers
- 14-1 General (Environmental Stewardship)
- 14-2 Cultural Resources
- 14-6 Biological Resources
- 14-8 Noise and Vibration
- 14-9 Air Quality
- 14-10 Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling
- 14-11 Hazardous Waste and Contamination
- 14-12 Other Agency Regulatory Requirements
- 17-2 Clearing and Grubbing
- 18-1 Dust Palliatives
- 20-1 Landscape
- 20-3 Planting
- 20-4 Plant Establishment Work
- 21-2 Erosion Control Work

Additional standard measures will be added to the project as necessary or appropriate.

In addition, prior to project construction a Transportation Management Plan will be developed to manage traffic during the construction phase. The Transportation Management Plan will establish traffic control and access actions to minimize disruption to the travelling public, as well as ensuring that emergency response and evacuation access will be maintained during project construction. Transportation Management Plans are required for all projects on the state highway system to minimize work-related traffic delays while reducing overall duration of work activities.

Best Management Practices that will be implemented to protect water quality during the proposed project activities are discussed further in Section 2.1.10, Hydrology and Water Quality.

1.6 Discussion of the NEPA Categorical Exclusion

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

1.7 Permits and Approvals Needed

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

Agency	Permit/Approval	Status
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Section 1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement	To be obtained prior to construction
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	2081 Incidental Take Permit for California tiger salamander	To be obtained prior to construction
Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board	Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification	To be obtained prior to construction
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Clean Water Act Section 404 Nationwide Permit	To be obtained prior to construction
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Section 7 Consultation and a Biological Opinion for California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, and least Bell's vireo	To be obtained prior to construction
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	CEQA Review	Review of Draft Environmental Document
County of San Benito	Encroachment Permits	To be obtained prior to construction
Local Landowners	Temporary Construction Easements	Formal agreements will be proposed after project approval

Chapter 2 CEQA Evaluation

2.1 CEQA Environmental Checklist

This checklist identifies physical, biological, social, and economic factors that might be affected by the proposed project. Potential impact determinations include Significant and Unavoidable Impact, Less Than Significant 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 Best Management Practices and measures included in the Standard Plans and Specifications or as Standard Special Provisions, are considered to be an integral part of the project and have been considered prior to any significance determinations documented below.

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

2.1.1 Aesthetics

Considering the information in the project Visual Impact Assessment of the Proposed SBt US101 Pavement Rehabilitation Project, dated June 1, 2026, 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?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	**No Impact**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Aesthetics
c) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from a publicly accessible vantage point.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	**No Impact**

Affected Environment

In the project area, U.S. Route 101 is the primary north-south transportation corridor through San Benito County. This stretch of U.S. Route 101 is classified as a 4-lane Expressway from post mile 0.0 to 1.8, a Freeway from post mile 1.8-7.52, and an Expressway from post mile 7.52 to 7.55. The route serves local commuters, recreational drivers, commercial users and provides regional connection.

The landscape is characterized by broad valleys and rolling hills east and inland of the Monterey Bay. Land uses include low density rural residential; agricultural; and scattered mixed commercial and industrial. Natural landscapes are dominant in the project area and include oak woodland, grassland, and riparian corridors. The southern portion of the project includes unique rock formations and a dense grove of large, old eucalyptus trees. Near post mile 3.0, U.S. Route 101 follows the historic El Camino Real, which is marked by several replica mission bells. A local landmark known as the “Mission Monument Marker” is located in this area and is often visited by community members for informal gatherings and tributes. The Mission Monument Marker is considered a sensitive visual resource by the local community.

U.S. Route 101 has long been recognized for its scenic qualities in San Benito County. The southern segment of the project area, from post miles 0.0 to 3.0, has been identified by Caltrans as an Eligible State Scenic Highway. In addition, area residents and representatives have long valued the aesthetic qualities of this corridor, with San Benito County recognizing U.S. Route 101 as a scenic corridor worthy of preservation and designating it as a “County Scenic Highway.” Several Natural and Cultural Resource elements of the County of San Benito 2035 General Plan elaborate on the corridor’s scenic value and the desire of residents to protect it.

Environmental Consequences

The project Visual Impact Assessment found that viewer sensitivity to adjacent roadway modifications for observers looking toward the highway is expected to be low, as existing views toward the highway from surrounding, publicly accessible areas are already minimal. The proposed improvements will be 50 feet or more from these viewers or will be blocked by terrain or vegetation, and thus are not expected to be visible. Additionally, project features such as drainage improvements, a taller concrete median barrier and taller guardrail are not expected to impact views to or from neighboring areas. Vegetation removal will generally be in remote locations of the project or are part of larger vegetation patterns and are not anticipated to impact views to or from the project. Although construction staging activities are anticipated to temporarily impact views and access to the Mission Monument Marker, protection measures implemented during construction will minimize any potential visual impacts at the location.

For travelers passing through on U.S. Route 101, viewer sensitivity is expected to be moderate-high, based on the area's visual resources as well as the scenic importance of the highway corridor. Motorists traveling on the highway will see elements of the proposed improvements such as new asphalt paving, concrete barriers, and metal beam guardrail at close range along the full extent of the project limits, or at least in consistent intervals. The amount of time traveling motorists will see elements of the proposed improvements is up to eight minutes if traveling through the entire project area at the posted speed limit of 55 miles per hour. However, viewer sensitivity might be somewhat decreased because the main use of the corridor is primarily for commuting and business, with minimal tourism related uses or publicly available views directly associated with this segment of U.S. Route 101.

As stated in the Visual Impact Assessment, the project is expected to result in a minor reduction in visual quality due to urbanizing elements of the proposed improvements such as an approximately 10 inch taller median barrier, approximately 4 inch taller guardrail, and new features such as wildlife fencing and jump-outs. However, these features are not unexpected in a highway environment. Existing views of scenic rocks, oak woodland and eucalyptus forest, expansive hills and grassland, and local landmarks such as mission-style wall and gateway features will still be visible to travelers on U.S. Route 101. Neighbor views to corridor improvements are not expected to change significantly given that there are few public views to the roadway from the surrounding area. In addition, the project does not propose any new lighting. Railing, new guardrail, or other metal facilities will be stained or color-treated to reduce the potential for glare.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Although mitigation for visual impacts is not required for this project, the following measures will be implemented to further minimize the visual effects of the project:

VIS-1. Preserve the existing vegetation to the maximum extent feasible. Prescriptive clearing, grubbing, and grading techniques that will save the most existing vegetation possible should be employed.

VIS-2. Replacement planting shall include aesthetic considerations as well as the inherent biological goals. Revegetation shall include native trees and plants as determined by the Caltrans Biologist and Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architect. Plantings should be maintained until established.

VIS-3. Preserve existing rock outcroppings and historic architecture elements.

VIS-4. All visible concrete drainage elements, including but not limited to headwalls, drain inlet aprons, and rock slope protection, will be colored to blend with the surroundings and reduce reflectivity. The specific colors of these concrete elements shall be determined by Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture.

VIS-5. Within eligible scenic highway portions of the project, stain the proposed cable railing or other metal components as directed by District 5 Landscape Architecture.

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] VIS-6. Where concrete median barrier is installed, stain and/or apply architectural treatment through project limits at the direction of District 5 Landscape Architecture. Color treat cable rail if applicable.

VIS-7. Placement, scale, and color of wildlife passage fencing and materials should be coordinated with District 5 landscape architecture to reduce visual impacts and limit vegetation removal.

VIS-8. Bridge rails, if required for proposed culverts within eligible scenic highway limits, should be open style where feasible, and color treated or textured under the direction of District 5 Landscape Architecture and in coordination with Caltrans Structures.

VIS-9. Following construction, re-grade and re-contour all new construction staging areas and other temporary uses as necessary to match the surrounding pre-project topography.

VIS-10. Inert vegetation control under guardrail will be selected to blend in with the natural surrounding and reduce reflectivity. The selection of the vegetation control material and/or color shall be determined and approved by

District 5 Landscape Architecture in coordination with District 5 field maintenance.

VIS-11. Aesthetic treatments such as bridge barriers selection, concrete barrier color and aesthetics need coordination with the community.

VIS-12. If feasible, underground new or relocated utilities.

VIS-13. Delineate the Mission Monument Marker as an Environmentally Sensitive Area or other protection area as appropriate.

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.

Based on the San Benito County Planning Department's Geographic Information Systems web tool and the San Benito County 2035 General Plan Land Use Element (adopted July 21, 2015), segments of the project limits are adjacent to properties zoned for agricultural uses. Although agricultural properties are found next to U.S. Route 101, the project is not anticipated to affect these properties or their existing functions. No prime farmland exists within the project limits. Although some adjacent parcels are held by a Williamson Act contract, none of these parcels are considered prime farmland and the project will not impact them. A review of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's Hub online Geographic Information Systems tool indicates that no timber operations are currently taking place near the project limits.

Considering the information in the San Benito County Planning Department's Geographic Information Systems web tool and the San Benito County 2035 General Plan, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Agriculture and Forest Resources
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	**No Impact**
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	**No Impact**
c) Conflict with existing zoning, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g))?	**No Impact**
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	**No Impact**
e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	**No Impact**

2.1.3 Air Quality

Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations.

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Considering the information in the project Air Quality, Noise and Water Quality Technical Assessment Memo dated May 8, 2026 and the Climate Change Report dated April 2026, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Air Quality
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	**No Impact**
b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?	**No Impact**
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	**No Impact**

Affected Environment

The project corridor is largely rural. Within the project limits, U.S. Route 101 crosses through areas that have San Benito County zoning designations of Rural, Agricultural Productive, Agricultural Rangeland/Mineral Resource, Neighborhood Commercial, Agricultural Rangeland/FP, Agricultural Rangeland, Heavy Industrial, and Commercial Thoroughfare.

The project limits are within the north Central Coast Air Basin. The Monterey Bay Air Resource District regulates air quality in the project area. The North Central Coast Air Basin is considered in attainment for all federal ambient air quality standards; under State ambient air quality standards, the basin is in non-attainment transitional for ozone and non-attainment for airborne particulate less than 10 microns in diameter (PM10).

The Federal Highway Administration first issued air quality conformity guidelines in 1993, which have been amended throughout the years. Because the project is in attainment for all federal ambient air quality standards, conformity requirements do not apply for this project.

Environmental Consequences

The proposed project will rehabilitate pavement and drainage systems, improve wildlife connectivity, upgrade traffic safety systems, and replace

transportation management system elements along U.S. Route 101 in San Benito County.

As stated in the project's Air Quality, Noise and Water Quality Technical Assessment Memo, the project does not have the potential to cause long-term, adverse air quality impacts in the project vicinity (the North Central Coast Air Basin) because it will not increase the highway's capacity or vehicle miles traveled.

However, roadway construction projects such as this one can typically be expected to create short-term, temporary air emission impacts from the use of methods such as cold planing, asphalt overlay, dig outs, cut and cover, and pipe jacking. In addition, the hot mix asphalt overlay that will be used to resurface the highway has the potential to subject surrounding sensitive receptors such as residences, businesses, health care facilities, and schools to inhalable construction emissions and odors because it will require transportation and application of asphalt. Fugitive dust generation resulting from road construction projects can also cause temporary impacts to local air quality from excavation, soil transport, and subsequent fill operations; however, dust production resulting from this project is expected to be minimal because of the relatively minor amount of earthwork proposed.

Project-related air pollutant and dust emissions will be minimized through standard construction dust and emission minimization practices and procedures (see Section 1.5, Standard Measures and Best Management Practices). Project-related air pollutant and dust emissions are anticipated to be well within Monterey Bay Air Resources District daily thresholds. Section 14-9.02 (Air Pollution Control) of the 2022 Standard Specifications states that the contractor is responsible for complying with all local air-pollution-control rules, regulations, ordinances, and statutes that apply to work performed under the Contract, including those provided in California Government Code Section 11017 (Pub Contract Code Section 10231). This standard measure also requires that the contractor incorporate appropriate engineering design and Stormwater Best Management Practices during construction.

Any potential air quality impacts to sensitive receptors nearby will also be minimized since the project corridor is overwhelmingly rural. The largest population center near the project, San Juan Bautista (population approximately 2,000 as of 2020), is two miles away from U.S. Route 101.

Caltrans will implement standard construction dust and emission minimization practices and procedures, ensuring that project emissions of particulate matter and equipment emissions will be well within the daily thresholds of the Monterey Bay Air Resource District. Thus, the project will be consistent with the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District's State air quality attainment goals as outlined in its State Implementation Plan, the 2012 to 2015 Air Quality Management Plan.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures are proposed.

2.1.4 Biological Resources

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Considering the information in the project Natural Environment Study dated May 2026, the San Benito US 101 Pavement Rehabilitation Project Jurisdictional Delineation Report dated May 2025 (attached to the Natural Environment Study), and the Natural Environment Study Addendum dated April 20, 2026, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Biological Resources
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries?	**Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated**
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	**Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated**
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?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	**No Impact**
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	**No Impact**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Biological Resources
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	**No Impact**

Affected Environment

The project Biological Study Area encompasses the region assessed for biological resources, including areas that may be directly, indirectly, temporarily, or permanently affected by construction and related activities. It also included adjoining habitats to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of potential environmental impacts.

The Biological Study Area included an approximately 7.55-mile segment of U.S. Route 101 in San Benito County, California, from post mile 0.0 to post mile 7.55. The total area of the Biological Study Area is approximately 368 acres. The Biological Study Area is primarily confined to areas adjacent to highway facilities and ruderal/disturbed habitats, including road surfaces and shoulders. However, the Biological Study Area is expanded in areas where proposed drainage work and wildlife connectivity improvements will occur. The limits of the Biological Study Area encompass the proposed construction work areas, associated access roads, staging areas, and nearby potential habitat areas. As a result, the Biological Study Area extends beyond the anticipated construction footprint to ensure a thorough evaluation of potential effects on biological resources near the project limits.

Special-status species considered in this analysis include those that are federally or state-listed as endangered, threatened, or rare; candidates for federal or state listing; or proposed for such listings. Additionally, species considered to be of special concern by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, as well as those appearing on the California Natural Diversity Database Special Animals List (2025), are included. Sensitive species also include those protected under various regulations, including the National Environmental Policy Act, the California Environmental Quality Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and sections of the California Fish and Game Code, such as protections for nesting birds. Species recognized as locally important or sensitive by the California Native Plant Society or the scientific community are also considered.

Sensitive natural communities and habitats analyzed include those regulated or considered significant by federal, state, and local agencies, as well as those protected under National Environmental Policy Act and California Environmental Quality Act. The known occurrences of these species and habitats have been mapped using data from the California Natural Diversity Database, and field surveys. The search area for this project included the San

Juan Bautista and Chittenden U.S. Geological Survey (U.S. Geological Survey) 7.5-minute quadrangles, ensuring a comprehensive assessment of all sensitive biological resources within the Biological Study Area.

Habitats and Natural Communities of Special Concern

Eleven natural and semi-natural vegetation types and three anthropogenic land cover types occur in the Biological Study Area of the project. Additionally, aquatic resources were identified within the Biological Study Area, including non-wetland waters, wetlands (emergent, and scrub-shrub wetlands), and riparian habitats.

Eight are natural communities: coast live oak woodland and forest, Goodding's willow–red willow riparian woodland and forest, Fremont cottonwood forest and woodland, arroyo willow thickets, coyote brush scrub, California buckwheat scrub, needle grass–melic grass grassland, and ashy ryegrass–creeping wildrye turfs. Goodding's willow–red willow riparian woodland and forest, Fremont cottonwood forest, needle grass–melic grass grassland, and ashy ryegrass–creeping wildrye turfs are considered sensitive natural communities. A Sensitive Natural Community is defined as vegetation cover type that ranks as S3 (vulnerable), S2 (imperiled), or S1 (critically imperiled) under the California Native Plant Society's online inventory of rare plants. These communities are recognized in collaboration with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and are included in the California Natural Diversity Database.

Two are semi-natural communities dominated by nonnative trees and shrubs: eucalyptus groves and pepper tree groves. The last semi-natural community is nonnative grasslands which consist of all nonnative perennial and annual grasslands within the Biological Study Area.

The remaining three land cover types, agricultural, developed, and ruderal areas, cover approximately 0.78, 146.19, and 10.33 acres, respectively. These land cover types are anthropogenic, meaning they are heavily altered and disturbed by human activity and often subject to ongoing management such as mowing, herbicide, and disking (process used to break up soil, and control weeds). The developed areas are not included in the natural communities' descriptions below.

The coast live oak woodland and forest community covers approximately 40.78 acres throughout the Biological Study Area. It is dominated by the evergreen coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), with variations in canopy density. In densely canopied areas, the understory is sparse or absent, whereas in more open areas, poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*) and coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*) are commonly found. Although much of the Biological Study Area is disturbed due to its proximity to the highway, portions

bordering the San Benito River, unnamed streams, and open rangeland provide suitable wildlife habitat.

The Goodding's willow–red willow riparian woodland and forest community, which is considered a Sensitive Natural Community, covers 8.02 acres along the San Benito River and its tributaries. It features a dense tree canopy dominated by Goodding's willow (*Salix gooddingii*) and red willow (*Salix laevigata*), along with valley oak (*Quercus lobata*), California bay (*Umbellularia californica*), Fremont and black cottonwoods (*Populus fremontii* and *Populus trichocarpa*), box elder (*Acer negundo*), and black walnut (*Juglans hindsii*). The understory is composed of poison oak, wild grape (*Vitis californica*), and blackberries (*Rubus* spp.). This riparian woodland was found at three locations in the Biological Study Area, including two at the eastern edge of the San Juan Valley, where it occurs along unnamed streams, and a third near the western end of the Biological Study Area, where it parallels a southern roadside stream. These willow-dominated habitats provide moderate-quality wildlife habitat.

The Fremont cottonwood forest and woodland community, which is also considered a Sensitive Natural Community, spans 5.52 acres and is found along the San Benito River, extending north along both sides of U.S. Route 101 in the river floodplain. This habitat is dominated by Fremont cottonwood with other riparian species such as willows, box elder, and blackberries, present in the canopy and understory. Cottonwood-dominated land cover offers moderate-quality habitat for wildlife.

The coyote brush scrub community covers approximately 5.34 acres within the Biological Study Area and is commonly found on valley floors, lower slopes, and flatlands. It is dominated by coyote brush, often growing in dense stands or interspersed among nonnative grasses. Other species, including California sage (*Artemisia californica*) and blue elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* subspecies *caerulea*) are frequently present.

The California buckwheat scrub community covers approximately 9.04 acres and is primarily located at the western end of the Biological Study Area on roadside banks and open hill slopes. California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*) dominates the open shrub canopy, with small gaps occupied by nonnative grasses or bare ground. Associated species include coyote brush, sticky monkey flower (*Diplacus aurantiacus*), poison oak, and California coffeeberry (*Frangula californica*).

Two types of native perennial grasslands, which are both considered Sensitive Natural Communities, occur in the Biological Study Area. Needle grass–melic grass grassland covers approximately 0.36 acres and is found north of U.S. Route 101 at the State Route 156 interchange. Ashy ryegrass–creeping wildrye grassland covers approximately 0.56 acres and is located adjacent to U.S. Route 101 at the western end of the Biological Study Area.

Needle grass–melic grass grassland was identified in areas where a combination of needle grass (*Stipa* species) and melic grass (*Melica* species) dominate, with native perennial grasses making up at least five percent of the absolute cover. Ashy ryegrass–creeping wildrye grassland was mapped in locations where creeping wildrye (*Leymus triticoides*) is the predominant species, typically growing on poorly drained flats and valley bottoms. These grasslands are often accompanied by a diverse mix of native and nonnative grasses and forbs.

Arroyo willow thickets cover approximately 3.23 acres within the Biological Study Area and represent the primary type of riparian scrub along some streams in the region. These thickets consist of small stands of arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*), often interspersed with coyote brush. Within the Biological Study Area, arroyo willow thickets were mapped along the Pajaro River at the northern end and along an unnamed stream at the eastern edge of the San Juan Valley. This community is not considered a Sensitive Natural Community and does not meet the criteria for a sensitive alliance within this vegetation type, as defined by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Eucalyptus groves cover approximately 17.5 acres within the Biological Study Area and were mapped at two locations along U.S. Route 101. These groves consist of very tall eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus* species) trees with a dense canopy that limits the development of an understory. Planted along the roadway, this semi-natural community is classified under the Eucalyptus–tree of heaven–black locust groves alliance. Despite its distinctive structure, this vegetation type is not considered a Sensitive Natural Community by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife but does offer suitable habitat for some species, such as the monarch butterfly and nesting birds.

Pepper tree groves cover approximately 1.67 acres within the Biological Study Area and were mapped at a single location along U.S. Route 101. This grove consists of a row of planted pepper trees (*Schinus molle*) situated at an industrial site between the San Benito River and Chittenden Road. Classified under the Pepper tree or Myoporum groves alliance, this semi-natural community is not considered a Sensitive Natural Community by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Nonnative grasslands cover approximately 119.08 acres within the Biological Study Area and are widespread throughout the region. This semi-natural community encompasses several nonnative grassland types, including those dominated by annual and perennial nonnative grasses. Wild oats (*Avena* species) and annual brome (*Bromus* species) grasslands are the most extensive, consisting primarily of annual nonnative grasses interspersed with a variety of native and nonnative forbs. Smaller patches of nonnative perennial grasses occur in moderately moist areas such as valley bottoms and lower slopes, including fields of perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*) and swards of Harding grass (*Phalaris aquatica*) and reed canary grass (*Phalaris*

arundinacea). These grasslands are often subject to vegetation management such as mowing along roadsides, grazing, and disking. Classified under the *Wild oats and annual brome grasslands* alliance, this community is not considered a Sensitive Natural Community by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Potential Jurisdictional Areas

Non-Wetland Waters, Wetlands, and Riparian Habitats

Non-wetland waters, wetlands, and riparian habitats are regulated under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Water Quality Control Board, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Jurisdictional features were identified within the Biological Study Area where impacts on aquatic resources are anticipated. These areas were mapped as sub-areas named the Jurisdictional Delineation Survey Area, as documented in the San Benito US 101 Pavement Rehabilitation Project Jurisdictional Delineation Report (May 2025). These resources include streams, wetlands, and riparian areas. Additionally, two major perennial rivers occur within the Biological Study Area: The Pajaro River at the northern end of the Biological Study Area and the San Benito River in the central portion of the Biological Study Area. These rivers support stands of riparian woodland and forest.

Jurisdictional features mapped in the Jurisdictional Delineation Survey Area are described in more detail below.

Non-Wetland Waters: Several intermittent and ephemeral streams were identified within the Jurisdictional Delineation Survey Area, some of which support wetland vegetation. Intermittent streams flow seasonally when the groundwater table rises above the streambed, allowing for prolonged water flow that is further sustained by stormwater runoff. In contrast, ephemeral streams only carry water during and immediately after precipitation events, relying solely on rainfall rather than groundwater. Additionally, one open water feature was mapped within the study area—a stock pond formed by impounding seasonal runoff.

Wetlands: Several small palustrine (freshwater and lacking significant flow) emergent and scrub-shrub wetlands were delineated within the Biological Study Area, primarily associated with ephemeral and intermittent streams. The emergent wetlands support herbaceous hydrophytic vegetation, including brown-headed rush (*Juncus phaeocephalus*), Mexican rush (*Juncus mexicanus*), pennyroyal (*Mentha pulegium*), and Santa Barbara sedge (*Carex barbarae*). Wetland ditches were identified in one location, where hydrophytic vegetation such as Italian ryegrass (*Festuca perennis*) and iris-leaved rush (*Juncus xiphioides*) grows below the ordinary high-water mark. However, these ditches were constructed in upland areas to drain stormwater and are not associated with natural streams. Additionally, several small palustrine

scrub-shrub wetlands were delineated, consisting of dense stands of arroyo willow with minimal understory vegetation. These wetlands occur along ephemeral and intermittent streams and provide important riparian habitat within the study area.

Riparian Habitat: Riparian habitats in the Biological Study Area were delineated according to agency protocols within the Jurisdictional Delineation Survey Area and were mapped elsewhere in the Biological Study Area as part of the vegetation and land cover mapping survey. Riparian vegetation consists of arroyo willow thickets, Gooding's willow–red willow riparian woodland and forest, and Fremont cottonwood woodland and forest.

Acreages reported for aquatic resources and other land cover types have not been adjusted to remove the overlap of aquatic resources and riparian habitat within the other vegetation and land cover types.

Designated Critical Habitat

Designated Critical Habitat for south-central California coast steelhead distinct population segment (*Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus* pop. 9) intersects the northern tip of the Biological Study Area at the San Benito and Pajaro Rivers. Since no work is proposed within or on the bridges that span steelhead critical habitat, no impacts to critical habitat will occur as a result of this project. Therefore, south-central California coast steelhead distinct population segment critical habitat will not be discussed further in this document.

Travel Corridors and Habitat Connectivity

The northern portion of the Biological Study Area intersects with an "Essential Connectivity Area" that links the Santa Cruz Mountains to the Gabilan and Diablo ranges—an important ecological corridor for regional wildlife movement. Both the northern and southern ends of the study area also overlap with "Missing Linkages in California's Landscape," which are at-risk areas increasingly fragmented by roads and development. These landscapes are needed to maintain connectivity across the Southern Coast Ranges. The Aromas Hills region represents a critical "choke point" within this corridor and is a top priority for maintaining ecological connectivity. [The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] This is particularly important for species such as the Central Coast population of mountain lions, as connectivity supports genetic diversity and long-term population viability. The mountain lion population in the project area (Central Coast Distinct Population Segment) was listed as Threatened under the California Endangered Species Act in February 2026. Additionally, this stretch of U.S. Route 101 is a known roadkill hotspot, with frequent wildlife-vehicle collisions, including multiple incidents involving mule deer and mountain lions.

Special-Status Plant Species

Botanical surveys were conducted within the project's Biological Study Area in 2023 on April 26–28, June 7–8, July 19–20, and July 27. Based on searches of the California Natural Diversity Database, the California Native Plant Society rare plant inventory (Rank of 1A, 1B.1, or 1B.2), and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service federally listed species list, 40 special-status plant species were identified as occurring in the search area.

The names of each special-status plant species considered are included in Table 2-1, along with a general description of the habitat requirements. Also included are determinations of whether suitable habitat is present or absent, the regulatory status of each species, and whether the species is present in the Biological Study Area. The rationale section summarizes the potential for each species to occur in the project's Biological Study Area.

Although Table 2-1 includes species that are not likely to be found in the Biological Study Area because the habitat in which they occur is not present, these species are included to demonstrate that all species known to occur in the Project region have been reviewed. Where suitable habitat is absent, the species is assumed not to occur within the Biological Study Area.

Within the project's Biological Study Area, suitable habitat is present for eight special-status plant species. However, only one special-status plant species, Pajaro manzanita, was found during appropriately timed floristic and botanical surveys where it appears to have been planted. No designated critical habitat for special-status plant species was discovered in the Biological Study Area.

Although potential habitat occurs within the Biological Study Area for several special-status plant taxa, none of these taxa were found and none are anticipated to occur. It was determined that there will be no effect on any federally or state listed plants or their critical habitat, and therefore will not be discussed further in the document.

Invasive Plant Species

Forty invasive plant species rated High and Moderate were observed within the Biological Study Area. In general, invasive plant species are common throughout the project area, especially on disturbed sites. Nine invasive plant species rated High were observed in the Biological Study Area: red brome (*Bromus rubens*), iceplant (*Carpobrotus edulis*), yellow star-thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*), English ivy (*Hedera helix*), Cape ivy (*Delairea odorata*), French broom (*Genista monspessulana*), perennial pepperwood (*Lepidium latifolium*), and Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*).

Table 2-1 Special-Status Plants Known to Occur in the Project Region

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/ Absent	Determination of Presence in Biological Study Area Rationale
Arctostaphylos andersonii	Anderson's manzanita (*Santa Cruz manzanita*)	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Absent	Study area is south of this plant's geographic range. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Arctostaphylos hookeri subspecies *hookeri*	Hooker's manzanita	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Present	Suitable habitat is present in oak woodlands with sandy soils in the study area; however, this species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Arctostaphylos pajaroensis	Pajaro manzanita	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.1	Habitat Absent	This species was found during botanical surveys, although the plants were planted as part of roadside landscaping. This species occurs within the study area but outside of its native range.
Arenaria paludicola	Marsh sandwort	Federal Endangered State Endangered California Rare Plant Rank 1B.1	Habitat Absent	Suitable aquatic habitats are not present in the study area, and this species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Astragalus tener variety *tener*	Alkali milk-vetch	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Absent	Suitable habitat and soils are not present in the study area. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/ Absent	Determination of Presence in Biological Study Area Rationale
Balsamorhiza macrolepis	Big-scale balsamroot	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Present	Suitable oak woodland and grassland are present in the study area, although serpentine soils are not present. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Ravenella (Campanula) exigua	Chaparral harebell	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Absent	Suitable habitat is not present in study area. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Castilleja rubicundula variety *rubicundula*	Pink creamsacs	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Absent	Suitable habitat and serpentine soils are not present in study area. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Centromadia parryi subspecies *congdonii*	Congdon's tarplant	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.1	Habitat Absent	Suitable soils are not present in the study area. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Chorizanthe pungens variety *pungens*	Monterey spineflower	Federal Endangered California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Present	Suitable soils and habitats are present; however, this species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Cirsium fontinale variety *campylon*	Mount Hamilton fountain thistle	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Absent	Suitable aquatic habitat and serpentine soils are not present in the study area, and this species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/ Absent	Determination of Presence in Biological Study Area Rationale
Collinsia multicolor	San Francisco collinsia	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Absent	Suitable habitat is not present in the study area. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Cordylanthus rigidus subspecies *littoralis*	Seaside bird's-beak	State Endangered California Rare Plant Rank 1B.1	Habitat Present	Suitable soils and habitats are present; however, the species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Deinandra halliana	Hall's tarplant	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Absent	This species generally occurs at higher elevations and was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Delphinium californicum subspecies *interius*	Hospital Canyon larkspur	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Absent	This species generally occurs at higher elevations and was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Dudleya abramsii subspecies *setchellii*	Santa Clara Valley dudleya	Federal Endangered California Rare Plant Rank 1B.1	Habitat Absent	Suitable rocky serpentinite substrates are not present in the study area. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Ericameria fasciculata	Eastwood's goldenbush	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.1	Habitat Present	There is a small amount of suitable habitat present in the study area; however, this species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/ Absent	Determination of Presence in Biological Study Area Rationale
Eriogonum heermannii variety *occidentale*	Western Heermann's buckwheat	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Absent	Suitable soil types are not present within the study area and the study area is outside of this species geographic range. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Eriogonum nortonii	Pinnacles buckwheat	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.3	Habitat Absent	The study area is well below this species' elevation range. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Eryngium aristulatum variety *hooveri*	Hoover's button-celery	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.1	Habitat Absent	Vernal pools are not present within the study area and this species was not found during appropriately time botanical surveys.
Extriplex joaquinana	San Joaquin spearscale	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Absent	Suitable alkaline soils are not present in the study area. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Fritillaria liliacea	Fragrant fritillary	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Present	A small amount of suitable clay soils are present in the study area however, this species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Hoita strobilina	Loma Prieta hoita	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.1	Habitat Absent	Suitable soils are not present in the study area and this species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/ Absent	Determination of Presence in Biological Study Area Rationale
Horkelia cuneata variety *sericea*	Kellogg's horkelia	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.1	Habitat Absent	Suitable habitats are not present in the study area. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Holocarpha macradenia	Santa Cruz tarplant	Federal Endangered State Endangered California Rare Plant Rank 1B.1	Habitat Absent	Suitable habitats are not present in the study area. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Legenere limosa	Legenere	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.1	Habitat Absent	Suitable aquatic habitat is not present in the study area. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Lessingia micradenia variety *glabrata*	Smooth lessingia	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Absent	Suitable serpentine soils are not present in the study area. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Malacothamnus aboriginum	Indian Valley bush-mallow	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Absent	Suitable substrates are not present and the study area is below elevation range. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Malacothamnus arcuatus	Arcuate bush-mallow	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Absent	The study area is south of geographic range in the Bay Area. The species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/ Absent	Determination of Presence in Biological Study Area Rationale
Monolopia gracilens	Woodland Woolythreads	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Absent	Suitable serpentine soils are not present within the study area. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Navarretia prostrata	Prostrate vernal pool navarretia	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Absent	Suitable vernally mesic areas and alkaline soils are not present in the study area. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Penstemon rattanii variety *kleei*	Santa Cruz Mountains beardtongue	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Absent	The study area is well below the elevation range. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Pinus radiata	Monterey pine	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.1	Habitat Absent	This species is generally confined to the immediate coast and was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Piperia yadonii	Yadon's rein orchid	Federal Endangered California Rare Plant Rank 1B.1	Habitat Absent	This species is generally found closer to the coast than the study area. This species was not found during appropriately timed 2023 botanical surveys.
Plagiobothrys diffusus	San Francisco popcorn-flower	State Endangered California Rare Plant Rank 1B.1	Habitat Present	Suitable habitat is present in grasslands within the study area, although this species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/ Absent	Determination of Presence in Biological Study Area Rationale
Plagiobothrys glaber	Hairless popcorn-flower	California Rare Plant Rank 1A	Habitat Absent	Suitable wetlands and soils are not present within the study area. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Puccinellia simplex	California alkali grass	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Absent	Suitable wetlands and soils are not present within the study area. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Rosa pinetorum	Pine rose	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Absent	Suitable closed-cone coniferous forest is not present in the study area. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Streptanthus albidus subspecies *peramoenus*	Most beautiful jewel-flower	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Absent	No suitable serpentine soils are present within the study area. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.
Trifolium hydrophilum	Saline clover	California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2	Habitat Absent	Suitable wetlands and soils are not present in the study area. This species was not found during appropriately timed botanical surveys.

The *Project region* is defined as the United States Geological Survey 7.5-minute quadrangles the Project is in: Chittenden and San Juan Bautista, and the surrounding quadrangles: Mount Madonna, Gilroy, Gilroy Hot Springs, Watsonville East, San Felipe, Prunedale, and Hollister.

Special-Status Animal Species

General reconnaissance-level wildlife surveys of the project's Biological Study Area, along with habitat assessments for California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*) and California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*), were conducted by consultant wildlife biologists on May 18–19 and June 5, 2023. To identify special-status animal species with the potential to occur in the project region, multiple resources were reviewed, including California Natural Diversity Database search results; the United States Fish and Wildlife Service list of endangered, threatened, and proposed species for the area; the National Marine Fisheries Service list of endangered and threatened species within the corresponding United States Geological Survey 7.5-minute quadrangles; and available species distribution and habitat data.

A total of 41 special-status animal species were identified as having the potential to occur within the Biological Study Area, as listed in Tables 2-2 through 2-7. However, after reviewing species distribution, habitat requirements, and field survey data, it was determined that some species are unlikely to occur in the area due to the absence of suitable habitat or because the site is outside their known range. Tables 2-2 through 2-7 provide the names and legal status of each special-status animal species, along with determinations regarding the presence or absence of suitable habitat, species occurrence, and whether the Biological Study Area falls within a federally designated critical habitat unit. The wildlife species with the potential to occur in the Biological Study Area are discussed in the environmental consequences section below.

The special-status species identified during California Department of Fish and Wildlife's review of the Notice of Preparation for the proposed nearby Ranch 35 Quarry Project, which overlaps a portion of the Biological Study Area, were also considered while assessing the regional animal species of concern. These species included Crotch's bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii*), California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*; occurrences noted adjacent to the southern boundary of the site), California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*; nearby occurrences noted), western spadefoot (*Spea hammondii*), western pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*; occurrence noted on the eastern boundary of the site), burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), and mountain lion (*Puma concolor*).

Table 2-2 Special-Status Animal Species in the Biological Study Area (Invertebrates)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/ Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Bombus crotchii	Crotch bumble bee	State Candidate Endangered	Habitat Present	Coyote brush scrub, nonnative grassland, and ruderal areas with rodent burrows provide a suitable habitat within the Biological Study Area. Water sources and potential food plants from the Eriogonum, Eschscholzia, and Lupinus genera are also present. There is one historical California Natural Diversity Database record approximately 11.05 miles north of the Biological Study Area near San Martin. The species was not observed during surveys. **The California Endangered Species Act determination is that no take would occur**. Additional surveys to detect the bumble bee will be conducted in the design phase. If the species is detected, Caltrans will coordinate with California Department of Fish and Wildlife to determine if a 2081 take permit is required. **Avoidance and minimization measures are incorporated to ensure there will be no state take of Crotch bumble bee.**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/ Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Bombus occidentalis	western bumble bee	State Candidate Endangered	Habitat Present	Potential suitable habitat is present within the Biological Study Area (coyote brush scrub, nonnative grassland and ruderal areas with rodent burrows), along with water sources and multiple foraging plants from the Ceanothus, Centaurea, Crisium, Eriogonum, Geranium, Lupinus, Melilotus, Rubus, and Trifolium genera. The nearest California Natural Diversity Database record is approximately 4.89 miles west of the Biological Study Area. The species was not observed during surveys. **The California Endangered Species Act determination is that no take would occur**. Additional surveys to detect the bumble bee will be conducted in the design phase. If the species is detected, Caltrans will coordinate with California Department of Fish and Wildlife to determine if a 2081 take permit is required. **Avoidance and minimization measures are incorporated to ensure there will be no state take of western bumble bee.**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/ Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Branchinecta lynchi	vernal pool fairy shrimp	Federal Threatened, Designated Critical Habitat	Habitat Absent	There is no critical habitat within or adjacent to the Biological Study Area. Suitable vernal pool habitat is not present in the Biological Study Area. There are no California Natural Diversity Database records within the search area. The project area does not overlap critical habitat. The species was not observed during surveys. **The Federal Endangered Species Act effects determination is the project would have no effect on vernal pool fairy shrimp or its critical habitat.** No further studies are needed.
Danaus plexippus plexippus Population 1	monarch butterfly (California overwintering population)	Federal Proposed Threatened	Habitat Absent	Larval host plants (milkweeds) are absent within the Biological Study Area and there are no California Natural Diversity Database or Xerces overwintering records within the Biological Study Area. While eucalyptus groves exist within the Biological Study Area, the project area is too far inland to provide overwintering habitat and is not a known overwinter site. Species was not observed during surveys. **The Federal Endangered Species Act effects determination is that the project would have no effect on monarch butterfly.** No further studies are needed.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/ Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Euphydryas editha bayensis	bay checkerspot butterfly	Federal Threatened	Habitat Absent	The Biological Study Area occurs outside of the known geographic range of the species. There are no California Natural Diversity Database records within the search area. The species was not observed during surveys. **The Federal Endangered Species Act effects determination is the project would have no effect on bay checkerspot butterfly.** No further studies are needed.

Table 2-3 Special-Status Animal Species in the Biological Study Area (Fish)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/ Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Hesperoleucus venustus subditus	southern coastal roach	California Species of Special Concern	[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Habitat Present	[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Tributaries and drainages to the San Benito and Pajaro Rivers with sufficient hydrology may provide suitable habitat for southern coastal roach. This includes the outlets of the culverts at post miles 4.4 and 6.4. No California Natural Diversity Database records are present within the search area. The species was not observed during surveys. Avoidance and minimization measures are recommended.

Lavinia exilicauda harengus	Monterey hitch	California Species of Special Concern	[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Habitat Present	[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Tributaries and drainages to the San Benito and Pajaro Rivers with sufficient hydrology may provide suitable habitat for Monterey hitch. This includes the outlets of the culverts at post miles 4.4 and 6.4. The species was not observed during surveys. Avoidance and minimization measures are recommended.
Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus Population 9	steelhead (south-central California coast distinct population segment)	Federally Listed as Threatened, Critical Habitat designated	Habitat Absent	The northern part of the Biological Study Area overlaps with critical habitat for this species in the San Benito and Pajaro Rivers. No work is proposed on the bridges over the San Benito or Pajaro Rivers, therefore no impacts will occur to steelhead critical habitat. Tributaries to the Pajaro and San Benito Rivers within the Biological Study Area do not have adequate hydrology or habitat to support anadromous fish habitat. **The Federal Endangered Species Act effects determination is the project would have no effect on south-central California Coast steelhead or its critical habitat.**

Table 2-4 Special-Status Animal Species in the Biological Study Area (Amphibians)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Ambystoma californiense Population 1	California tiger salamander (central California distinct population segment)	Federally Listed as Threatened, Critical Habitat designated, State-listed as Threatened	Habitat Present	Potential breeding habitat (ephemeral pools and ponds in nonnative grassland) is present adjacent to and potential upland habitat is present within the Biological Study Area. California Natural Diversity Database occurrences are adjacent to the Biological Study Area. The species was not observed during surveys; however, due to the presence of suitable upland habitat within potential breeding pond dispersal distance, it is assumed that the species may be present in some portions of the Biological Study Area. Critical habitat does not overlap the Biological Study Area. **The Federal Endangered Species Act effects determination is the project may affect and is likely to adversely affect California tiger salamander but will have no effect to the species' critical habitat. The California Endangered Species Act determination is that there may be take of California tiger salamander.** **Avoidance and minimization measures are recommended**.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Ambystoma macrodactylum croceum	Santa Cruz long-toed salamander	Federally Listed as Endangered, State-listed as Endangered, State Fully Protected	Habitat Absent	The Biological Study Area occurs outside of the known geographic range of the species. This species is known only from ponds near Elkhorn Slough at Watsonville. The nearest California Natural Diversity Database record for this very range-restricted endemic species is approximately 4.44 miles west of the Biological Study Area. Species was not observed during surveys. **The Federal Endangered Species Act effects determination is the project would have no effect on Santa Cruz long-toed salamander and the California Endangered Species Act determination is that no take would occur.** No further studies are needed.
Aneides niger	Santa Cruz black salamander	California Species of Special Concern	Habitat Absent	Suitable habitat (shaded coniferous forest with a high dense coverage of leaf litter) is generally lacking in the Biological Study Area. The Nearest California Natural Diversity Database record (recorded in 1946) is approximately 9 miles west of the Biological Study Area near Watsonville. The species was not observed during surveys. No further studies are needed.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Dicamptodon ensatus	California giant salamander	California Species of Special Concern	Habitat Absent	Suitable habitat (shaded coniferous forest) is lacking for this species in the Biological Study Area. The nearest California Natural Diversity Database record (recorded in 1939) is approximately 10 miles west of the Biological Study Area near Watsonville. The species was not observed during surveys. No further studies are needed.
Rana boylii Population 4	foothill yellow-legged frog (central coast distinct population segment)	Federally Listed as Threatened, State-listed as Endangered	Habitat Absent	Suitable habitat (sunny, foothill creeks and rivers with cobble or rocky substrates) is lacking in the Biological Study Area. The nearest California Natural Diversity Database record is approximately 10 miles west of the Biological Study Area near Watsonville. The species was not observed during surveys. **The Federal Endangered Species Act effects determination is the project would have no effect on foothill yellow-legged frog and the California Endangered Species Act determination is that no take would occur.** No further studies are needed.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Rana draytonii	California red-legged frog	Federally Listed as Threatened, Critical Habitat designated, California Species of Special Concern	Habitat Present	There is no critical habitat within or adjacent to the Biological Study Area. Breeding habitat (seasonal pools, marshes, and streams) is present in and adjacent to the Biological Study Area in aquatic areas, and upland habitat with underground refuges (California ground squirrel burrows) were found throughout the Biological Study Area. Critical habitat for the species does not overlap with the Biological Study Area. The species was observed in Biological Study Area east of Searle Road and approximately 1,400 feet south of the Biological Study Area on Rocks Road during wildlife reconnaissance surveys. **The Federal Endangered Species Act effects determination is the project may affect and is likely to adversely affect California red-legged frog but will have no effect to the species' critical habitat.** **Avoidance and minimization measures are recommended.**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Spea hammondii	western spadefoot	Federal proposed, California Species of Special Concern	Habitat Present	Breeding habitat (seasonal pools in grassland or woodland habitat) is present within and adjacent to the Biological Study Area in several places, and upland habitat and underground refuges (California ground squirrel burrows) found throughout the Biological Study Area. Nearest California Natural Diversity Database record approximately 7.76 miles east of the Biological Study Area near Hollister; however, records for commonly co-occurring commensal species (e.g., California tiger salamander) are documented in the area. The species was not observed during surveys. **The Federal Endangered Species Act Section 7 determination is that the project may affect and is likely to adversely affect western spadefoot.** **Avoidance and minimization measures are recommended.**
Taricha torosa	Coast Range newt	California Species of Special Concern	Habitat Present	Suitable breeding ponds and streams are present in the Biological Study Habitat Area near the Pajaro River; nonnative grassland and oak woodland upland habitat are also present. The nearest California Natural Diversity Database record is from San Juan Bautista area approximately 3.56 miles southeast of the Biological Study Area. The species was not observed during surveys. **Avoidance and minimization measures are recommended.**

Table 2-5 Special-Status Animal Species in the Biological Study Area (Reptiles)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Anniella pulchra	northern California legless lizard	California Species of Special Concern	Habitat Absent	A habitat specialist species, requiring loose sandy soils for burrowing, which is often in coastal scrub/bush lupine communities. The heavy clay soils in the Biological Study Area, combined with the long history of disturbance, make this an unlikely species to occur. The nearest California Natural Diversity Database record is approximately 5.45 miles west of the Biological Study Area near Prunedale. The species was not observed during surveys. No further studies are needed.
Actinemys marmorata	northwestern pond turtle	Federal Proposed, California Species of Special Concern	Habitat Present	The Pajaro River and adjacent nonnative grassland provides suitable aquatic and upland nesting habitat within the Biological Study Area. The northwestern pond turtle may also use nearby ponds within and immediately adjacent to the Biological Study Area for breeding. There are numerous California Natural Diversity Database records in the area. The species was not observed during surveys. **The Section 7 Federal Endangered Species Act determination is that the project may affect and is likely to adversely affect northwestern pond turtle.** **Avoidance and minimization measures are recommended.**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Masticophis flagellum ruddocki	San Joaquin coachwhip	California Species of Special Concern	Habitat Absent	The Biological Study Area is unsuitable for this species due to its proximity to busy roadways, which are incompatible with this large, active foraging snake's ecology. The nearest California Natural Diversity Database record is approximately 7.67 miles east of the Biological Study Area near Hollister. The species was not observed during surveys. No further studies are needed.
Phrynosoma blainvillii	Blainville's (coast) horned lizard	California Species of Special Concern	Habitat Absent	No habitat with suitable sandy soils is present within the Biological Study Area. There is no California Natural Diversity Database records within the search area. The species was not observed during surveys. No further studies are needed.

Table 2-6 Special-Status Animal Species in the Biological Study Area (Birds)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Agelaius tricolor	tricolored blackbird (nesting colony)	Protected by Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, State-listed as Threatened, California Species of Special Concern	Habitat Present	Ponds with emergent vegetation within and directly adjacent to the Biological Study Area provide suitable foraging and nesting habitat. There are several California Natural Diversity Database records in the area, including approximately 0.49 mile west of the Biological Study Area near the San Benito River. Species was not observed during surveys and is not expected to occur within the area of potential impact. **The California Endangered Species Act determination is that no take of tricolored blackbird would occur. Avoidance measures for nesting birds are recommended.**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Aquila chrysaetos	golden eagle (nesting and wintering)	Protected by Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, State Fully Protected, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife Watch List species	Habitat Present	High levels of disturbance throughout the Biological Study Area create unsuitable nesting and overwintering conditions. There is one California Natural Diversity Database record (Occurrence #134) approximately 4.70 miles south of the Biological Study Area from 2001. The record consists of a lone adult near a nest in Crazy Horse Canyon. The species was not observed during surveys; however, the species may use the Biological Study Area and surrounding area to forage and nest in the larger project area (within 1 mile). **The project would have no take of golden eagle. Avoidance measures for nesting birds are recommended.**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Athene cunicularia	burrowing owl	Protected by Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, State Candidate Threatened, State Candidate Endangered, California Species of Special Concern	Habitat Present	Potential suitable habitat (grassy slopes with numerous California ground squirrel burrows and a lack of shrubby vegetation), is present in many places throughout the Biological Study Area in both nonnative grassland and ruderal areas. The nearest California Natural Diversity Database record is approximately 0.55 mile east of the Biological Study Area. The species was not observed during surveys and is not expected to occur within the area of potential impact due to high levels of disturbance and a lack of open habitat required for nesting and foraging. **The California Endangered Species Act determination is that no take would occur.** **Avoidance measures for nesting birds are recommended.**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Brachyramphus marmoratus	marbled murrelet (nesting)	Federally Listed as Threatened, Critical Habitat designated, Protected by Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, State-listed as Endangered	Habitat Absent	There is no critical habitat within or adjacent to the Biological Study Area. The Biological Study Area occurs outside of the known geographic range of the species and no nesting habitat is present. There are no California Natural Diversity Database records within the search area. The species was not observed during surveys. **The Federal Endangered Species Act effects determination is the project would have no effect on marbled murrelet or its critical habitat and the California Endangered Species Act determination is that no take would occur.** No further studies are needed.
Buteo swainsoni	Swainson's hawk (nesting)	Protected by Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, State-listed as Threatened	Habitat Present	Within the Biological Study Area, open nonnative grassland foraging habitat is present but high levels of disturbance throughout the Biological Study Area create unsuitable nesting conditions. Three California Natural Diversity Database records are near the Biological Study Area. The species was not observed during surveys and is not expected to nest within the area of potential impact. **The California Endangered Species Act determination is that no take would occur.** **Avoidance measures for nesting birds are recommended.**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Coccyzus americanus	yellow-billed cuckoo, Western U.S. distinct population segment (nesting)	Federally Listed as Threatened, Critical Habitat designated, Protected by Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act	Habitat Absent	The Biological Study Area occurs outside of the known geographic range of the species. There are no California Natural Diversity Database records or critical habitat within the search area. The species was not observed during surveys. **The Federal Endangered Species Act effects determination is the project would have no effect on yellow-billed cuckoo or its critical habitat.** No further studies are needed.
Elanus leucurus	white-tailed kite (nesting)	Protected by Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, State Fully Protected	Habitat Present	Within the Biological Study Area, open nonnative grassland foraging habitat is present but high levels of disturbance throughout the Biological Study Area create unsuitable nesting conditions. Three California Natural Diversity Database records including near the Biological Study Area. The species was not observed during surveys and is not expected to nest within the area of potential impact due to a lack of suitable nesting habitat and high levels of disturbance. **Avoidance measures for nesting birds are recommended.**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Empidonax traillii extimus	southwestern willow flycatcher (nesting)	Federally Listed as Endangered, Critical Habitat designated, Protected by Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act	Habitat Absent	There is no critical habitat within or adjacent to the Biological Study Area. Dense willow riparian habitat is lacking from the Biological Study Area. There are no California Natural Diversity Database records or critical habitat within the search area. This species is not expected to occur and was not observed during surveys. **The Federal Endangered Species Act effects determination is the project would have no effect on southwestern willow flycatcher or its critical habitat.** **No further studies are needed.**
Falco columbarius	merlin	Protected by Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife Watch List species	Habitat Absent	The Biological Study Area is outside of breeding range; non-breeding species in Central California. One California Natural Diversity Database record documented an overwintering merlin at Hollister Hills State Vehicle Recreation Area approximately 11.49 miles southeast of the Biological Study Area. The species was not observed during surveys. **No further studies are needed.**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Gymnogyps californianus	California condor (USA)	Federally Listed as Endangered, Critical Habitat designated, Protected by Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act	Habitat Absent	There is no critical habitat within or adjacent to the Biological Study Area. Breeding habitat (deep canyons) and foraging habitat (open savannas) is lacking within the Biological Study Area. There are no California Natural Diversity Database records or critical habitat within the search area. Species was not observed during surveys. **The Federal Endangered Species Act effects determination is the project would have no effect on California condor or its critical habitat.** **No further studies are needed.**
Haliaeetus leucocephalus	Bald eagle	Delisted under the Federal Endangered Species Act, Protected by Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, State-listed as Endangered, State Fully Protected	Habitat Present	High levels of disturbance throughout the Biological Study Area create largely unsuitable nesting and overwintering conditions; however, there are adequate water sources in the area and the species may use the Biological Study Area and surrounding area to forage and may nest in the larger project area (within 1 mile). There are no California Natural Diversity Database occurrences near the Biological Study Area. The project would have no take of bald eagle. **Avoidance measures for nesting birds are recommended.**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Rallus obsoletus (formerly Rallus longirostris) obsoletus	California Ridgway's (clapper) rail	Federally Listed as Endangered, Protected by Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, State-listed as Endangered, State Fully Protected	Habitat Absent	Suitable tidal and brackish marsh breeding habitat and foraging habitat is lacking in the Biological Study Area. One California Natural Diversity Database record approximately 5.76 miles west of the Biological Study Area near Prunedale. The species was not observed during surveys. **The Federal Endangered Species Act effects determination is the project would have no effect on California Ridgway's (clapper) rail and the California Endangered Species Act determination is that no take would occur.** **No further studies are needed.**
Riparia riparia	bank swallow (nesting)	Protected by Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, State-listed as Threatened	Habitat Absent	There is no suitable breeding habitat (eroding, vertical/nearly vertical banks with sandy soils) present in the Biological Study Area. There are two historical California Natural Diversity Database records within the search area. The species was not observed during surveys. **The California Endangered Species Act determination is that no take of bank swallow would occur.** **No further studies are needed.**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Vireo bellii pusillus	least Bell's vireo (nesting)	Federally Listed as Endangered, Critical Habitat designated, Protected by Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, State-listed as Endangered	Habitat Present	There is no critical habitat within or adjacent to the Biological Study Area. Riparian areas with willow and *Baccharis* are present within the Biological Study Area. There are three California Natural Diversity Database records near the Biological Study Area along the Pajaro River: one record along the Pajaro River is from 1932, and the two remaining occurrences are both from 2001 in Llagas Creek, approximately 3.85 miles northeast of the Biological Study Area. The species was not observed during surveys. The habitat within the area of potential impact is unsuitable for nesting due to high levels of disturbance and habitat fragmentation. **The Federal Endangered Species Act section 7 determination is that the project may affect but is not likely to adversely affect least Bell's vireo, and will have no effect on the species' critical habitat. The California Endangered Species Act determination is that no take of the species would occur.**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Class *Aves*	other native nesting birds	Protected by Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Protected by California Fish and Game Code Section 3503	Habitat Present	Numerous natural and artificial substrates are found throughout the Biological Study Area and surrounding area that may provide nesting habitats for birds covered under the Protected by the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Lacustrine waters with emergent vegetation, riparian zones, *Eucalyptus*, forests and woodlands, grassland, ruderal, and developed areas can all provide breeding habitat for nesting birds. No nesting birds covered under the Protected by the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act or Protected by California Fish and Game Code Section 3503 were observed during surveys. **Avoidance and minimization measures for nesting birds are recommended.**

Table 2-7 Special-Status Animal Species in the Biological Study Area (Mammals)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Antrozous pallidus	pallid bat	California Species of Special Concern	Habitat Present	Nonnative grassland, ornamental trees, scrub, forest and woodland habitats along with human-made structures in developed (bridges, culverts, urban) as well as rocky areas suitable for roosting are present within the Biological Study Area. Pajaro River, San Benito River, streams, and other aquatic features and nonnative annual and perennial grassland within the Biological Study Area provide foraging habitat. One historical California Natural Diversity Database record from 1946 overlaps the Biological Study Area. The species was not observed during surveys and existing culverts and vegetation that may require removal do not appear to provide optimal roosting habitat. **Avoidance and minimization measures are recommended.**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Corynorhinus townsendii	Townsend's big-eared bat	California Species of Special Concern	Habitat Present	Human-made structures in developed (bridges, culverts, urban) areas suitable for roosting are present within the Biological Study Area. Pajaro River, San Benito River, streams, and other aquatic features and nonnative grassland within the Biological Study Area, provide foraging habitat. There are two historical California Natural Diversity Database records near the Biological Study Area. The species was not observed during surveys and existing culverts and vegetation that may require removal do not appear to provide optimal roosting habitat. **Avoidance and minimization measures are recommended.**
Eumops perotis californicus	western mastiff bat	California Species of Special Concern	Habitat Present	Scrub, oak woodland, coniferous forest, and ornamental tree habitat and human-made structures in developed (bridges, culverts, urban) areas suitable for roosting are present within the Biological Study Area. Pajaro River, San Benito River, streams, and other aquatic features within the Biological Study Area provide foraging habitat. There is one California Natural Diversity Database record approximately 8.03 miles east of the Biological Study Area. The species was not observed during surveys and existing culverts and vegetation that may require removal do not appear to provide optimal roosting habitat. **Avoidance and minimization measures are recommended.**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Lasiurus frantzii	western red bat	California Species of Special Concern	Habitat Present	Riparian forest and woodland, coniferous forest, and ornamental trees provide suitable roosting habitat within the Biological Study Area. Pajaro River, San Benito River, streams, and other aquatic features within the Biological Study Area provide foraging habitat. There is one California Natural Diversity Database record approximately 8.03 miles east of the Biological Study Area. The species was not observed during surveys and existing culverts and vegetation that may require removal do not appear to provide optimal roosting habitat. **Avoidance and minimization measures are recommended.**
Puma concolor	mountain lion	State Listed as Threatened (Central Coast Distinct Population Segment)	Habitat Present	While suitable foraging habitat (coniferous forest, foothills) and prey (mule deer, rodents) are present in the Biological Study Area, this species may move through but is unlikely to den within the Biological Study Area due to the high level of human and vehicular disturbance. The species was not observed during surveys however telemetry collar and roadkill data show that the species uses the Biological Study Area to travel between suitable habitat areas on either side of U.S. Route 101. The species is unlikely to occur within the area of potential impact during construction activities. **The California Endangered Species Act determination is that no take of mountain lion would occur.**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Habitat Present/Absent	Determination Rationale for Species and Habitat Presence in the Biological Study Area
Taxidea taxus	American badger	California Species of Special Concern	Habitat Present	Nonnative grassland and scrub associated with sandy soils provide potential denning habitat present within the Biological Study Area. Prey source (California ground squirrels) is present within Biological Study Area. There are multiple California Natural Diversity Database records near the Biological Study Area along State Route129. The species was not observed during surveys. **Avoidance and minimization measures are recommended.**
Vulpes macrotis mutica	San Joaquin kit fox	Federally Listed as Endangered, Critical Habitat designated, State-listed as Threatened	Habitat Absent	There is no critical habitat within or adjacent to the Biological Study Area. The Biological Study Area occurs outside of the known geographic range of the species. There is one historical California Natural Diversity Database record from 1992 approximately 6.49 miles south of the Biological Study Area. The species was not observed during surveys. **The Federal Endangered Species Act effects determination is the project would have no effect on San Joaquin kit fox and the California Endangered Species Act determination is that no take would occur.** No further studies are needed.

Environmental Consequences

The Biological Study Area contains several natural communities of special concern, including Sensitive Natural Communities, coast live oak woodlands, wetlands and non-wetland waters, and riparian habitat. The Biological Study Area also contains potential habitat for various special-status plant and animal species, as well as designated critical habitat for the south-central California coast steelhead Distinct Population Segment.

Permanent impact areas will occur mainly within three natural community/habitat types: Goodding's willow–red willow riparian woodland and forest, coast live oak woodland and forest, and arroyo willow thicket. Permanent impact areas will result from work related to culvert replacement, wildlife undercrossing installation, and access.

Temporary impacts will occur throughout the Biological Study Area and will result primarily from the use of construction equipment and associated worker foot traffic in the course of creating equipment access, clearing vegetation, staging, stockpiling, and temporary dewatering/diversion. Equipment used will include trucks, bulldozers, backhoes, compactors, asphalt concrete rollers, clamshells, excavators, compressors, pavers, water trucks, sweepers, and any other equipment needed during construction.

Habitats and Natural Communities of Special Concern

The area of anticipated permanent and temporary project-related impacts to natural communities is shown in Table 2-8.

Table 2-8 Area of Estimated Permanent and Temporary Impacts to Natural Communities

Natural Community/ Habitat	California Department of Fish and Wildlife Sensitive (Yes/No)	Project Locations	Permanent Impacts Acre(s)	Temporary Impacts Acre(s)
Coast live oak woodland and forest	No - Riparian	Post miles 0.43R, 0.48L 0.80, 1.12, 2.65, and 3.71	0.03	3.48
Goodding's willow–red willow riparian woodland and forest	Yes - Riparian	Post miles 0.80 and 4.40	0.08	1.26
Fremont cottonwood forest and woodland	Yes - Riparian	Roadside	0	0.01
Coyote brush scrub	No	Post miles 2.82 and 6.40	0	0.87
California buckwheat scrub	No	Post mile 0.48L	0	1.10
Needle grass–melic grass grassland	Yes	Not within Area of Potential Impacts	No impacts	No impacts
Ashy ryegrass–creeping wildrye	Yes	Not within Area of Potential Impacts	No impacts	No impacts
Arroyo willow thickets	No - Riparian	Post mile 0.48L	0.02	0.18

Natural Community/ Habitat	California Department of Fish and Wildlife Sensitive (Yes/No)	Project Locations	Permanent Impacts Acre(s)	Temporary Impacts Acre(s)
Eucalyptus groves	No	Post mile 3.13	0	3.38
Pepper tree groves	No	Roadside	0	0.07
Nonnative annual and perennial grassland	No	Not Applicable	0.01	7.58
Total	**Not Applicable**	**Not Applicable**	**0.14**	**17.93**

Oak Woodland

Project impacts to oak woodland will be minor, limited only to areas required for access, culvert replacement, wildlife undercrossing construction, and directional fencing installation. There will be approximately 3.48 acres of temporary impacts and 0.03 acre of permanent impacts to this natural community. It is anticipated that only a small number of small-diameter oak trees may be impacted (removed or trimmed), primarily for activities associated with construction of the wildlife undercrossings. Permanent impacts will be limited to small amounts of rock slope protection placement and minor headwall modifications. Oak trees will be avoided to the greatest extent feasible. All vegetation that is removed will be replaced and replanted with native species. In non-jurisdictional areas, any oaks removed will be replaced at a 1-to-1 ratio. In jurisdictional areas, they will be replaced at a 3-to-1 ratio.

Native Grasslands

The project will not result in any temporary or permanent impacts to native grassland communities.

Riparian Sensitive Natural Communities

Project-related impacts to riparian sensitive natural communities will be minor, limited to only areas required for access and culvert replacement. There will be approximately 1.26 acres of temporary and 0.08 acre of permanent impacts to Goodding's willow–red willow riparian woodland and forest. It is anticipated that impacts will be limited to removal of small-diameter trees and limb removal for temporary access, permanent rock slope protection placement, and headwall modifications.

Approximately 0.01 acre of Fremont cottonwood forest community type overlaps with temporary impact areas. While this community's canopy overlaps the Area of Potential Impacts, no impacts will likely occur as all activities will be limited to the areas underneath mature trees on pavement and ruderal areas. The project will not result in any permanent impacts to Fremont cottonwood forest and woodland.

Jurisdictional Waters and Areas

The proposed project will impact jurisdictional waters regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Waters of the State regulated by the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, and stream and riparian jurisdictional areas regulated by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Impacts to jurisdictional waters will be avoided to the extent feasible and will therefore be limited in scale.

Permanent impacts will result from the construction of new end treatment sections, placement of rock slope protection where it is not currently present, and headwall modification. A total of up to 0.035 acre of jurisdictional stream and up to 0.059 acre of riparian habitat will be permanently impacted.

Temporary impacts will result from constructing equipment access paths necessary to build the new drainage facilities. Diversion and dewatering activities may be required at locations where water is present at the time of construction. Approximately 0.332 acre of jurisdictional stream, 0.002 acre of emergent wetland, 0.934 acre of riparian habitat, 0.039 acre of ditch, and 0.010 acre of open water habitat will be temporarily impacted.

Due to the removal of two culverts and replacement with full span, open bottom structures, the project will likely result in a net increase of stream as well as other improvements to riparian areas.

Federally Designated Critical Habitat

No work is proposed within or on the bridges that span designated critical habitat for the south-central California coast steelhead Distinct Population Segment. Therefore, the proposed project will not result in any impacts to federally designated critical habitat.

Invasive Species

Ground disturbance and other aspects of project construction could potentially spread or introduce invasive species within the Biological Study Area. The distribution of invasive plant species is scattered throughout the Biological Study Area and is most common in ruderal or disturbed areas along the edges of U.S. Route 101. The proposed project has the potential to cause an increase in invasive species into communities and areas not currently dominated by them.

Special-Status Plant Species

No work is currently proposed in areas where Pajaro manzanita are located; therefore, it is anticipated that the project will not result in any impacts to this species. Furthermore, given that the observed occurrences of this species within the Biological Study Area are both outside of the natural range of the species and appear to be features of landscaping rather than natural occurrences or contributing to a larger sensitive habitat type, project-related impacts to this plant will not be considered impacts to a sensitive species. Nonetheless, if project activities impact individuals of this species, additional Pajaro manzanita plants will be included in revegetation plantings.

Special-Status Animal Species

Special-status animal species are those that are of special concern based on federal, State, or local laws; limited distributions; and/or habitat requirements for certain species occurring in the project area. Of the species described below, only California red-legged frog was found to be present in the Biological Study Area during Caltrans biological field surveys for this project. However, all of the special-status animal species described below have the potential to occur in the project area.

Mountain Lion

The proposed project will improve habitat connectivity for mountain lion, as well as benefiting the species by reducing vehicle collision mortality, improving gene flow between individuals on either side of U.S. Route 101, and increasing habitat availability for adjacent populations. It is unlikely that mountain lion will be impacted by construction activities due to this species' elusive nature and tendency to avoid human interaction. Night work may indirectly and temporarily affect animals using suitable habitat adjacent to the highway by causing auditory and visual disturbances. However, with implementation of avoidance and minimization measures the project will not result in State take of mountain lion.

Crotch's Bumble Bee and Western Bumble Bee

Most project work activities will occur on the roadway or along highly disturbed shoulders. However, vegetation removal, staging, and ground-disturbing activities will occur beyond the highway shoulder where suitable nesting and foraging habitat for these species exists. Project locations that will result in permanent impacts from rock slope protection placement are not within suitable Crotch or western bumble bee habitat. While Crotch and western bumble bee are not expected to be nesting in the project area, additional focused surveys will be conducted during the project's Plans, Specifications, and Estimates phase and pre-construction surveys will be performed prior to the start of ground disturbance. No State take of Crotch or western bumble bee is anticipated. If Crotch or western bumble bee are observed using the project area, Caltrans will coordinate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and apply for a 2081 Incidental Take Permit if necessary.

South-central California Coast Steelhead Distinct Population Segment

Although suitable habitat for steelhead is present within the Biological Study Area in the San Benito and Pajaro Rivers, the project will not result in any direct or indirect impacts to steelhead. No work is proposed on the bridges that span these rivers, and there will be no direct impacts due to work in or adjacent to these waters.

[The following text has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] *Monterey Hitch and Southern Coastal Roach*

Work at locations where Monterey hitch and southern coastal roach may be present will be limited to downstream of the culvert outlets at post miles 4.4 and 6.4. Impacts may occur to these species and their habitats, if present. Dewatering will be required if water is present, which could result in injury or mortality. The potential need to capture and relocate these species would subject these animals to stresses that could result in adverse effects. Erosion and sedimentation could also occur, which would directly or indirectly affect water quality. The potential for these impacts is anticipated to be low due to no observations of the species within areas of potential disturbance. Work at these locations will be limited to the dry season to minimize impacts.

A minor amount of permanent impacts may be required via placement of rock slope protection at culvert outlets. Rock slope protection is currently anticipated at post mile 4.4; however, this will be refined in the design phase of the project. The smallest feasible amount of rock slope protection will be placed to minimize habitat impacts.

California Tiger Salamander

All unpaved areas of the project limits within the possible dispersal distance of 1.24 miles from a potential breeding pond, where U.S. Route 101 is not a barrier, are considered suitable upland habitat for California tiger salamander. These locations are at post miles 0.43R, 0.48L, 0.80, 1.12, 2.65, 2.82, 3.13, 3.35, 3.52, 3.71, 4.00, and 4.40. As a result of this species' mobility, an additional 1.3-mile buffer was added to the Biological Study Area for the evaluation of potential project effects on California tiger salamander in these locations.

The project will temporarily impact up to 7.33 acres of potential upland and seasonally wet non-breeding aquatic habitat in order to create equipment access and perform culvert repair or replacement work. Placement of a minor amount of new rock slope protection will result in an estimated 0.13 acre of permanent impacts to upland and non-breeding seasonal aquatic habitat within the 1.24 mile dispersal distance. Within the 0.35 mile buffer where California tiger salamander are most likely to occur, there will be approximately 3.72 acres of temporary impacts and 0.10 acre of permanent impacts. All estimated temporary and permanent impact areas will be further refined in the project's design phase and reduced to the minimum necessary to complete the project, as feasible. No work is proposed in potential breeding ponds and therefore the project will not affect this habitat.

Construction activities for culvert replacement could result in the injury or mortality (via accidental crushing by equipment) of an unknown number of California tiger salamanders residing in small mammal burrows within upland habitat at locations within suitable habitat. This could also be particularly

detrimental during rain events during the breeding season (typically from about October 15 - April 15) when adults could potentially disperse to ponds surrounding the Biological Study Area to breed or during moist nights in May/June when juveniles are dispersing out of ponds to upland habitat. California tiger salamander could also be entombed in small mammal burrows collapsed by construction activities, which could result in injury or mortality. The potential need to capture and relocate California tiger salamander could subject these animals to stresses that could result in adverse effects. Erosion and sedimentation could directly or indirectly affect water quality and thus impact this species.

Guardrail installation is not expected to affect California tiger salamander because work locations are confined to highly disturbed and/or paved areas where burrows were not observed by project biologists. The placement of wildlife directional fencing will avoid burrows and is not expected to result in impacts to this species or its habitat.

Due to the minor amount of ground disturbance at each work location, temporary nature of most impacts, and distance from known ponds, it is unlikely that California tiger salamander will be present during project activities. Despite this, because project locations are within the 1.24 mile dispersal distance of known and potential breeding ponds, this project may impact California tiger salamander.

The Federal Endangered Species Act Section 7 effects determination is that the proposed project may affect, and is likely to adversely affect, California tiger salamander. The basis for this determination is that California tiger salamander presence has been inferred based on suitable habitat and nearby California Natural Diversity Database observations, and there is potential for take of the species during construction. Caltrans will complete Section 7 consultation for potential effects to California tiger salamander prior to construction. The California Endangered Species Act determination is that there may be take of California tiger salamander as a result of project activities. Caltrans will acquire a 2081 ITP or Consistency Determination from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for take of California tiger salamander prior to the commencement of work activities.

California Red-legged Frog

Project construction could result in the injury or mortality of California red-legged frog if present during diversion/dewatering activities. The species was observed within the study area east of Searle Road in nonnative grassland during floristic surveys, and approximately 1,400 feet south of the study area on Rocks Road during wildlife reconnaissance surveys. Capture and relocation of California red-legged frogs, if needed, would subject these animals to stresses that could result in adverse effects. Injury or mortality could occur via accidental crushing by worker foot traffic or construction

equipment. Erosion and sedimentation could directly or indirectly affect water quality and thus affect this species. The potential for these impacts is anticipated to be low due to no observations of the species within areas of potential disturbance during surveys, but this could change through time, where the species could potentially expand its population.

The Federal Endangered Species Act Section 7 effects determination is that the proposed project may affect, and is likely to adversely affect, California red-legged frog. The basis for this determination is that California red-legged frog has been observed in the project Biological Study Area and there will be potential for take of the species during construction. Caltrans will complete Section 7 consultation for potential effects to California red-legged frog prior to construction; however, it is anticipated that the project will qualify for use of the Programmatic Biological Opinion for Projects Funded or Approved under the Federal Highway Administration's Federal Aid Program.

Western Spadefoot

Project construction could result in the injury or mortality of western spadefoot, if present, during clearing and grubbing operations. This could occur in the areas surrounding culvert repair and replacement work in upland habitat and in breeding and nonbreeding aquatic habitat in drainages. Capture and relocation of spadefoot, if needed, could subject the animals to stresses that could result in adverse effects. Injury or mortality could occur via accidental crushing by worker foot traffic or construction equipment.

In addition, western spadefoots are sensitive to noise stimuli and may break dormancy and emerge from their burrows in response to disturbances like construction noise. Emerging from dormancy at inappropriate times could result in mortality or reduced fitness from desiccation during hot periods or from inability to find prey to sustain themselves.

The Federal Endangered Species Act Section 7 effects determination for western spadefoot is that the proposed project may affect, and is likely to adversely affect the species. The basis for this determination is that suitable habitat is present and there are commonly co-occurring commensal species in the area.

Coast Range Newt

Potential impacts to Coast Range newt within the project limits are the same as potential impacts to California red-legged frog. These impacts may include injury or mortality from foot traffic, construction equipment, or the stress of relocation, or injurious effects from degraded water quality.

Northwestern Pond Turtle

The proposed project could result in adverse impacts to northwestern pond turtle if the species is present within the Area of Potential Impacts during construction. Direct impacts to this species from injury, mortality, construction-related noise, and general disturbance could occur if turtles are present in the construction area during activities such as dewatering, excavating, grading, grubbing, and vegetation removal. Temporary degradation of water quality could also affect the species.

The Federal Endangered Species Act Section 7 effects determination for northwestern pond turtle is that the proposed project may affect, and is likely to adversely affect the species. The basis for this determination is that pond turtle has been observed in riparian habitat outside the Biological Study Area that is similar to that found within the Biological Study Area and complete avoidance may not be feasible.

Bald Eagle and Golden Eagle

Focused surveys for eagles were not conducted and there are no California Natural Diversity Database occurrences of eagles nesting in the area; however, California Department of Fish and Wildlife agency input indicated that there may be undocumented nests in the project vicinity. Suitable nesting habitat occurs within 1 mile of the project in various natural communities (riparian habitats and oak woodland).

Project activities including paving and culvert replacement may disrupt nesting eagles, if present. Large equipment including grinders and guardrail post drivers are typically at or slightly louder than ambient noise along U.S. Route 101 through the project area. Raptors can be sensitive to human presence, including increased noise levels (compared to ambient) and visual disturbances.

No nesting eagles have been observed in the project area; therefore, no impacts are anticipated. Should eagles nest in the project vicinity during project activities, avoidance and minimization measures will be implemented to ensure the project will not result in take of bald or golden eagle.

Least Bell’s Vireo

The project will temporarily impact willow woodland and thicket riparian habitat that is suitable for this species. Based on historical data in the vicinity of the Biological Study Area, there is very low potential for least Bell's vireo to be present within the Area of Potential Impacts. The Federal Endangered Species Act Section 7 effects determination is that the proposed project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, least Bell’s vireo.

Least Bell's vireo is also a State-listed taxa under the California Endangered Species Act. No California Endangered Species Act take of this species is expected. However, if least Bell's vireo is detected during pre-construction surveys, coordination with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife will be required.

Swainson's Hawk and White-tailed Kite

With the implementation of the avoidance and minimization measures listed below, project-related impacts to Swainson's hawk or white-tailed kite would not be expected.

Tricolored Blackbird, Burrowing Owl, and Other Nesting Birds

Tricolored blackbird and burrowing owl were not detected during biological surveys. The project's area of potential impact occurs directly adjacent to U.S. Route 101, resulting in dangerous conditions with very high ambient noise and visual disturbance levels. Although suitable habitat (marginal) exists in the project area, the species is not expected to occur during project activities due to the presence of much higher quality foraging and nesting habitat in the surrounding areas, such as protected conservation lands directly adjacent to the project.

Potential nesting habitat for a variety of bird species occurs throughout the Biological Study Area. Direct project-related impacts to nesting birds could occur during culvert replacement/repair activities and if vegetation removal is carried out during the nesting season. These activities could result in injury or mortality of nesting birds, or harassment that could alter nesting behaviors. Indirect impacts could result from noise and disturbance during the nesting season or from the temporary loss of nesting substrate as replacement habitat establishes post-construction.

Pallid Bat, Townsend's Big-eared Bat, Western Mastiff Bat, and Western Red Bat

Due to extensive visual and noise disturbances within the Area Of Potential Impacts, it is unlikely that bats would use the project area for roosting during construction. Additionally, due to the lack of sign (guano/urine staining) and lack of optimal day-roosting crevasses observed by project biologists, it is not anticipated that bats use the project work locations regularly or in large numbers. If bats were present in the Area Of Potential Impacts during construction, it is expected that they would be using project areas only intermittently, in small numbers or on an individual basis, and/or as a night roost during foraging activities. No project work will occur on bridges where optimal foraging/night roosting habitat exists. Rocky areas suitable for pallid bat are present in the Biological Study Area, but these areas are not within the Area Of Potential Impacts.

If present in the project area during construction, bats could be directly impacted by culvert repairs and replacements as well as tree removal, resulting in injury or mortality of individuals. Harassment and construction noise could alter bat roosting behaviors. Replacement structures may result in the permanent loss or alteration of day roosting and night roosting habitat. Implementation of pre-activity surveys, use of exclusionary devices prior to construction as needed, and planning for suitable replacement habitat post-construction will reduce these potential adverse effects to roosting bat species.

American Badger

No American badgers or potential dens were observed during surveys for the project. However, the Biological Study Area contains suitable denning habitat, foraging habitat, and prey species for badger. It is unlikely that American badger would den on-site, but they may occur as a transient during foraging activities.

If present during construction, American badger could be directly impacted by project activities. The species could be entombed during grading/excavating or otherwise injured by construction equipment, while noise, light, and other disturbance associated with construction could affect foraging and dispersal behaviors.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

BIO-1. Removal of coast live oak trees will be avoided at the greatest extent feasible.

BIO-2. All coast live oak trees that will remain in the project vicinity will be delineated on design plans. Prior to ground-disturbing activities, temporary Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing or flagging will be installed around trees to be protected.

BIO-3. (Compensatory Mitigation) Coast live oak trees will be replaced onsite at a 1-to-1 ratio in non-jurisdictional areas. Coast live oak trees that occur within jurisdictional areas will be replaced at a 3-to-1 ratio. Replacement plantings will be detailed in the project Landscape Planting Plans. [The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Tree plantings will be monitored to ensure successful revegetation at six months and then once a year for five years. Off-site mitigation is not anticipated.

BIO-4. Prior to construction, Caltrans shall obtain a Section 404 Nationwide Permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a Section 401 Water Quality Certification from the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, and a Section 1602 Streambed Alternation Agreement from the California

Department of Fish and Wildlife. All permit terms and conditions will be incorporated into construction plans and implemented.

BIO-5. Prior to any ground-disturbing activities, Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing shall be installed around jurisdictional waters, and the dripline of trees to be protected within the project limits. Caltrans-defined Environmentally Sensitive Areas shall be noted on design plans and delineated in the field prior to the start of construction activities.

BIO-6. Construction activities in jurisdictional waters and temporary stream diversion shall be timed to occur between June 1 and October 31 in any given year, or as otherwise directed by the regulatory agencies, when the surface water is likely to be dry or at a seasonal minimum. Deviations from this work window will only be made with permission from the relevant regulatory agencies.

BIO-7. During construction, all project-related hazardous materials spills within the project site shall be cleaned up immediately. Readily accessible spill prevention and cleanup materials shall be kept by the contractor on-site at all times during construction.

BIO-8. During construction, erosion control measures shall be implemented. Fiber rolls and barriers shall be installed as needed between the project site and jurisdictional other waters and riparian habitat. At a minimum, erosion controls shall be maintained by the contractor on a daily basis throughout the construction period.

BIO-9. During construction, the staging areas shall conform to Best Management Practices applicable to attaining zero discharge of stormwater runoff. At a minimum, all equipment and vehicles shall be checked and maintained by the contractor on a daily basis to ensure proper operation and avoid potential leaks or spills.

BIO-10. Prior to the removal of the diversion, stream contours shall be restored as close as possible to their original condition.

BIO-11. (Compensatory Mitigation) Restoration (re-establishment) is proposed at a 1-to-1 ratio (acreage) for temporary impacts to jurisdictional areas. Compensatory mitigation is proposed at a 3-to-1 ratio (acreage) for permanent impacts to jurisdictional areas and a 1.5-to-1 ratio (acreage) for degradation impacts to jurisdictional areas (e.g. installation of rock slope protection over gravel filter). Replacement plantings will include appropriate native tree and understory species. In order to ensure success, some locations will require a one-year plant establishment period, and others may require a three-year plant establishment period. Both will include monitoring, semiannual (twice a year) inspections, weeding, and replacement of dead plants. [The following text has been added since the draft environmental

document was circulated.] It is anticipated that these revegetation areas will be monitored for success for five years.

Replacement plantings will be detailed in Caltrans' Landscape Architecture Landscape Planting Plan and the final Restoration, Mitigation, and Monitoring Plan, which will be prepared prior to construction. This plan will be developed in coordination with a biologist and will include developed planting specifications and grading plans to ensure survival of planted vegetation and re-establishment of functions and values. The final Restoration, Mitigation, and Monitoring Plan will detail methodologies and will be consistent with standards and mitigation commitments from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Restoration, Mitigation, and Monitoring Plan will be finalized through the permit review process with regulatory agencies. It is anticipated that restoration plantings will consist mainly of native riparian species and associated riparian understory and bank species. Caltrans shall implement the Restoration, Mitigation, and Monitoring Plan as necessary during construction and immediately following project completion.

BIO-12. During construction, Caltrans will ensure that the spread or introduction of invasive exotic plant species will be avoided to the maximum extent possible.

BIO-13. Only clean fill shall be imported. When practicable, invasive exotic plants in the project site shall be removed and properly disposed of. Any plant species rated as "High" on the Cal-IPC Invasive Plant Inventory that are removed from the construction site shall be taken to a landfill to prevent the spread of invasive species.

BIO-14. Plant species that the California Invasive Plant Council, California Department of Agriculture, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, or other resource organizations consider to be invasive or potentially invasive will not be used in erosion control seed mix or to revegetate areas of disturbance. Caltrans erosion control mix will only contain native species to the central coast of California.

BIO-15. Construction equipment shall be inspected as "weed-free" by Caltrans before entering the construction site. If necessary, wash stations onsite shall be established for construction equipment under the guidance of Caltrans in order to avoid/minimize the spread of invasive plants and/or seed within the construction area.

BIO-16. If Pajaro manzanita plants require removal, they will be replanted in-kind.

BIO-17. To protect any mountain lions in the project area, night work will be limited to the extent necessary to complete project activities. Any temporary lighting will be shielded or focused to avoid adjacent habitat.

BIO-18. During the design phase, a Crotch and western bumble bee habitat assessment will be conducted following California Department of Fish and Wildlife's "Survey Considerations for California Endangered Species Act Candidate Bumble Bee Species" dated June 6, 2023. Where Crotch and western bumble bee habitat is determined to be present within the project site a focused non-invasive survey will be conducted within suitable habitat prior to ground disturbance for Crotch and western bumble bee and their nests, following California Department of Fish and Wildlife guidance (2023).

BIO-19. Prior to any ground-disturbing activities, Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing shall be installed, as appropriate, around Crotch and western bumble bee feeding and nesting habitat to be avoided. Environmentally Sensitive Areas shall be noted on design plans and delineated in the field prior to the start of construction activities.

BIO-20. A Worker Environmental Awareness Training will be provided for all construction personnel prior to the start of any ground-disturbance or vegetation removal to discuss Crotch and western bumble bee identification, ecology, habitat, and avoidance and minimization measures.

BIO-21. If Crotch or western bumble bee is identified in the project area, Caltrans will coordinate with California Department of Fish and Wildlife and, if necessary, a 2081 Incidental Take Permit will be acquired, on-site mitigation may be required, and the following will be implemented:

> a) Any blooming flowering plants that are scoped for removal will be inspected immediately prior to work to ensure that no bumble bees are on or near the plant. If a bumble bee is identified on or adjacent to vegetation that is to be removed, work in that area will not proceed until the bumble bee leaves the area of its own accord.
>
> b) No work will occur within 50 feet of an active Crotch or western bumble bee nest unless approved by California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

BIO-22. Caltrans will obtain U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife approval of biologist(s) prior to project-related activities that may result in impacts to California tiger salamander. An approved biologist will be present at preconstruction surveys and during all initial ground disturbing activities in areas of potential California tiger salamander habitat to help minimize or avoid impact to the California tiger salamander and to minimize disturbance of habitat. If burrow excavations are required prior to ground disturbance by regulatory agencies, the approved

biologist shall be present to direct crews and relocate any individuals as needed.

BIO-23. Biologists shall ensure that their activities do not transmit diseases or pathogens harmful to amphibians, such as chytrid fungus (*Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*), by following the fieldwork code of practice developed by the Declining Amphibians Task Force.

BIO-24. Before any activities begin, the approved biologist shall conduct an education program for all persons employed or otherwise working on the project site prior to performing any work on-site. The program shall include a discussion of the biology of the California tiger salamander and project-specific avoidance and minimization measures. Upon completion of the program, employees shall sign a form stating they attended the program and understand all protection measures.

[The following text has been deleted since the draft environmental document was circulated, due to redundancy with measure BIO-32.] BIO-25. During project activities, all trash that may attract predators will be properly contained, removed from the work site, and disposed of regularly. Following construction, all trash and construction debris will be removed from work areas.

[The following text has been deleted since the draft environmental document was circulated, due to redundancy with measure BIO-33.] BIO-26. All refueling, maintenance, and staging of equipment and vehicles will occur at least 60 feet from riparian and pond habitat. Measures will be taken to avoid situations where a spill could drain directly toward aquatic habitat.

BIO-27. Temporary amphibian exclusion fencing and environmentally sensitive habitat area fencing/flagging shall be installed, as appropriate, prior to ground disturbance.

BIO-28. (Compensatory Mitigation) Caltrans anticipates that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife will require compensatory mitigation for potential California tiger salamander upland habitat impacts. Caltrans will mitigate for these impacts at a 1-to-1 ratio onsite, through restoration of impacted habitats. Permanent impacts to suitable habitat are proposed for mitigation at a 3-to-1 ratio, or as required by regulatory agencies, using mitigation credits at a California Department of Fish and Wildlife-approved California tiger salamander mitigation bank.

BIO-29. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist shall survey the project area at locations with suitable California red-legged frog habitat no more than 48 hours before the onset of work activities. If found, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist shall relocate the California red-legged frogs the shortest distance possible to a location that contains suitable

habitat and will not be affected by the activities associated with the project. The relocation site shall be in the same drainage to the extent practicable.

BIO-30. Before any activities begin on a project, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist shall conduct a training session for all construction personnel. At a minimum, the training shall include a description of the California red-legged frog and its habitat, the specific measures that are being implemented to conserve the California red-legged frog for the current project, and the boundaries within which the project may be accomplished.

BIO-31. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist shall be present at the project locations with suitable California red-legged frog habitat until all California red-legged frogs have been removed, workers have been instructed, and initial disturbance of habitat has been completed. If work is stopped because California red-legged frogs would be affected in a manner not anticipated by Caltrans and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service during review of the proposed action, they shall notify the Resident Engineer immediately. When work is stopped, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service shall be notified as soon as possible.

BIO-32. During project activities, all trash that may attract predators or scavengers shall be properly contained, removed from the work site, and disposed of at the end of each work week. Following construction, all trash and debris shall be removed from work areas.

BIO-33. All refueling, maintenance and staging of equipment and vehicles shall occur at least 100 feet from riparian habitat or water bodies and not in a location from where a spill would drain directly toward aquatic habitat, unless otherwise preapproved by the necessary agencies.

BIO-34. Habitat contours shall be returned to a natural configuration at the end of the project activities. This measure shall be implemented in all areas disturbed by activities associated with the project at locations with suitable California red-legged frog habitat unless the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Caltrans determine that it is not feasible, or modification of original contours would benefit the California red-legged frog. See also measure VIS-9.

BIO-35. The number of access routes, size of staging areas, and the total area of activity shall be limited to the minimum necessary to achieve the project. Environmentally Sensitive Areas shall be established to confine access routes and construction areas to the minimum area necessary to complete construction, and minimize the impact to California red-legged frog habitat; this goal includes locating access routes and construction areas outside of wetlands and riparian areas to the maximum extent practicable.

BIO-36. Caltrans shall attempt to schedule work for times of the year when impacts to the California red-legged frog would be minimal. For example, work that would affect large pools that may support breeding will be avoided, to the maximum degree practicable, during the breeding season (November through May).

BIO-37. To control sedimentation during and after project completion, Caltrans shall implement Best Management Practices outlined in any authorizations or permits issued under the authorities of the Clean Water Act received for the project.

BIO-38. If a work site is to be temporarily dewatered by pumping, intakes shall be completely screened with wire mesh not larger than 0.2 inch to prevent California red-legged frogs from entering the pump system. Water shall be released or pumped downstream at an appropriate rate to maintain downstream flows during construction. Upon completion of construction activities, any diversions or barriers to flow shall be removed in a manner that will allow flow to resume with the least disturbance to the substrate. Alteration of the streambed shall be minimized to the maximum extent possible; any imported material shall be removed from the streambed upon completion of the project.

BIO-39. Unless approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, water shall not be impounded in a manner that may attract California red-legged frogs.

BIO-40. Project sites shall be revegetated with an assemblage of native riparian, wetland, and upland vegetation suitable for the area. Locally collected plant materials shall be used to the extent practicable. Invasive, exotic plants shall be controlled to the maximum extent practicable.

BIO-41. Caltrans shall not use herbicides as the primary method to control invasive, exotic plants.

BIO-42. Upon completion of the project, Caltrans shall ensure that a Project Completion Report is completed and provided to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, following the template provided with the Programmatic Biological Opinion.

BIO-43. During the winter season prior to start of construction, a qualified biologist shall survey areas of the project with suitable habitat when pools/puddles will be present. If spadefoot are present, Caltrans shall coordinate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service unless otherwise outlined in the project's Biological Opinion.

BIO-44. Caltrans will schedule project activities to minimize adverse effects to the western spadefoot and their habitat. Disturbance to aquatic habitat will be confined to the dry season, generally June 1 through October 31 (or the first measurable fall rain of 1 inch or greater) because that is the time period when

the western spadefoot are less likely to be moving through upland areas. However, if seasonal avoidance is not possible, grading, and other disturbance in pools and ponds will occur only when they are dry, typically between July 15 and October 31. Work within a pool or wetland may begin prior to July 15 if the pool or wetland has been dry for a minimum of 30 days prior to initiating work.

BIO-45. No construction activities will occur during rain events.

BIO-46. No more than 24 hours prior to the date of initial ground disturbance and vegetation clearing, a qualified biologist with experience in the identification of the western spadefoot will conduct a pre-construction survey within suitable habitat at the project site. The survey will consist of walking the subject area to determine possible presence of the species. The qualified biologist will investigate all areas that could be used by western spadefoot for feeding, breeding, sheltering, movement, and other essential behaviors, such as small woody debris, refuse, burrows, etc. If burrow excavations are conducted and/or amphibian exclusion fencing is installed, surveys will instead occur immediately prior to those activities.

BIO-47. Biological monitoring by a qualified biologist(s) will be carried out for initial ground disturbance activities, unless the area has had burrow excavation and amphibian exclusion fencing installed. If spadefoot are detected during initial ground disturbance monitoring, the qualified biologist(s) will periodically visit the site throughout the construction period. No construction work will be initiated until the biologist(s) determines that the work area is clear of spadefoot.

BIO-48. A Caltrans-approved biologist shall survey the project site no more than 48 hours before the onset of work activities in drainages with suitable habitat for Coast Range newt. If found, the biologist shall relocate the species the shortest distance possible to a location that contains suitable habitat and will not be affected by the activities associated with the project. The relocation site shall be in the same drainage to the extent practicable.

BIO-49. Before any project activities begin, a Caltrans-approved biologist shall conduct a training session for all construction personnel. At a minimum, the training shall include a description of Coast Range newt and their habitat, the specific measures for the project that are being implemented to conserve the species, and the boundaries of the work area.

BIO-50. Biological monitoring by a qualified biologist(s) will be carried out for initial ground disturbance activities, unless the area has had burrow excavation and amphibian exclusion fencing installed. If Coast Range newt are detected during initial ground disturbance monitoring, the qualified biologist(s) will periodically visit the site throughout the construction period.

No construction work will be initiated until the biologist(s) determines that the work area is clear of Coast Range newt.

BIO-51. The project includes Environmentally Sensitive Areas to minimize impacts to sensitive areas and species. The project plans will delineate Environmentally Sensitive Areas that restrict access to the minimum required for construction, minimizing impacts to northwestern pond turtle and their habitat. No vehicle access within these Environmentally Sensitive Areas will be permitted. During construction, the Resident Engineer and biological monitor will determine and agree upon the exact placement of Environmentally Sensitive Area markers, based on the project plans, and will determine and agree upon the appropriate material for marking Environmentally Sensitive Areas.

BIO-52. Prior to construction, a qualified biologist will provide an environmental awareness training to all personnel on the potential for northwestern pond turtle to occur in the project area. The contractor shall submit a written request to the Resident Engineer 14 calendar days prior to the performance of any work to schedule training.

BIO-53. Prior to the start of excavation or construction activities, a qualified biologist will conduct a pre-construction survey for northwestern pond turtle. If any are found within the Area of Potential Impacts, they will be relocated to a suitable location outside of the Area of Potential Impacts by a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approved biologist. The qualified biologist will use the most current survey protocols available for the species to ensure highest level of species detection including visual encounter surveys and nesting survey techniques.

BIO-54. A qualified biologist shall be present on-site during all initial vegetation removal and ground disturbing activities. If pond turtle are encountered, only a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approved biologist shall handle and relocate the animal.

BIO-55. As required by regulatory agencies, focused surveys following U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey guidelines for least Bell’s vireo shall be completed to determine the presence/absence of least Bell’s vireo wherever suitable habitat is present. If least Bell’s vireo is detected during these surveys, Caltrans will coordinate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to determine if formal consultation will be required or if additional avoidance and minimization measures will be needed.

BIO-56. Worker Environmental Awareness Trainings will be provided in accordance with the Programmatic Biological Opinion for Projects Funded or Approved under the Federal Highway Administration’s Federal Aid Program 8-8-10-F-58 for California red-legged frog. Worker trainings will include information about least Bell’s vireo, and its habitat.

[The following text has been deleted since the draft environmental document was circulated, due to redundancy with measure BIO-62.] BIO-57. Prior to construction, vegetation removal shall be scheduled to occur from October 1 to January 31, outside of the typical nesting bird season, if possible, to avoid potential impacts to nesting birds. If tree removal or other construction activities are proposed to occur within 100 feet of potential habitat during the nesting season (February 1 to September 30), a nesting bird survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist no more than five calendar days prior to construction.

BIO-58. If least Bell's vireo is observed within 100 feet of the project area during construction or during the preconstruction surveys, all project activities shall cease immediately, and the relevant resource agencies shall be consulted. Development of additional avoidance and minimization measures will occur as necessary in coordination with the pertinent agencies.

BIO-59. If an active Swainson's hawk or white-tailed kite nest are observed within 800 meters (2,624 feet) of construction activities, an adequate buffer and monitoring will be implemented and developed in consultation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

BIO-60. Surveys for raptor nests within one mile of construction activities, as feasible and accessible, will be conducted as described below in measure BIO-62.

BIO-61. If an active eagle nest is identified within one mile of and line-of-sight to project activities, a protective buffer will be established using best available data and developed in consultation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] BIO-62. Prior to construction, vegetation removal shall be scheduled to occur from September 16 to January 31, outside of the typical nesting bird season, if possible, to avoid potential impacts to nesting birds. If tree removal or other construction activities are proposed to occur within 500 feet of potential habitat during the nesting season (February 1 to September 15), a nesting bird survey shall be conducted by a biologist determined qualified by Caltrans no more than ten calendar days prior to vegetation removal. If an active nest is found, a biologist shall monitor baseline behavior with ambient conditions and implement an appropriate buffer or monitoring strategy based on the habits and needs of the species. The buffer area or monitoring strategy shall be implemented until a qualified biologist has determined that juveniles have fledged and are no longer reliant on the nest or nesting activity has otherwise ceased. A 250-foot buffer around active nests of non-listed bird species and a 500-foot buffer around active nests of non-listed raptors shall be established unless a biologist is present to monitor within the buffer for potential disturbance. If the biologist determines that

behavior has changed due to project activities, work activities within the buffer shall be stopped and the buffer shall be expanded as needed to avoid disturbance.

BIO-63. During construction, active bird nests shall not be disturbed and eggs or young of birds covered by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish and Game Code shall not be killed, destroyed, injured, or harassed at any time.

BIO-64. Trees to be removed shall be noted on design plans. Prior to any ground-disturbing activities, Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing shall be installed around the dripline of trees to be protected within project limits.

BIO-65. All initial clearing/grubbing and vegetation removal shall be monitored and documented by a qualified biologist regardless of time of year.

BIO-66. If a tricolored blackbird is detected within the project limits or within 250 feet of the construction activities, the qualified biologist will determine whether a nesting colony is present in the area. If nesting tricolored blackbirds are confirmed, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife will be notified, and a buffer zone for the colony will be defined. No take of tricolored blackbird shall occur. Caltrans will coordinate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and if needed, permits will be acquired.

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] BIO-67. If a burrowing owl or inactive burrowing owl den is detected within the project limits, an appropriately sized protective buffer will be established in coordination with a qualified biologist and in consideration of the 2012 Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (California Department of Fish and Game 2012). The inactive burrow and/or animal will be monitored to ensure work does not disturb it and the buffer will be in place until the animal leaves on its own. If an active burrowing owl burrow (breeding or nonbreeding) is identified within 1,640 feet (500 meters) of the construction activities, a no-disturbance buffer zone for the burrow or burrow complex will be defined. Caltrans will coordinate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and permits will be acquired if needed.

BIO-68. Preconstruction surveys will be conducted by a qualified biologist to identify potential roosting bat activity. The biologist(s) conducting the preconstruction surveys will also identify the nature of the bat utilization of the area (i.e., roosting, night roost, day roost, maternity roost). If there is roosting bat activity, a buffer shall be established until the roost is no longer active or exclusionary devices are installed. Any exclusionary devices and exclusion methodology will be approved by a qualified biologist prior to installation. A qualified Caltrans biologist shall determine an appropriate buffer based on the habits and needs of the roosting species. The buffer area shall be avoided until a qualified biologist has determined that roosting activity has ceased or

exclusionary methods have successfully evicted roosting bats. No exclusions will be installed on a maternal roosting site.

BIO-69. Tree removal shall be scheduled to occur from October 1 to January 31, outside of the typical bat maternity roosting season, if possible, to avoid potential impacts to tree roosting bats.

BIO-70. Prior to any ground disturbance, the contractor, all employees of the contractor, subcontractors, and subcontractors' employees will attend an employee education program conducted by a qualified biologist. The program will consist of a brief presentation by persons knowledgeable in American badger biology, legislative protection, and measures to avoid impacts to the species during project implementation.

BIO-71. The project plans shall delineate Environmentally Sensitive Areas to minimize impacts to sensitive areas and species by limiting access to the minimum required for construction within the Area of Potential Impacts. No vehicle access within the Environmentally Sensitive Areas will occur.

BIO-72. Prior to any ground disturbance in suitable habitat, a preconstruction survey will be conducted for American badger. The survey will identify any potential badger dens. The status of all potential dens will be determined and mapped. Potentially active dens will be monitored with tracking medium or infrared camera for three consecutive days to determine the current use. If no badger activity is observed during this period, then the den will be excavated by hand or carefully with equipment provided by the contractor or blocked during the duration of construction under the direction of the biologist to preclude subsequent use. If American badger activity is observed at a den, Caltrans will coordinate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for suitable buffer implementation or exclusion methods.

BIO-73. Observations of Species of Special Concern or other special-status species shall be documented on California Natural Diversity Database forms and submitted to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife upon project completion.

[The following four measures, BIO-74 through BIO-77, have been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.]

BIO-74. The 2012 Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (2012 Staff Report; California Department of Fish and Game 2012) protocol will be used to inform the survey methodology for burrowing owl to be conducted by a qualified biologist within and adjacent to suitable habitat in the project area prior to construction. The survey area will include a subset of locations where off-highway ground disturbance will occur or construction will cause higher-than ambient levels of disturbance.

BIO-75. If take of burrowing owl cannot be avoided, take authorization through the acquisition of an Incidental Take Permit, pursuant to California Fish and Game Code section 2081 subdivision (b), will be completed to comply with the California Endangered Species Act.

BIO-76. Caltrans will schedule project activities to minimize adverse effects to the Monterey hitch and southern coastal roach and their habitat. Disturbance to aquatic habitat, including temporary stream diversions, will be timed to occur in the dry season (typically June 1 to October 31) when surface water is likely to be at a seasonal minimum, or as otherwise permitted by the regulatory agencies.

BIO-77. If permanent impacts are required at the outlets of culverts at either post mile 4.4 or 6.4, Caltrans will coordinate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife during 1600 permitting to determine offsetting mitigation, which may include refugia creation (e.g., woody debris installation, pool creation, riparian planting).

2.1.5 Cultural Resources

Considering the information in the Historic Properties Survey Report and its attachments (Archaeological Survey Report, Extended Phase I Cultural Resource Inventory, and Historical Resources Evaluation Report), all dated April 2025; and also considering the supplemental Historic Properties Survey Report (June 2025) and its attachments (Finding of No Adverse Effect, July 2025; Environmentally Sensitive Area Action Plan, June 2025; and Post Review Discovery Management Plan, June 2025), the following significance determinations have been made:

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

Affected Environment

A project's Area of Potential Effects is the geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may directly or indirectly alter the character or use of historic properties if any such properties exist. The Area of Potential Effects

includes the total horizontal (ground surface) and vertical (below ground) footprint of proposed ground-disturbing activities.

This project's Area of Potential Effects was defined by Caltrans cultural resources specialists and encompasses the proposed pavement work, ramp construction, drainage work, new right of way, temporary construction easements, utility relocation, and any borrow, disposal, access, or staging areas. The horizontal extent of the proposed undertaking is approximately 375 acres while the vertical Area of Potential Effects will range from one to 70 feet deep. Caltrans conducted field surveys and evaluations of the Area of Potential Effects and determined that two cultural resources are present within this area.

The project Area of Potential Effects contains site CA-SBN-4/H, a property that contains both precolonial and historic-era components. The precolonial component is considered an eligible historic property for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D, while the historic-era component lacks integrity and is ineligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Previous evaluation at CA-SBN-4/H found that the property does not qualify as a Traditional Cultural Property.

The project corridor contains a roadside, built-environment site called the San Juan Bautista Turn Off (known locally as the Mission Monument Marker), a 1930s-era roadside development that includes six adobe walls and a bell tower (campanile), an old highway segment, and several contemporary features including a steel cross and commemorative bell. This resource was evaluated in the Historical Resources Evaluation Report submitted to the State Historic Preservation Officer as part of the Section 106 and PRC 5025 consultation process. The site was determined not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places or California Register of Historical Resources, as it does not meet any of the listing criteria due to a lack of significance and integrity. Nor is the site a historical resource for the purpose of CEQA. The State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with this determination of eligibility in their letter dated May 15, 2025.

Caltrans conducted Native American consultation for the project as required under Assembly Bill 52 (Public Resources Code 21080.3.1 and 21084.3(c)) in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act Initial Study preparation. See Section 3.1, Cultural Resources and Native American Coordination, for details about this consultation.

Environmental Consequences

Caltrans, pursuant to Section 106 Programmatic Agreement, Stipulation IX.B, has determined that there is a historic property within the Area of Potential Effects. Caltrans submitted a Historic Properties Survey Report, an Archaeological Survey Report, an Extended Phase I Cultural Resource

Inventory, and an Historic Resources Evaluation Report to the California State Office of Historic Preservation on April 28, 2025.

Subsequently, on August 4, 2025 Caltrans submitted a supplemental Historic Properties Survey Report, along with attachments including a Finding of No Adverse Effect regarding CA-SBN-4/H, Environmentally Sensitive Area Action Plan, and Post Review Discovery Management Plan, to the Caltrans Cultural Studies Office.

The proposed project is not anticipated to adversely affect either of the two identified cultural resources sites.

Caltrans completed subsurface testing at CA-SBN-4/H, a property previously determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. One of the project's planned culvert repairs overlaps with CA-SBN-4/H. Although the precolonial component of this site is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, subsurface testing conducted for the project at the proposed work location did not locate any intact archaeological deposits or features. In accordance with Section 106 Programmatic Agreement, Stipulation X, Caltrans is continuing consultation with the Caltrans Cultural Studies Office and/or the State Historic Preservation Officer to assess project effects on CA-SBN-4/H. Caltrans anticipates that the State Historic Preservation Officer will concur with a Finding of No Adverse Effect for this site.

The Historical Resources Evaluation Report contained the evaluation of a State-owned, built environment property located on the Caltrans right-of-way called the San Juan Bautista Turn Off (also known as the Mission Monument Marker). On May 15, 2025, the State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with Caltrans' Determination of Eligibility for the San Juan Bautista Turn Off site; specifically, that the site is not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places and California Register of Historical Resources, and hence is not a historical resource for the purpose of CEQA. While construction work will take place in the vicinity of this site and temporary staging impacts could occur at the site, an Environmentally Sensitive Area will be established and direct project-related impacts are not anticipated. Please see Measure VIS-13 in Section 2.1.1, Aesthetics.

Implementation of the following avoidance and minimization measures will help further reduce the potential for any project-related impacts to cultural resources.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

While the proposed project is not expected to result in any significant adverse impacts to prehistoric or historic-era cultural resources, the project will

incorporate the following avoidance and minimization measures to further reduce the potential for any such impacts:

CR-1. An Environmentally Sensitive Area Action Plan has been prepared for this project. The project contractor shall adhere to the requirements of this plan, which includes:

- Methods for Environmentally Sensitive Area delineation and installation of temporary fencing;
- General archaeological and Native American monitoring procedures during ground-disturbing activities associated with the project;
- Protocol for inadvertent discoveries of potentially significant cultural materials from known or unidentified resources;
- Treatment of human remains if they were to be discovered during the course of the project;
- Responsible parties for all aspects of the action plan;
- Protocol for the event of an inadvertent violation of the Environmentally Sensitive Area Action Plan during the course of the project.

CR-2. If previously unidentified cultural resources (including human remains), or concerns pertaining to a known cultural resource, are identified during construction, it is Caltrans policy that work be halted until a qualified archaeologist or architectural historian (as applicable) can assess the significance of the finding and recommend appropriate action. Additional cultural resources-related studies will be needed if the project limits are extended beyond the present study limits.

2.1.6 Energy

Caltrans incorporates energy efficiency, conservation, and climate change measures into transportation planning, project development, design, operations, and maintenance of transportation facilities, fleets, buildings, and equipment to minimize the use of fuel supplies and energy sources and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The project will involve short-term use of fossil fuels, electricity, and natural gas during construction activities such as pavement repair and the replacement of infrastructure elements like drainage culverts, median barrier, and guardrails. These energy demands are not anticipated to result in a significant demand on local or regional energy resources.

The project is not expected to result in inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary energy use, nor would it conflict with any existing state or local plans aimed at

promoting energy efficiency or expanding renewable energy use. [The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Based on the findings detailed in the project Climate Change Report dated April 2026, and the Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas, Noise, and Water Quality Assessment Memo dated May 8, 2026, the following significance determinations have been made:

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

2.1.7 Geology and Soils

Considering the information in the Geologic Hazards Report for San Benito US 101 Pavement Rehabilitation dated April 11, 2025; the Structures Preliminary Geotechnical Report dated March 14, 2025; the Paleontological Identification Report, EA 05-1J840, SBT 101 Asset Management Project revised June 9, 2026; and the Paleontological Cumulative Impact Report, EA 05-1J840, SBT US101 Pavement Rehabilitation Project dated August 11, 2025, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils
a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving: i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.	**Less Than Significant Impact**
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	**Less Than Significant Impact**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils
iv) Landslides?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	**Less Than Significant 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?	**Less Than Significant 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?	**Less Than Significant 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?	**Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated**

Affected Environment

The proposed project is located within the north-central portion of the Coast Ranges Geomorphic Province of California. The Coast Ranges are composed of Mesozoic and Cenozoic sedimentary, igneous, and metamorphic strata which have been uplifted and deformed by right-lateral movement along the San Andreas Fault Zone over the last 30 million years into a series of northwest-southeast trending mountain ranges and valleys.

The California Geological Survey record and United States Geological Survey Quaternary Fault and Fold database indicates the proposed improvements from post miles R3.89 to R4.18 lie within an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone. Therefore, a portion of the proposed improvements are considered susceptible to surface fault rupture hazards per Caltrans standards.

According to the project Structures Preliminary Geotechnical Report dated March 14, 2025 the project area is considered seismically active and would be subject to strong ground motions, including an estimated peak ground acceleration of 1.17g.

Liquefaction potential may exist within the project area since there are mapped valley and floodplain deposits (Quaternary alluvium and Older

Quaternary alluvium) within the project limits; however, the project limits do not include any mapped California Geologic Survey Liquefaction Zones.

Seismic and/or heavy rainfall events may contribute to landslide hazards. There is a history of rockfall and slope failures near the proposed wildlife undercrossings included in this project. However, during Caltrans investigations for the project Geologic Hazards Report, no record of significant damage from landslides within the project limits was found.

The USDA soil survey report generated for the trenchless culvert rehabilitation work associated with this project found that there are erodible soils with soil erodibility (Kf) factors up to 0.43, which is near the upper end of moderate erodibility.

The proposed improvements in the project limits were found to be situated on primarily embankment fill and valley and floodplain deposits. These geologic units are relatively stable but may have potential for liquefaction.

According to the USDA soil survey report generator, lean clays and fat clays, which may have the potential for expansion, are present within the project limits. Because the proposed improvements are generally within embankment fill, any expansive soils would likely not create a substantial risk to life or property.

The project does not include any septic system or other wastewater disposal-related components.

The project Paleontological Identification Report notes that the project area contains eight geologic units that have varying potential to contain significant fossils. Of these units, three units within the project limits have high potential for scientifically valuable fossils and would also be subject to excavation-related impacts from the project: unnamed nonmarine deposits, old alluvial deposits, and the Etchegoin Formation.

Environmental Consequences

According to the project Geologic Hazards Report, although post miles R3.89 to R4.18 are located within a designated Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone, the hazard present from surface fault rupture is considered less than significant because there are no critical structures within that zone.

Though the project area could potentially experience strong shaking, soil liquefaction, or landslides in the event of an earthquake, the project will not add any new structural elements to the project limits of the route that might otherwise increase the potential for seismic hazards to the traveling public in the long-term use of the highway within the project limits.

Seismic design standards in the Caltrans Highway Design Manual are implemented to the extent needed for each project's specific geologic and soil setting and to address the specific elements of design. These design standards will minimize the susceptibility of the project route, travelers that use the highway, and nearby buildings and utilities to damage from earthquakes and other seismically induced hazards over the long term.

The project contractor is responsible, per the requirements of the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Occupational Safety and Health administrations, to provide employees with a workplace free from recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious physical harm, including during seismic events.

Trenches cut for the repair work will be laid back into slopes and embankments, which will be required to be shored up at 95 percent compaction to ensure there will be no roadway or embankment slope failures. In addition, Caltrans Standard Specifications and Best Management Practices will be implemented during construction at project work locations for control of erosion and sedimentation from the construction work areas (see Section 1.5, Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in All Build Alternatives, and Section 2.1.10, Hydrology and Water Quality). It is expected that project construction will have less than significant impacts related to soil instability and erosion.

Because the project does not include installation of septic tanks or other wastewater disposal systems and is not expected to affect any existing, nearby wastewater systems, no adverse impacts are anticipated in this regard.

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] The project has the potential to impact paleontological resources because the rehabilitation of seven culverts at four locations (Drainage Systems 1, 6, 7, 12), including the installation of two wildlife undercrossings at two existing culvert locations, could potentially disturb scientifically important fossils in unnamed nonmarine deposits, old alluvial deposits, and the Etchegoin Formation. Therefore, a Paleontological Mitigation Plan will be prepared prior to construction. This plan will require Paleontological Monitoring during construction.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measure under CEQA will reduce potentially significant project-related impacts to paleontological resources to a less than significant level:

GEO-1. (CEQA Mitigation) Caltrans shall retain a Principal Paleontologist that meets Caltrans qualifications to prepare or oversee preparation of a

Paleontological Mitigation Plan during the project Plans, Specifications, and Estimates phase. The Paleontological Mitigation Plan provides detailed information about the implementation of mitigation fieldwork (construction monitoring, fossil recovery), laboratory techniques for fossil preparation and identification, and the designation of a curation (repository) facility to receive the fossils. Elements of the Paleontological Mitigation Plan shall conform to Caltrans guidelines. Paleontological Monitoring during construction will be required as a component of the Paleontological Mitigation Plan.

2.1.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Considering the information in the Air Quality, Noise and Water Quality Technical Assessment Memo dated May 8, 2026, and the Climate Change Report dated April 2026, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Greenhouse Gas Emissions
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	**No Impact**

Affected Environment

Within the project limits, U.S. Route 101 runs north-south and is classified as a 4-lane curvilinear Expressway from post mile 0.0 to 1.8, a Freeway from post mile 1.8-7.52, and an Expressway from post mile 7.52 to 7.55.

Regulatory agencies take greenhouse gas emissions inventory estimates to track the amount of greenhouse gases discharged into the atmosphere by specific sources over a period, such as a calendar year. Tracking annual greenhouse gas emissions allows countries, states, and smaller jurisdictions to understand how emissions are changing and what actions may be needed to attain emission reduction goals. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is responsible for documenting greenhouse gas emissions nationwide, and the California Air Resources Board does so for the state.

The California Air Resources Board sets regional targets for California's 18 Metropolitan Planning Organizations to use in their Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy to plan future projects that will cumulatively achieve greenhouse gas reduction goals. Targets are set at a

percent reduction of passenger vehicle greenhouse gas emissions per person from 2005 levels.

The project is within the jurisdiction of the San Benito Council of Governments, which is designated by the State of California as the Regional Transportation Agency for the county. The Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments is the joint power, multi-planning agency for the area and the federal Metropolitan Planning Organization for the region. The San Benito Council of Governments updates the Regional Transportation Plan every four years in coordination with the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments, which prepares a Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy for the counties of Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz. The Regional Transportation Plan provides a basis for actions to allocate state and federal funding for transportation improvement projects.

The current 2022-2045 Regional Transportation Plan was approved by the San Benito Council of Governments in June 2022. As noted in this plan, current California Air Resources Board targets for greenhouse gas reduction in the Monterey Bay region include a 3 percent reduction in per capita greenhouse gas emissions from passenger vehicles by 2020 (compared with 2005) and a 6 percent per capita reduction by 2035 through land use and transportation planning.

Environmental Consequences

The proposed project is not anticipated to contribute considerable amounts of greenhouse gas emissions in the long term because it will not increase the highway's capacity or alter existing vehicle miles traveled. The project will help reduce the frequency of Caltrans maintenance visits and the associated equipment operation. While temporary increases in greenhouse gas emissions are to be expected during the project's construction phase, project-generated greenhouse gas emissions will be minimized through standard construction emission minimization practices and procedures (see Section 1.5, Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in the Build Alternative), as well as through the measures listed below under Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures.

Estimated project-related construction greenhouse gas emissions are shown in Table 2-9 for carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and hydrofluorocarbons. These estimates were calculated using the Caltrans Construction Emissions Tool based on default settings for a pavement preservation project and an assumption of 417 working days for the project's construction phase. Note that these estimates are based on assumptions made during the environmental planning phase of the project and are considered "ballpark" energy usage figures.

Table 2-9 Project-Related Construction Greenhouse Gas Emission Estimates

Metric	Carbon Dioxide (CO2)	Methane (CH4)	Nitrous Oxide (N2O)	Hydrofluorocarbons
Daily Average (pounds per day)	614	0.014	0.030	0.014
Maximum Daily Average (pounds per day)	806	0.019	0.039	0.018
Annual Average (tons per year)	64	0.001	0.003	0.001

Source: Caltrans Construction Emissions Tool (2021)

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The following measures will be implemented in the project to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the project:

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.]

GHG-1: Limit idling to five minutes for delivery and dump trucks and other diesel-powered equipment.

GHG-2: Schedule truck trips outside of peak morning and evening commute hours.

GHG-3: Schedule longer-duration lane closures to reduce number of equipment mobilization efforts.

GHG-4: For improved fuel efficiency from construction equipment:

- Maintain equipment in proper tune and working condition;
- Use right sized equipment for the job;
- Use equipment with new technologies.

2.1.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Considering the information in the project's 0-Phase Initial Site Assessment, EA 05-1J840, SBt 101 Asset Management Project, revised June 9, 2026; the California Environmental Protection Agency's Cortese List; the Federal Aviation Administration online mapping tool; and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Map Viewer for Fire Hazard Severity Zones in

the State Responsibility Area, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	**Less than Significant Impact**
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	**Less than Significant Impact**
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	**No Impact**
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?	**No Impact**
f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?	**Less Than Significant Impact**

Affected Environment

The proposed project lies in San Benito County along an approximately 7.5-mile segment of U.S. Route 101 that passes through gently sloping hills and valleys. The project corridor is largely flanked by undeveloped rural land used for grazing and agriculture with sparse residential and commercial development, with other nearby land uses including industrial areas and

public facilities. The project is located 0.25 mile from Anzar High School. The project area is not part of an airport land use plan, nor is it located within 2 miles of an operational airfield. There are no documented hazardous waste sites or businesses commonly associated with hazardous waste generation within 1,000 feet of the project limits.

The historic use of leaded gasoline in automobiles has resulted in soils along roadways throughout California containing elevated concentrations of lead. Soil with lead concentrations exceeding stipulated thresholds must be managed under the July 1, 2016, Aerially Deposited Lead Agreement between Caltrans and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control. This Agreement outlines which soils can be safely reused within the project limits, and which soils must be exported and disposed of as hazardous waste.

An aerially deposited lead study conducted in 2007 for a previous Caltrans project sampled soils alongside U.S. Route 101 in Monterey County between post miles 100.0 and 101.3, immediately south of the 05-1J840 post mile limits. The results from this study indicated that aerially deposited lead was present in regulated quantities within the uppermost two feet of soil adjacent to the northbound and southbound shoulders. During the current project's Plans, Specifications, and Estimates (final design) phase, the project's hazardous waste specialist will work with the project design team to create a task order for a consultant to perform aerially deposited lead testing at project locations where ground disturbance will occur. The purpose of the aerially deposited lead study will be to document site-specific lead concentrations so that disturbed soils can be properly handled, reused, and/or disposed of. The appropriate Caltrans Standard Specifications for aerially deposited lead soil management will be determined based on the results of the study.

Yellow traffic paint purchased by Caltrans prior to 1997 contained high concentrations of lead. Application of yellow thermoplastic material containing high concentrations of lead continued until at least 2004 to 2006. The lead concentrations in the older yellow paint and yellow thermoplastic are high enough to make these materials hazardous wastes when they are removed.

A review of as-built plans indicates that yellow stripe in the vicinity of the project was removed in 2018. Yellow stripe present within the project limits is therefore assumed to be non-hazardous. The appropriate Standard Special Provisions for removal of traffic stripe and pavement markings, if required, would be determined during the Plans, Specifications, and Estimates phase once the removal method is known.

The Lead Compliance Plan required to be developed by the construction contractor will address traffic stripe removal and aerially deposited lead soil management.

Naturally occurring asbestos refers to silicate minerals that occur as asbestiform fibers and are found as a natural component in certain soil or rock types. Disturbance of soil or rocks containing naturally occurring asbestos can release asbestos fibers into the air, posing a human health risk if inhaled. In District 5, naturally occurring asbestos can be found within serpentine and ultramafic rocks of the Coast Ranges, and within fault zones. A review of geologic mapping and mineral hazard maps indicates that naturally occurring asbestos is not present within the project limits.

Caltrans guardrail supports and signposts often consist of wood that has been treated with chemical preservatives to prevent rot or insect attack. Treated wood waste is a State-designated hazardous waste, but is subject to alternative management standards under Health and Safety Code Section 25230. These standards allow for simplified management and transport of treated wood waste, and disposal at non-hazardous waste landfills that meet certain requirements.

Treated wood waste may be generated by this project via guardrail replacement. If treated wood waste would be disposed of as part of the project, Standard Special Provision 14-11.14 should be included in the construction contract for proper management and disposal of this material.

As the main transportation corridor through northwestern San Benito County, a largely rural area, U.S. Route 101 can be considered a major emergency response route.

According to California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Fire Hazard Severity Zone Mapping for State Responsibility Area lands in San Benito County (April 1, 2024), the project passes through fire hazard severity zones of Moderate and High. In addition, the San Benito County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (September 2022, p. 106) notes that the U.S. Route 101 corridor within the county is an area that is particularly vulnerable to wildfire. See Section 2.1.20, Wildfire, for more information.

Environmental Consequences

The proposed project is unlikely to pose a significant risk to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials, or through the accidental release of hazardous materials. During the project design phase, an aerially deposited lead study will be completed, and the hazardous waste specialist will work with the project design team to determine the appropriate Standard Special Provisions to include in the construction contract. With implementation of appropriate Caltrans Standard Specifications, Best Management Practices, and other standard procedures during construction activities to properly store, handle and dispose of potentially hazardous materials, adverse effects to human health or the environment would not be expected. Therefore, the potential for adverse

impacts related to the transport, use, disposal, or accidental release of hazardous materials would be considered less than significant.

During project construction, although U.S. Route 101 will remain open to two-way public travel, occasional lane closures, route detours, and other changes to circulation and access could potentially affect emergency service response times or emergency evacuation plans. However, emergency access will be maintained through the project limits. Traffic control during construction will be addressed with changeable message signs and construction area signs, and a public awareness campaign will be conducted. Detour route(s) for vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic will be provided as necessary. Enhanced traffic law enforcement will be provided in active work zones by the California Highway Patrol to ensure emergency access and protect public and worker safety. In addition, the Resident Engineer will coordinate with regional emergency service providers and the construction contractor to maintain emergency service access to nearby roadways and routes in the area. Lane closure charts will be provided during the project's Plans, Specifications, and Estimates phase.

The project would not be expected to increase the risk of injury, death, or property destruction from wildfire. The project will not change the existing land uses or generate new development so that new populations and structures would be brought into wildland fire zones. As noted in Section 1.5, the project will implement Standard Special Provision 7-1.02M(2), which will require the contractor to develop and implement a fire prevention plan to minimize the risk of starting a wildfire during construction. Therefore, the project will not expose residents or businesses to increased risk of loss, injury, or death from wildland fires in the long term or permanently increase the potential for wildfire hazards in the region.

In summary, the implementation of Caltrans Standard Specifications, Standard Special Provisions, and Best Management Practices will ensure proper handling, treatment, and disposal of hazardous materials and wastes found during construction, as well as ensuring required emergency response and evacuation access through the project Transportation Management Plan, thus protecting human and environmental health. See Section 1.4.1, Build Alternative, Section 1.5, Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in All Build Alternatives, and Section 2.1.20, Wildfire, for more information.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures are proposed.

2.1.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

Considering the information in the Location Hydraulic Study dated October 15, 2024, and the Air Quality, Noise and Water Quality Technical Assessment

Memo dated May 8, 2026, the following significance determinations have been made.

The proposed project does not involve excavation or earthwork activities to an extent that would cause violation of water quality standards or waste discharge requirements, or otherwise result in substantial degradation to surface water or groundwater quality. The project is not expected to impact groundwater supplies or recharge in the project area.

The project will not alter existing drainage patterns in the area because the project will improve existing drainage features and will not add or remove drainage features within the project limits. The project will not add any net new impervious surface area and all disturbed soil area (estimated at 1.38 acres) will be fully rehabilitated after construction.

The project will not construct any significant changes to the highway infrastructure that would increase runoff leading to any designated floodplains or floodways within the project limits. No significant encroachments to existing floodplains or floodways are planned. As such, the proposed project will not raise water surface elevations within the existing floodplains or floodways.

The project is not anticipated to conflict with any existing or planned water management plan in the region because the project will be limited to improving existing roadway elements, and existing drainage features.

The project is not anticipated to decrease existing water quality in the project vicinity, as temporary and permanent erosion and sediment control will be implemented as components of the project. In addition, the project will include Caltrans standard measures, and Best Management Practices will be implemented during construction to avoid and minimize potential impacts to water quality.

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**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hydrology and Water Quality
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**

2.1.11 Land Use and Planning

According to the San Benito County Planning Department's Geographic Information Systems web tool, U.S. Route 101 within the project limits crosses through areas that have county zoning designations of Rural, Agricultural Productive, Agricultural Rangeland/Mineral Resource, Neighborhood Commercial, Agricultural Rangeland/FP, Agricultural Rangeland, Heavy Industrial, and Commercial Thoroughfare.

The proposed project involves work primarily on existing facilities and will not involve any changes in land use, expansion of land use, or conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation. There are no proposed changes to the highway's alignment, function, or capacity, and the project will not divide a planned or established community. Therefore, after additional review of the San Benito County 2035 General Plan's Land Use Element (adopted July 21,

2015), the determination is that the project will not result in any impacts related to land use and planning.

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Land Use and Planning
a) Physically divide an established community?	**No Impact**
b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	**No Impact**

2.1.12 Mineral Resources

Based on a review of the San Benito County 2035 General Plan's Natural and Cultural Resources Element (adopted July 21, 2015), the county contains significant mineral and aggregate resources. However, according to the San Benito County Planning Department's Geographic Information Systems web tool, the proposed project's Area of Potential Impacts does not intersect with any County-designated mineral preservation or extraction zone.

The project activities will be limited to work on highway features already present along the existing alignment of U.S. Route 101. The project will not involve the removal or extraction of mineral resources. Therefore, the project will not result in any impacts related to 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**

2.1.13 Noise

Considering the information in the Air Quality, Noise and Water Quality Technical Assessment Memo dated May 8, 2026 and the San Benito County 2035 General Plan (adopted July 21, 2015), the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project result in:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Noise
a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
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**

Affected Environment

The project spans a length of approximately 7.5 miles, passing through the entirety of U.S. Route 101's footprint within San Benito County. The project setting consists of rolling terrain with land uses including agricultural, low density rural residential, and scattered mixed commercial and industrial. The immediate project vicinity contains few residences; however, according to the project Air Quality, Noise and Water Quality Technical Assessment Memo, the nearest residence to planned project activities is approximately 55 feet away, and therefore the potential exists for project-related noise impacts to nearby residents.

Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-8.02 requires contractors to control and monitor noise resulting from work activities and to avoid exceeding 86 decibels (maximum sound level) at 50 feet from the job site between 9:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

The San Benito County 2035 General Plan (adopted July 21, 2015) includes policies to protect the health, safety, and welfare of county residents through the elimination of annoying or harmful noise levels:

- General Plan Noise Policy HS-8.3, Construction Noise, states that the County shall control the operation of construction equipment at specific sound intensities and frequencies during daytime hours between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on weekdays and 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays. No construction shall be allowed on Sundays or federal holidays.

- General Plan Noise Policy HS-8.12, Construction Noise Control Plans, requires all construction projects to be constructed within 500 feet of sensitive receptors to develop and implement construction noise control plans that consider controls for reducing construction noise levels to the extent practical.

Though Caltrans is not required to adhere to local jurisdiction land use policies, Caltrans endeavors to be consistent with local laws and ordinances to the extent possible in its project activities.

Environmental Consequences

Over the long term, the project will not alter the capacity or alignment of U.S. Route 101, and it is anticipated that upon project completion, local noise and vibration levels will be similar to existing conditions. Therefore, no long-term noise or vibration abatement measures will be required for the project.

In the short term, project construction activities will result in a temporary and intermittent increase in noise and vibration levels within the project vicinity. The amount of construction noise and vibration will vary with the activities occurring and the types of equipment used. Construction equipment that may be used for this project and the associated noise levels at 50 feet away are listed in Table 2-10.

Table 2-10 Construction Equipment Noise Levels

Equipment	Noise Level (decibels) at 50 Feet
Backhoe	78
Bar Bender	Not applicable
Chain Saw	84
Clam Shovel	87
Compactor (ground)	83
Compressor (air)	78
Concrete Mixer Truck	79
Concrete Pump Truck	81
Concrete Saw	90
Cold Planer	90
Dump Truck	76
Excavator	81
Flat Bed Truck	74
Front End Loader	79

Equipment	Noise Level (decibels) at 50 Feet
Generator (less than or equal to 25 Kilovolt-Amperes)	73
Generator (greater than or equal to 25 Kilovolt-Amperes)	81
Gradall	83
Grader	Not applicable
Jackhammer	89
Mounted Impact Hammer (Hoe Ram)	90
Paver	77
Pickup Truck	75
Pneumatic Tools	85
Pumps	81
Roller Compactor (Asphalt)	80
Vacuum Street Sweeper	82
Vibratory Concrete Mixer	80
Welder/Torch	74

Source: Federal Transit Administration, 2006.

The project is expected to use much of the construction equipment shown in Table 2-10. Since it is known that cold planing work is included, it can be inferred that the loudest piece of equipment would be expected to produce a noise level of approximately 90 decibels at 50 feet, above the 86-decibel standard nighttime threshold.

Groundborne vibration and noise may be produced by commonly used construction equipment and may, in some cases, damage older or structurally compromised buildings. This project's cultural resources and noise staff did not identify any properties at risk from groundborne vibration or noise damage.

Though the potential construction noise impacts at any given sensitive receptor location are anticipated to be short-term in duration, project-related noise and vibration, particularly at night, could be expected to adversely affect local residents' normal daily routines.

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] To ensure contractor adherence to the Caltrans Standard Specifications for noise, Caltrans will require the construction contractor to develop a project-specific Noise Control Plan and submit it to District 5 noise staff for review. This plan will include requirements that construction noise be quantified, that sound control measures be implemented, as needed, to

maintain noise levels below the 86-decibel threshold between 9:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m., and that the contractor conduct construction noise monitoring.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] No avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures will be required for noise. Standard measures and specifications included in Section 1.5 will be implemented to prevent potential impacts related to construction noise.

2.1.14 Population and Housing

The project corridor is largely rural but contains widely scattered residences in proximity to the Area of Potential Impacts. Within the project limits, U.S. Route 101 crosses through a variety of San Benito County zoning designations (see Section 2.1.11 above), but the project work area does not intersect with any county-designated residential zones (for example, Rural-Planned Unit Development, Single Family Residential, Single Family Residential-Planned Unit Development, Residential Multiple, Residential Multiple-Planned Unit Development, Rural Residential, or Rural Transitional-Planned Unit Development).

The project does not propose additional housing or development, nor will the project remove or displace existing housing. Additionally, the project will not change the capacity or alignment of U.S. Route 101. Therefore, after additional review of the San Benito County General Plan's 2023-2031 Housing Element, the determination is that the project will not result in any impacts related to changes in housing or population needs in the region.

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Population and Housing
a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	**No Impact**
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	**No Impact**

2.1.15 Public Services

The proposed project consists of improvements to existing pavement, drainage, and other roadway infrastructure. Based upon a reading of the San Benito County 2035 General Plan's Public Facilities and Services Element (adopted July 21, 2015), the project will not increase demand for public services, including fire and police services, parks, or schools, although the project could result in temporary delays to traffic flow. Considering this information, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Public Services
a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services: Fire protection?	**Less than Significant Impact**
Police protection?	**Less than Significant Impact**
Schools?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
Parks?	**No Impact**
Other public facilities?	**No Impact**

Affected Environment

Public service providers in the project area include the County of San Benito (including the San Benito County Sheriff's Office), the San Juan Bautista Fire Department, the California Highway Patrol, and the Aromas-San Juan Unified School District (Anzar High School).

The project segment of U.S. Route 101 (post miles 0.0 to 7.55) passes mostly through rural areas. The nearest major population center to the project work areas is the town of San Juan Bautista, located approximately one mile east of U.S. Route 101 off State Route 156.

Environmental Consequences

The proposed project's activities will be limited to the existing alignment of U.S. Route 101 through San Benito County. The project will not require the provision of, or need for, new or physically altered existing governmental facilities. Public access to U.S. Route 101, two-way traffic flow, and emergency services access will be maintained during project construction.

While project construction will result in occasional lane closures, route detours, and other changes to circulation and access that could potentially affect emergency service response times, emergency evacuation plans, and general public traffic flow, including to and from Anzar High School, Caltrans Standard Specifications and a project Transportation Management Plan for traffic control and access will be implemented to minimize all such delays during construction to the extent possible.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures are proposed.

2.1.16 Recreation

The proposed project does not include any recreational components and will not generate an increase in population, or an increase in demand for recreational facilities. One recreational facility that is open to the public, McAlpine Lake and Park, sits near the project limits but will not be impacted by the project. The project will not directly or indirectly impact existing recreational facilities or create a need for additional or expanded facilities. Public access to U.S. Route 101 will be maintained during project construction. Therefore, after additional review of the San Benito County General Plan's Natural and Cultural Resources Element (adopted July 31, 2015), the determination is that the project will not result in any impacts to 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**

2.1.17 Transportation

The proposed project consists of improvements to existing pavement, drainage, and other roadway infrastructure. The project will not increase roadway capacity or vehicle miles traveled on U.S. Route 101 through San Benito County. Nor would the project conflict with any circulation-related program, plan, ordinance, or policy, or increase roadway hazards in the project area. Although the project could result in temporary delays to traffic flow, including emergency access, this will be addressed through the project's use of Standard Specifications and the project's Transportation Management plan.

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Considering this information, the project Climate Change Report dated April 2026, and additional information in the San Benito County 2035 General Plan's Circulation Element (adopted July 31, 2015), the following significance determinations have been made:

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

Affected Environment

San Benito County is served by an extensive roadway network of freeways, arterials, collectors, and local roads. These roadways provide access to the surrounding counties and to local destinations, such as employment areas, shopping centers, schools, recreational opportunities, and residential communities.

U.S. Route 101's alignment in the northwestern part of the county provides a critical travel corridor through the greater Bay Area. The San Benito County

2035 General Plan's Circulation Element notes that a significant number of county residents commute to other counties for work, placing a significant burden on the circulation system, increasing vehicle miles traveled, and increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

Environmental Consequences

The proposed project will not generate population growth in the project area and therefore will not increase traffic volumes along the project route or lead to an increase in vehicle miles traveled. The project will not alter the existing alignment of U.S. Route 101 nor will the improvements conflict with existing or planned transportation-related programs or facilities in the region. Because the existing highway capacity and design features will remain unchanged, design-related hazards or incompatible uses will not be generated.

While project construction will result in occasional lane closures, route detours, and other changes to circulation and access that could potentially affect emergency service response times, emergency evacuation plans, and general public traffic flow, Caltrans Standard Specifications and the project Transportation Management Plan for traffic control and access will be implemented to minimize all such delays during construction to the extent possible.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures are proposed.

2.1.18 Tribal Cultural Resources

Considering the information in the Historic Properties Survey Report and its attachments (Archaeological Survey Report, Extended Phase I Cultural Resource Inventory, and Historical Resources Evaluation Report), all dated April 2025; and also considering the supplemental Historic Properties Survey Report (June 2025) and its attachments (Finding of No Adverse Effect, July 2025; Environmentally Sensitive Area Action Plan, June 2025; and Post Review Discovery Management Plan, June 2025), the following significance determinations have been made:

Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Tribal Cultural Resources
a) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k), or	**Less Than Significant Impact**
b) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.	**Less Than Significant Impact**

Affected Environment

Caltrans conducted field surveys and evaluations of the Area of Potential Effects for this project, and determined that one precolonial cultural resources site, CA-SBN-4/H, is present within this area. This property contains both precolonial and historic-era components. The precolonial component is considered an eligible historic property for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D. Previous evaluation at CA-SBN-4/H found that the property does not qualify as a Traditional Cultural Property.

As noted previously in Section 2.1.5, Caltrans conducted Native American consultation for the project as required under Assembly Bill 52 (Public Resources Code 21080.3.1 and 21084.3(c)) in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act Initial Study preparation. See Section 3.1, Cultural Resources and Native American Coordination, for details about this consultation.

Environmental Consequences

Caltrans, pursuant to Section 106 Programmatic Agreement, Stipulation IX.B, has determined that there is a historic property within the Area of Potential Effects. Caltrans submitted a Historic Properties Survey Report, an Archaeological Survey Report, an Extended Phase I Cultural Resource Inventory, and an Historic Resources Evaluation Report to the California State Office of Historic Preservation on April 28, 2025.

Subsequently, on August 4, 2025 Caltrans submitted a supplemental Historic Properties Survey Report, along with attachments including a Finding of No Adverse Effect regarding CA-SBN-4/H, Environmentally Sensitive Area Action

Plan, and Post Review Discovery Management Plan, to the Caltrans Cultural Studies Office.

The proposed project is not expected to impact any known intact archaeological resources or disturb any known human remains, and the likelihood of discovering a buried archaeological deposit during project construction is considered low. One of the project's planned culvert repairs intersects with CA-SBN-4/H, but the proposed project is not anticipated to adversely affect the site. Archaeological studies conducted for the project at the proposed work location, including an Extended Phase I Cultural Resource Inventory, did not locate any intact archaeological deposits or features nor any anthropogenic soils at the culvert work location.

In accordance with Section 106 Programmatic Agreement, Stipulation X, Caltrans is continuing consultation with the Caltrans Cultural Studies Office and/or the State Historic Preservation Officer to assess project effects on CA-SBN-4/H. Caltrans anticipates that the State Historic Preservation Officer will concur with a Finding of No Adverse Effect for this site.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The project will avoid or minimize any impacts to cultural resources through implementation of an Environmentally Sensitive Area Action Plan. In addition, if previously unidentified cultural materials or human remains are unearthed during construction, work will be stopped in that area until a qualified archaeologist can assess the significance of the find.

Please refer to avoidance and minimization measures CR-1 and CR-2 in Section 2.1.5, Cultural Resources.

2.1.19 Utilities and Service Systems

Considering information from the project design team and from review of the San Benito County 2035 General Plan's Public Facilities and Services Element (adopted July 31, 2015), the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Utilities and Service Systems
a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?	**Less Than Significant Impact**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Utilities and Service Systems
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**

Affected Environment

Information on public and private infrastructure, utilities, and services in the greater project vicinity is provided in the San Benito County 2035 General Plan. The General Plan's Public Facilities and Services Element provides an overview of the provision, nature, and timing of community facilities and services to support existing and future populations, including fire and police services, schools, water supply, wastewater treatment, drainage and flood control, solid waste management, and telecommunications and energy facilities, among others.

Utilities and service systems within or adjacent to the project limits include electrical lines (overhead and underground), telecommunication lines (overhead and underground), natural gas lines, water lines, and stormwater drainage features. These features belong to entities including American Telephone & Telegraph and Lumen (telecommunications), Pacific Gas and Electric (electric and natural gas), and the Aromas Water District (water).

The project's planned work sites consist of roadway and highway elements and facilities that typically do not require natural gas, wastewater treatment, or solid waste removal during regular operations. Use of electricity and domestic water supply within the project limits is minimal in the project area.

Environmental Consequences

The proposed project will improve existing culvert pipes along U.S. Route 101. Culvert work will focus on enhancing existing drainage structures and improving current conditions. While some culverts, many of which are currently obstructed by sediment, will be upsized to address inadequate flow capacity, none will be relocated and no new culverts will be installed in previously undeveloped locations.

The project will not alter regional water supplies, wastewater treatment systems, or drainage patterns, nor will it affect the functions of existing electrical, natural gas, or telecommunications infrastructure. The project does not involve the installation of new wastewater, stormwater, or natural gas infrastructure. Neither is the project expected to produce large volumes of solid waste that will exceed the capacity of existing waste management facilities. All construction-related waste will be properly collected and disposed of in compliance with applicable state and federal regulations.

The precise locations of existing utilities will be verified during the Plans, Specifications, and Estimates phase of the project. This information will help Caltrans determine whether any utility relocations will be required. Ongoing coordination with utility providers will continue throughout both the Plans, Specifications, and Estimates phase and the Construction phase to ensure that construction activities avoid conflicts with existing utility infrastructure and allow for utilities to remain in place where possible. Should any relocations be necessary, Caltrans will assess the proposed new locations to confirm that no significant environmental impacts will result. As such, the effects of this project on utilities and service systems in the project area are anticipated to be less than significant.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures are proposed.

2.1.20 Wildfire

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Considering the information in the San Benito County 2035 General Plan’s Health and Safety Element (adopted July 31, 2015); the San Benito County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (September 2022); California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection’s Fire Hazard Severity Zone Mapping (online) for State Responsibility Area lands in San Benito County (April 1, 2024); and the project’s Climate Change Report dated April 2026; the following significance determinations have been made:

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

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Wildfire
a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?	**No Impact**
c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?	**No Impact**
d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?	**No Impact**

Affected Environment

The proposed project lies in northwestern San Benito County along an approximately 7.5-mile segment of U.S. Route 101. The local terrain consists largely of rolling hills and valleys containing oak woodland, grassland, and riparian corridors. The southern portion of the project includes unique rock formations and a dense grove of large, old eucalyptus trees.

The San Benito County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (September 2022, p. 106) notes that structures and communities in the wildland-urban interface and intermix regions, including the U.S. Route 101 corridor, are considered particularly vulnerable to wildfire. Assets at risk of damage or destruction from wildfire within or near the project limits include residences, schools, commercial buildings, and public facilities and utilities, as well as natural communities/habitat areas.

According to California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's online Fire Hazard Severity Zone Mapping for State Responsibility Area lands in San Benito County (April 1, 2024), the majority of the project limits pass through State Responsibility Area fire hazard severity zones that are designated Moderate and High. Approximately 0.6 miles of the highway passes through Local Responsibility Area immediately north of the U.S. Route 101/Chittenden Road interchange.

The San Benito County 2035 General Plan Health and Safety Element notes that vegetation fires comprise the majority of fires in the county. Most of these are caused by human activities involving motor vehicles, equipment, operation, arson, and burning of debris. It is expected that as San Benito County continues to grow, the potential for wildland fires will increase.

Environmental Consequences

The proposed project will not substantially impair any adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan because Caltrans standard traffic control procedures and the project's Transportation Management Plan will allow for adequate emergency access and evacuation routes during construction. While temporary lane closures will slow the normal rate of traffic flow and potentially cause minor delays in emergency vehicle access or response times, evacuation and first responder access will be maintained, including specification of detour routes for vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic. Enhanced traffic law enforcement will also be provided in active work zones by the California Highway Patrol to ensure emergency access and protect public and worker safety.

The project is not expected to exacerbate the exposure of individuals to wildfire smoke due to geophysical factors such as slopes or prevailing winds, and it will not involve the construction or maintenance of infrastructure that could increase wildfire risk.

The project will not increase the risk of fire-related earth movement or flooding because it will not create any net new impervious surface, will not change drainage locations or runoff amounts, will improve drainage capacity at some of the culvert work locations, and will fully restore all disturbed soil areas (1.38 acres total) through post-construction grading, replanting, and implementation of erosion control measures.

The project will implement Caltrans' Standard Specification Section 7-1.02M(2), Fire Protection, which will require the contractor to develop and implement a fire prevention plan to minimize the risk of starting a wildfire during construction. The project will reduce the risk of infrastructure damage from wildfire through the use of corrugated steel pipe and reinforced concrete pipe in culvert replacement, and may incorporate steel guardrail posts instead of wooden posts to further reduce fire hazard.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures are proposed.

2.1.21 Mandatory Findings of Significance

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Mandatory Findings of Significance
a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	**Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated**
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.)	**Less Than Significant**
c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	**No Impact**

Affected Environment

The affected environment for the project is the U.S. Route 101 corridor in San Benito County between post miles 0.00 and 7.55, east and inland of the Monterey Bay. The project area is largely rural, consisting of rolling hill and valley terrain with natural landscapes including oak woodland, grassland, and riparian corridors. The southern portion of the project includes unique rock formations and a dense grove of large, old eucalyptus trees. Land uses in the area include agricultural, commercial, low-density residential, industrial, public facilities, and open space/recreational areas.

U.S. Route 101 has long been recognized for its scenic qualities in San Benito County, and the southern part of the project corridor (post miles 0.0 to 3.0) has been identified by Caltrans as an Eligible State Scenic Highway. In addition, San Benito County recognizes U.S. Route 101 as a scenic corridor worthy of preservation and has designated its alignment within the county as a "County Scenic Highway." In the vicinity of post mile 3.0, U.S. Route 101

follows the historical El Camino Real. Several replica mission bells mark the historic route and the local landmark known as the “Mission Monument Marker” is located here.

The project limits contain natural communities and jurisdictional waters that support a variety of animal and plant species, including special-status native species. The project limits are believed unlikely to contain significant cultural resources but may contain scientifically important paleontological resources.

Environmental Consequences

Natural and Historical Resources

Aesthetics

As noted previously, the project corridor along U.S. Route 101 in San Benito County is designated an Eligible Scenic State Highway and a County of San Benito “County Scenic Highway.” The predominance of natural landscapes and the relatively minimal amount of urbanization in the area means that undertakings such as the proposed project have the potential to result in impacts to visual resources. This project will include safety features such as an approximately 10-inch taller median barrier, approximately 4-inch taller guardrail, and new wildlife connectivity improvements such as wildlife fencing and jump-outs that could result in slightly diminished visual quality along the project corridor.

However, these changes are not unexpected in a highway environment and will not significantly reduce the quality of the views of natural and rural lands for motorists on U.S. Route 101. The general lack of public views to the roadway from the surrounding area means that local residents will be unlikely to see aesthetic changes from off the highway. In addition, the project does not propose any new lighting, and railing, new guardrail, or other metal facilities will be stained or color-treated to reduce the potential for glare. Overall, the minor reduction in visual quality in the project limits due to urbanizing project elements would be considered less than significant after the implementation of avoidance and minimization measures.

Biological Resources

The project has the potential to cause significant impacts to sensitive biological resources, including natural habitats, jurisdictional waters/stream and riparian features, and special-status animal species, though these impacts would be limited in duration and scope.

The project’s Biological Study Area covers 368 acres and consists of all areas that will be directly affected by permanent and temporary construction impacts, as well as adjacent areas that could potentially be indirectly affected by project activities. The Biological Study Area includes the project’s Area of

Potential Impacts as well as a 50-foot buffer around this area to ensure evaluation of all potential effects on biological resources. An additional 1.3-mile buffer was added for the evaluation of potential project effects on California tiger salamander due to this species' ability to disperse up to 1.24 miles from its breeding ponds.

Permanent impact areas will affect approximately 1.4 acres of habitats and natural communities, including 0.03 acre of coast live oak woodland and forest, 0.08 acre of Goodding's willow–red willow riparian woodland and forest, 0.02 acre of arroyo willow thickets, and 0.01 acre of nonnative annual and perennial grassland.

Temporary impacts will affect 17.93 acres of habitats and natural communities throughout the Biological Study Area (see Table 2-8 in Section 2.1.4, Biological Resources).

Permanent impacts to riparian and streambank habitat will result from the construction of new end treatments (flared end sections) and the placement of rock slope protection where it is not currently present. Approximately 0.035 acre of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Water Quality Control Board, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife jurisdictional stream will be permanently impacted. Additionally, 0.059 acre of riparian habitat potentially regulated by Regional Water Quality Control Board and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife will be permanently impacted.

Temporary impacts to jurisdictional features will result from equipment accessing culvert locations and possible diversion and dewatering activities. Approximately 0.332 acre of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Water Quality Control Board, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife jurisdictional stream will be temporarily impacted. Additionally, 0.002 acre of emergent wetland, 0.934 acre of riparian habitat, 0.039 acre of ditch, and 0.010 acre of open water habitat potentially regulated by the Regional Water Quality Control Board and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife will be temporarily impacted.

Additional concerns regarding project impacts on biological resources include the potential effects on special-status animal species including California tiger salamander, California red-legged frog, western spadefoot, northwestern pond turtle, least Bell's vireo and several others (see Section 2.1.4, Biological Resources).

[The following text has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] It should also be noted that in February 2026, subsequent to the release of the draft environmental document, the California Fish and Game Commission listed two Distinct Population Segments of mountain lion (*Puma concolor*) as threatened under the California Endangered Species Act.

One of these, the Central Coast Distinct Population Segment, includes the mountain lion population within the project area.

However, the project design will incorporate Caltrans standard measures and Best Management Practices that will reduce the potential for environmentally damaging conditions or practices to occur (see Section 1.5). Also, implementation of the avoidance, minimization, and mitigation (Compensatory Mitigation under CEQA) measures listed in this document will reduce potentially significant environmental impacts on biological resources to a less than significant level. [The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] See Section 2.1.4, Biological Resources, and Appendix D, Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Summary, for details.

Cultural Resources

Project-related impacts to cultural resources are anticipated to be less than significant. Of the two cultural resources identified within the project's Area of Potential Effects, only the precolonial component of CA-SBN-4/H is considered an eligible historic property for the National Register of Historic Places. The other site, the San Juan Bautista Turn Off ("Mission Monument Marker") at the intersection of U.S. Route 101 and State Route 156, does not meet the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or California Register of Historical Resources.

The project is not expected to impact any known intact archaeological resources or disturb any known human remains, and the likelihood of discovering a buried archaeological deposit during project construction is considered low. One of the project's planned culvert repairs intersects with CA-SBN-4/H, but the proposed project is not anticipated to adversely affect the site. Archaeological studies conducted for the project at the proposed work location, including an Extended Phase I Cultural Resource Inventory, did not locate any intact archaeological deposits or features nor any anthropogenic soils at the culvert work location. In accordance with Section 106 Programmatic Agreement, Stipulation X, Caltrans is continuing consultation with the Caltrans Cultural Studies Office and/or the State Historic Preservation Officer to assess project effects on CA-SBN-4/H. Caltrans anticipates that the State Historic Preservation Officer will concur with a Finding of No Adverse Effect for this site.

Geology and Soils

The project has the potential to impact scientifically important paleontological resources. The Cumulative Impact Report for this project (August 2025) defines the Resource Study Area for paleontological resources as all areas of outcrop of unnamed nonmarine deposits, old alluvial deposits, and the Etchegoin Formation that occur within the combined Elkhorn Slough, San

Juan Canyon, San Benito River, and Upper Pajaro River Watersheds. The rehabilitation of seven culverts at four locations (Drainage Systems 1, 6, 7, and 12) could potentially disturb fossils in these deposits or formations. Preparation of a Paleontological Mitigation Plan prior to the onset of construction, including a requirement for Paleontological Monitoring during construction, will mitigate for potential impacts to these resources. [The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Please refer to Section 2.1.7, Geology and Soils, and to Appendix D - Avoidance, Minimization and/or Mitigation Summary.

Cumulative Impacts

As defined by the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (formerly the Governor's Office of Planning and Research), "cumulative impacts" refer to two or more individual effects that, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts. A cumulative impact analysis therefore takes into account potential impacts from the proposed project in combination with reasonably foreseeable impacts from other planned projects in the vicinity. The analysis should focus on resources significantly impacted by the projects or on resources in poor or declining health or at risk, even if project impacts are less than significant.

Based on the findings of this Initial Study with Mitigated Negative Declaration, the following resource areas have been assigned environmental impact determinations of "Less Than Significant Impact" or "No Impact" in Chapter 2 of this document and are not considered further in the discussion of cumulative impacts, as they will not contribute to any such impacts:

Agriculture and Forestry Resources	Noise
Air Quality	Population and Housing
Cultural Resources	Public Services
Energy	Recreation
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Transportation
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	Tribal Cultural Resources
Hydrology and Water Quality	Utilities and Service Systems
Land Use and Planning	Wildfire
Mineral Resources	

The following cumulative impacts discussion focuses on effects relating to two resource areas – Biological Resources and Geology and Soils – for which potentially significant impacts were determined, and one resource area – Aesthetics/Visual Resources – for which potentially significant impacts were not determined but which merits consideration in this section due to the high quality of, and high level of public interest in, the resource.

The assessment of cumulative impacts also includes defining a Resource Study Area for specific individual resource areas (Figures 2-1 through 2-4). The Resource Study Area is a geographic area within which impacts on a resource are analyzed and which is often broader than the boundaries used for project-specific analyses. The Cumulative Impact Report for this project (August 2025) defines the following Resource Study Areas:

- The Resource Study Area for aquatic jurisdiction, other waters, and riparian habitat includes the combined area of four hydrologic unit code level 12 watersheds: the Elkhorn Slough Watershed, San Juan Canyon Watershed, San Benito River Watershed, and Upper Pajaro River Watershed. Due to the linear nature of the Area of Potential Impacts, which transects several watersheds, this Resource Study Area covers a large area – approximately 83,034 acres within San Benito County.

- The Resource Study Area for California tiger salamander, California red-legged frog, northwestern pond turtle, and western spadefoot is a 2-mile buffer surrounding the project's Area of Potential Impacts. This buffer distance was chosen because it is the maximum dispersal distance from breeding ponds for these species.

- The Resource Study Area for visual resources is defined by a 0.5-mile buffer around U.S. Route 101 through the project limits, encompassing the U.S 101/San Juan Road intersection at the southern project limits, the U.S. Route 101/State Route 156 interchange in the center of the project limits, and the U.S. Route 101/Betabel Road/Y Road on and off-ramps to the north.

- The Resource Study Area for paleontological resources is all areas within San Benito County that fall within the boundary of high-sensitivity geologic units that pass through the Area of Potential Impacts. This includes unnamed nonmarine deposits, old alluvial deposits, and the Etchegoin Formation.

The project will have individually limited impacts on environmental resources, as discussed in Sections 2.1.1 through 2.1.20 of this document. [The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Impacts on the affected resources will be managed through the implementation of the project-specific measures listed for each resource area (see Appendix D, Avoidance, Minimization and/or Mitigation Summary). Most

of these impacts will be temporary, as will the impacts of similar projects in the area that will affect the same resources.

The project will not realign or expand the existing State Highway System in the project area, is not anticipated to alter or influence growth or development patterns in the region, and does not have environmental effects that would be expected to cause long-term, substantial adverse effects on human beings or cultural resources, either directly or indirectly.

Biological Resources

The Biological Resources subject area was carried forward for consideration in this document's cumulative impacts discussion due to the existence of high-quality habitat for special-status species throughout the project area, records of special-status species observations in and near the Biological Study Area, and the fact that a location within the project corridor along U.S. Route 101 is a California Department of Fish and Wildlife-identified wildlife movement barrier and priority remediation site.

The project Cumulative Impact Report assessed the following biological resources based on findings in the Natural Environment Study:

- Aquatic jurisdiction, other waters, and riparian habitat;
- California tiger salamander, California red-legged frog, northwestern pond turtle, and western spadefoot.

The Cumulative Impact Report made the determination that the proposed project would not contribute to an existing adverse cumulative impact to these resources, and that while the project may result in impacts that are individually limited, these will not be cumulatively considerable for reasons including the following:

- The proposed project is not anticipated to substantially contribute to adverse cumulative impacts to jurisdictional waters and riparian habitat. The project will fully mitigate for impacts to jurisdictional waters and riparian habitat onsite.
- The proposed project is not anticipated to substantially contribute to adverse cumulative impacts to California tiger salamander in the Resource Study Area because California Natural Diversity Database records and recent California tiger salamander surveys in the vicinity of the Biological Study Area suggest a low potential for occurrence and risk of take is proportionately low within the Biological Study Area.
- When considered cumulatively, the proposed project is not anticipated to result in substantially adverse cumulative impacts to California red-legged frog, western spadefoot toad, or northwestern pond turtle because the

project will be small in scale and will result in mostly temporary impacts. In addition, compensatory mitigation will be implemented to offset impacts to jurisdictional areas, which will in turn offset impacts to these species.

[The following text has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] In response to California Department of Fish and Wildlife comments during the circulation period for this project's draft environmental document, avoidance and/or minimization measures specific to native fishes (Monterey hitch and southern coastal roach) and burrowing owl were added into the project's Natural Environment Study and have been incorporated into this final environmental document. From the revised Natural Environment Study:

- Impacts to Monterey hitch and southern coastal roach, if present, would be minimal and temporary in nature. With implementation of the included avoidance and minimization measures, the project does not have the potential to contribute to an adverse cumulative impact to Monterey hitch and southern coastal roach.

- As impacts to nesting birds will be avoided, and potential impacts to nesting habitat will be mitigated, no adverse cumulative impacts to nesting birds are anticipated.

For additional information, please refer to Section 2.1.4, Biological Resources; Appendix C, Comment Letters and Responses; and Appendix D, Avoidance, Minimization and/or Mitigation Summary.

Geology and Soils

The Geology and Soils resource area was carried forward for consideration in this document's cumulative impacts discussion due to the existence of three geological formations within the project limits that are known to contain, or potentially contain, scientifically important fossils: unnamed nonmarine deposits, old alluvial deposits, and the Etchegoin Formation.

The project Cumulative Impact Report assessed paleontological resources based on findings in the Paleontological Cumulative Impact Report. The project Cumulative Impact Report made the determination that the proposed project would not contribute to an existing adverse cumulative impact to paleontological resources, and that while the project may result in impacts that are individually limited, these will not be cumulatively considerable for the following reasons:

- Paleontological Resources within the Resource Study Area are not experiencing a cumulative effect from past, current, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. Exposures of paleontologically sensitive strata within the Resource Study Area include large swaths of rural and

mountainous terrain that are unlikely to be disturbed by human activities and would only be minimally affected by natural processes.

- The relatively small percentage of paleontologically sensitive strata in the Resource Study Area that may be disturbed by current or future development will be offset by mitigation strategies required for regulatory compliance.

Aesthetics/Visual Resources

The project Cumulative Impact Report assessed visual resources based on findings in the Visual Impact Assessment report. Although the Visual Impact Assessment did not report significant or potentially significant project-related impacts to visual resources, this resource area was carried forward for additional analysis in this document's cumulative impacts discussion because of the project area's acknowledged high-quality visual appeal. The views of rolling hills, oak woodlands, agricultural landscapes, and large rock formations are highly valued by local residents and travelers alike, as reflected in the State's designation of U.S. Route 101 in the project limits as an Eligible State Scenic Highway, as well as San Benito County's designation of the route as a "County Scenic Highway."

Figure 2-1 Aquatic Jurisdiction Resource Study Area

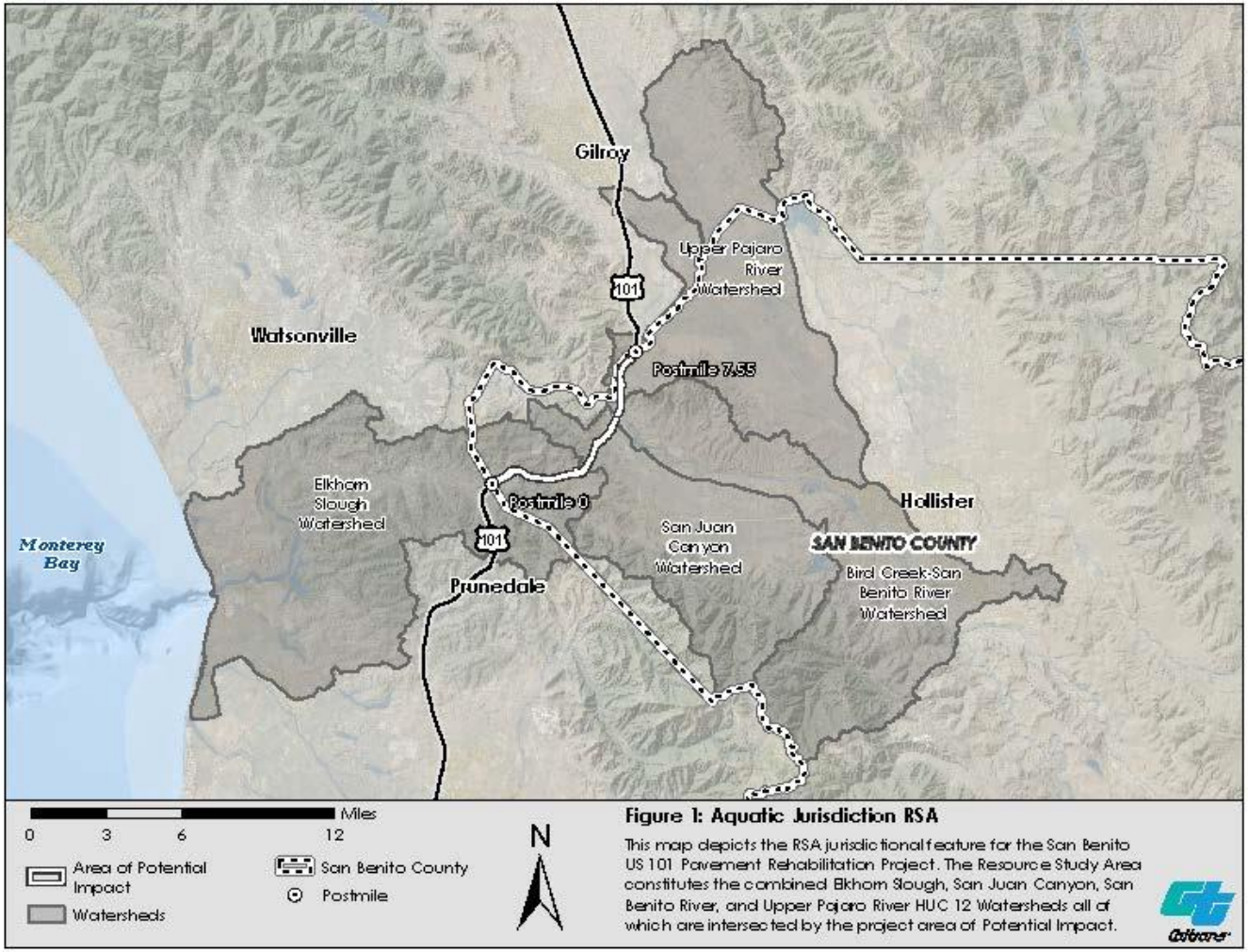


Figure 2-2 Biological Resource Study Area

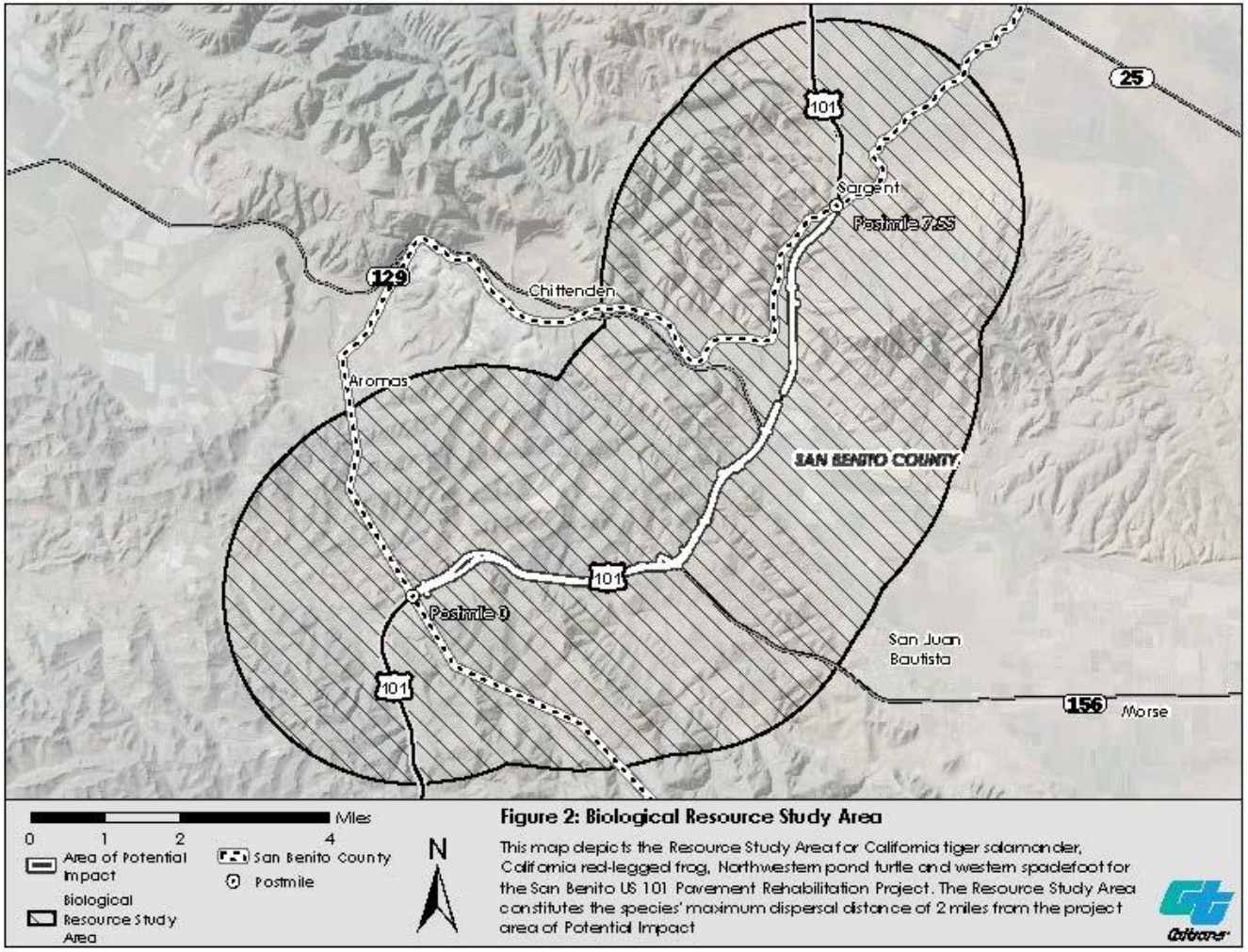


Figure 2-3 Visual Resource Study Area

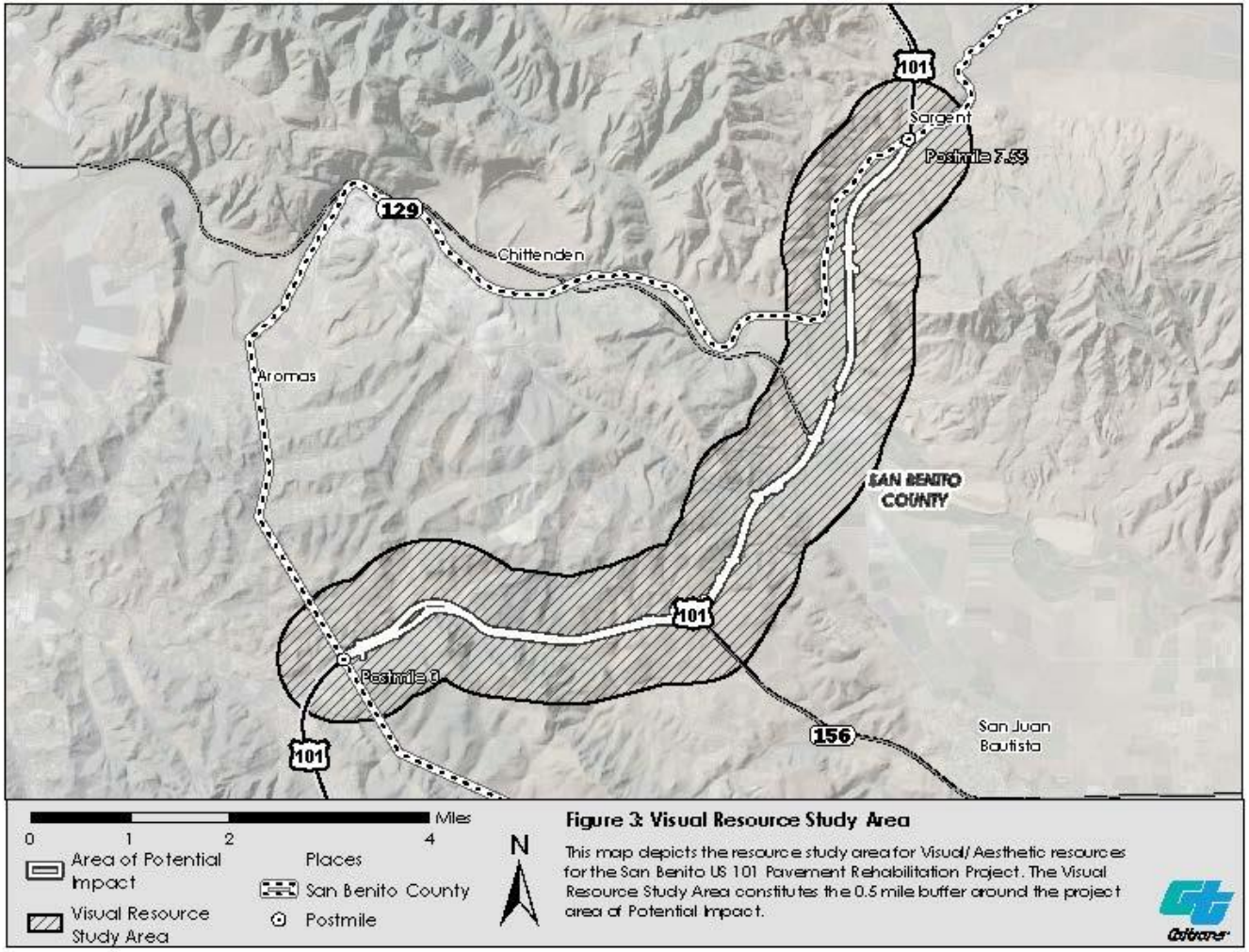
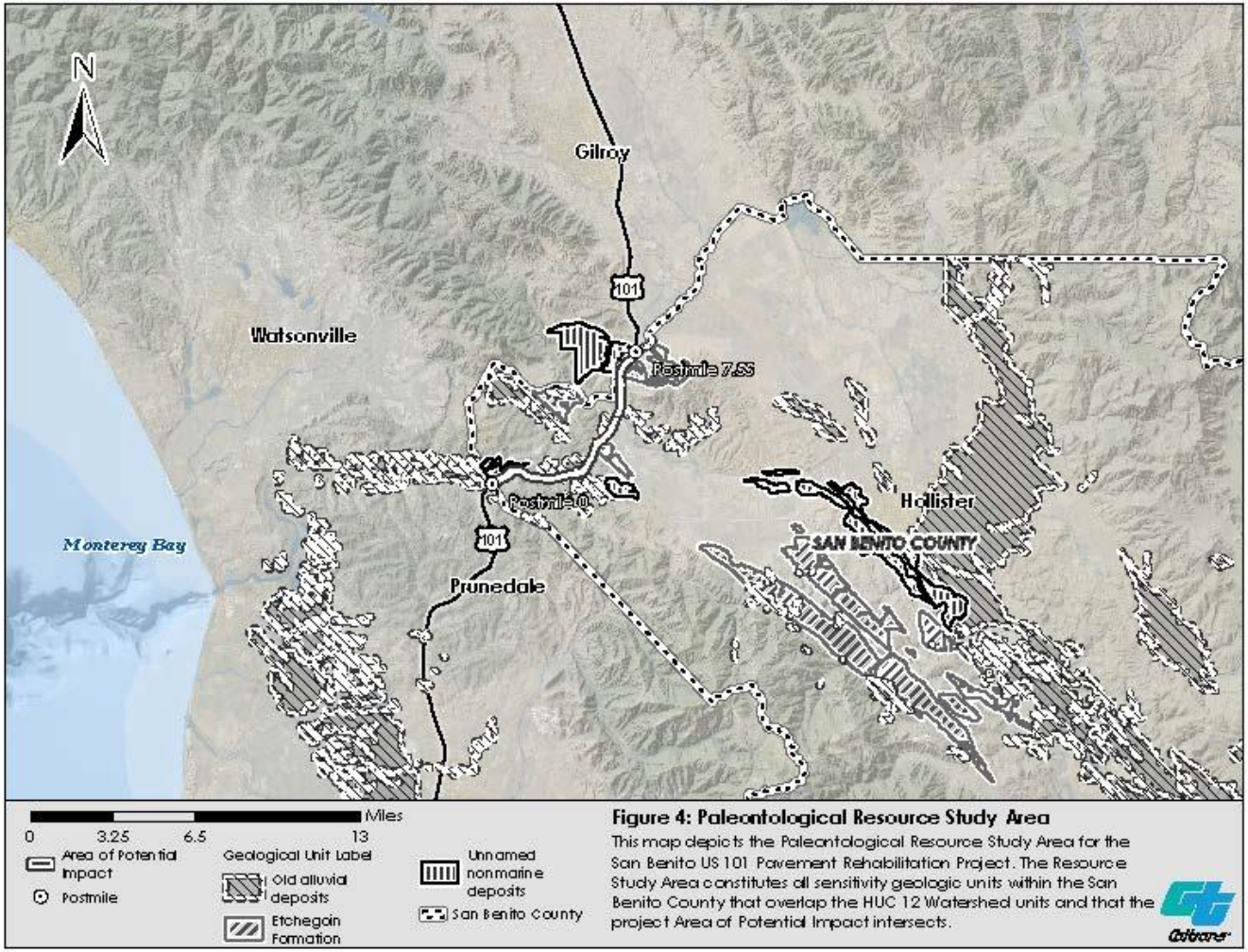


Figure 2-4 Paleontological Resource Study Area



The Cumulative Impact Report made the determination that the proposed project would not contribute to an existing adverse cumulative impact to visual resources; and that while the project may result in impacts that are individually limited, these will not be cumulatively considerable for the following reasons:

- While the proposed project features may cause a minor reduction in visual quality and character, these will not be unexpected highway features for most casual observers and it will not affect their perception of the rural character of the city and the region.
- The same type of elements proposed with this project are seen elsewhere along the highway and are not by themselves inconsistent with the rural roadway character of the region or throughout the state. The proposed guardrail, drainage structures, and minor loss of vegetation will continue to be subordinate to the overall experience of travelling along the highway. Rock outcroppings, forest habitat, rolling hills, and landmark architectural elements are visual resources along the project limits and will remain unchanged.
- It is expected that following project construction, revegetation, and implementation of environmental commitments, the project will be generally unnoticed by the casual observer driving on U.S. Route 101. If noticed, the project will not appear out of place with the setting. In addition, scenic vistas including views of the distant hills will remain intact as seen from U.S. Route 101.

Summary of Cumulative Impacts

In summary, the project will not result in cumulatively considerable effects on environmental resources within the project study area and vicinity in consideration of past, current, and reasonably foreseeable future projects due to the implementation of Caltrans' Standard Specifications, Standard Special Provisions, Best Management Practices, and avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures as noted throughout this document.

It should also be noted that the passage of a voter-led initiative, Measure A, in San Benito County in November 2024 removed the existing County zoning designation of Commercial Regional at four U.S. Route 101 interchanges in the project corridor. The initiative requires that any pending but unapproved, or future, proposal to rezone agricultural, rural, or rangeland to commercial use must be approved by voters. Given that plans for commercial developments were under way at some of these interchanges, and that these projects may be changed or no longer take place, the overall contribution of any given construction project to cumulative impacts may be reduced when compared to previous scenarios. However, specific information about the effects of Measure A on any given construction project, and therefore on the

potential contribution of this highway maintenance project to cumulative impacts in the Resource Study Areas, is not available as of this writing.

Effects on Human Beings

The proposed project consists of needed repairs and upgrades to transportation systems that support the daily routines of human beings who visit, live, and work in the project area. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this document, the project could result in temporary, adverse, direct and/or indirect effects on human beings relating to aesthetics/visual resources, air quality, cultural resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, noise, public services, tribal cultural resources, transportation, and wildfire. These short-term impacts could temporarily affect the activities of residents, businesses, and visitors to the project area.

These effects will be minimized through the use of Caltrans Standard Specifications and the avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures included in this document. Upon project completion, normalcy will return for people in the project area, and access for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users will be improved in comparison with current conditions.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] No further avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures beyond those listed in the preceding sections of this document, as well as in Appendix D, Avoidance, Minimization and/or Mitigation Summary, will be required.

Chapter 3 Coordination

Early and continuing coordination with the general public and public agencies is an essential part of the environmental process. It helps planners determine the necessary scope of environmental documentation and the level of analysis required, and to identify potential impacts and avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures and related environmental requirements.

Agency and tribal consultation and public participation for this project have been accomplished through a variety of formal and informal methods, including interagency coordination meetings, public meetings, public notices, and Project Development Team meetings.

This chapter summarizes the results of Caltrans' efforts to identify, address, and resolve project-related issues through early and continuing coordination.

3.1 Cultural Resources and Native American Coordination

Interested Native American representatives include individuals and groups identified by the Native American Heritage Commission list as well as individuals who have past involvement in archaeological studies within the immediate vicinity of the project.

3.1.1 State Government

On April 28, 2025, Caltrans submitted the Historic Properties Survey Report for the SBT 101 Asset Management Project, San Benito County, CA along with attachments, including an Archaeological Survey Report and a Historic Resources Evaluation Report, to the California State Office of Historic Preservation. The Historical Resources Evaluation Report contained the evaluation of a State-owned, built environment property located on the Caltrans right-of-way (the San Juan Bautista Turn Off site). On May 15, 2025, the State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with Caltrans' Determination of Eligibility for the San Juan Bautista Turn Off site; specifically, that the site is not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places and California Register of Historical Resources, and hence is not a historical resource for the purpose of CEQA.

Caltrans, pursuant to Section 106 Programmatic Agreement, Stipulation IX.B, has determined that there are historic properties within the Area of Potential Effects that may be affected by the proposed project. Caltrans anticipates that the State Historic Preservation Officer will concur with a Finding of No Adverse Effects. However, because the outcome is still undetermined, in accordance with Section 106 Programmatic Agreement, Stipulation X,

Caltrans will continue consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer in the future on the assessment of effects.

3.1.2 Local Government

Caltrans sent letters, along with project location mapping, via mail to the San Benito County Planning Commission on April 29, 2024, with follow-up emails sent on May 31, 2024 to notify them of the upcoming project and inquire whether they had any concerns regarding the planned activities. No responses have been received.

3.1.3 Native American Heritage Commission

On June 1, 2022, Caltrans sent the Native American Heritage Commission a request to search the Sacred Lands Files for cultural resources within San Benito County, as well as a list of Native American individuals who are familiar with the project area and may have information pertinent to cultural resources studies.

On July 7, 2022, the Native American Heritage Commission responded that the Sacred Lands Files search was positive for cultural resources, and provided a list of Native American tribes and individuals who may have knowledge of cultural resources in the proposed project area.

In July 2022, Caltrans sent letters to the list of individuals provided by the Native American Heritage Commission to initiate consultation under Assembly Bill 52 and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The letter included a project description, as well as mapping indicating where the project proposes work and a list of known cultural resources found within the project limits.

On February 11, 2025, Caltrans sent the Native American Heritage Commission a request for an updated search of the Sacred Lands Files for cultural resources within San Benito County, as well as an updated list of Native American individuals who are familiar with the project area and may have information pertinent to cultural resources studies.

On February 11, 2025, the Native American Heritage Commission responded that the Sacred Lands Files search was positive for cultural resources, and provided a list of Native American tribes and individuals who may have knowledge of cultural resources in the proposed project area.

3.1.4 Native American Tribes, Groups, and Individuals

On July 14, 2022, Caltrans sent out emails initiating Section 106 and AB52 consultation to individuals identified in the list provided by the Native American Heritage Commission. Letters provided a description of the

originally scoped project and resources identified within the project limits. Project mapping was attached to the letter. The Tribes contacted include: Amah Mutsun Tribal Band; Amah Mutsun Tribal Band of Mission San Juan Bautista; Costanoan Ohlone Rumsen-Mutsen Tribe; Costanoan Rumsen Carmel Tribe; Indian Canyon Mutsun Band of Costanoan; Salinan Tribe of San Luis Obispo and Monterey Counties; Xolon Salinan Tribe; Wuksache Indian Tribe/Eshom Valley Band.

On February 11, 2025, Caltrans sent out emails to all individuals identified in the updated list provided by the Native American Heritage Commission regarding proposed geotechnical studies associated with the project. These are summarized below:

Amah Mutsun Tribal Band:

- 7/14/2022: Caltrans sent initial consultation letter.
- 3/22/2024: Caltrans sent Project update and Phase II Excavation proposal.
- 2/11/2025: Caltrans requested comment on Geotech drilling for the project.

Amah Mutsun Tribal Band of Mission San Juan Bautista:

- 7/14/2022: Caltrans sent initial consultation letter.
- 3/22/2024: Caltrans sent Project update and Phase II Excavation proposal.
- 2/11/2025: Caltrans requested comment on Geotech drilling for the project.

Costanoan Ohlone Rumsen-Mutsen Tribe:

- 2/11/2025: Caltrans sent initial consultation letter and requested comment on Geotech drilling for the project.

Costanoan Rumsen Carmel Tribe:

- 2/11/2025: Caltrans sent initial consultation letter and requested comment on Geotech drilling for the project.

Indian Canyon Mutsun Band of Costanoan:

- 7/14/2022: Caltrans sent initial consultation letter.
- 3/22/2024: Caltrans sent Project update and Phase II Excavation proposal.

- 5/13/2024: Kanyon Sayers-Roods requested to monitor Phase II excavations.
- 7/22/2024: Caltrans requested the availability for monitoring from the tribe.
- 9/25/2024: Caltrans sent consultant Completion of Fieldwork Letter, requested comment on excavation results, and possible finding of No Adverse Effect.
- 12/19/2024: Caltrans sent an excavation report for review and comments.
- 2/11/2025: Caltrans requested comment on Geotech drilling for the project.

Salinan Tribe of San Luis Obispo and Monterey Counties:

- 2/11/2025: Caltrans sent initial consultation letter and requested comment on Geotech drilling for the project.

Xolon Salinan Tribe:

- 2/11/2025: Caltrans sent initial consultation letter and requested comment on Geotech drilling for the project.

Wuksache Indian Tribe/Eshom Valley Band:

- 7/14/2022: Caltrans sent initial consultation letter.
- 3/22/2024: Caltrans sent Project update and Phase II Excavation proposal.
- 2/11/2025: Caltrans requested comment on Geotech drilling for the project.

3.1.5 Local Historical Society/Historic Preservation Groups

On April 29, 2024, Caltrans sent letters, along with project location mapping, via mail to the historical societies listed below with follow-up emails sent on May 31, 2024 to notify them of the upcoming project and inquire whether they had any concerns regarding the planned activities. The entities contacted include the following:

- San Benito County Historical Heritage Advisory Society
- San Benito County Historical Society
- San Juan Bautista Historical Society

No response has been received.

3.2 Biological Resources Coordination

3.2.1 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

April 12, 2023: Caltrans obtained an official U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service species list for the Project.

September 22, 2023: An updated U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service species list was requested by Caltrans for the Project.

May 10, 2024: Caltrans submitted an updated online request through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation website for an official U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service species list for the project area.

December 24, 2024: Caltrans submitted an updated online U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation species list request for the project area.

April 14, 2025: Caltrans conducted Section 7 technical assistance with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service via virtual meeting. Follow up emails were sent after the meeting on April 14, and again on April 18 discussing potential for effects to listed species. Caltrans summarized anticipated effects determinations for the project, as described in the project's Natural Environment Study.

August 4, 2025: Caltrans submitted an updated U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service species list request for the project area.

3.2.2 National Marine Fisheries Service/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

April 18, 2023: An unofficial National Marine Fisheries Service/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration species list was queried by Caltrans for the Chittenden and San Juan Bautista USGS 7.5-minute quadrangles.

July 7, 2023: An official National Marine Fisheries Service species list for the Chittenden and San Juan Bautista USGS 7.5-minute quadrangles was obtained by Caltrans.

3.2.3 California Department of Fish and Wildlife

October 16, 2023: Caltrans biology and hydraulics staff met at the project site to conduct a site visit with California Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists. Multiple culvert locations proposed for work were visited as well as the tide gates at Elkhorn Slough.

December 20, 2023: A virtual meeting was held between Caltrans biology, hydraulics, and design staff and California Department of Fish and Wildlife staff to discuss the project overview, current design and channel of the culvert at post mile 4.4, and proposed work for the culvert at post mile 4.4. A site visit was requested and subsequently set up.

February 29, 2024: Caltrans biology and hydraulics staff met at the project site to conduct a site visit with California Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists. The primary focus of the site visit was the culvert at post mile 4.4 and upstream and downstream habitat at various locations.

March 4, 2024: The California Department of Fish and Wildlife contacted Caltrans by phone. The conversation confirmed that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife would not require mitigation in the 1600 Streambed Alteration Agreement for fish passage for proposed work at the post mile 4.4 culvert which could include either installing a new invert lining or replacing the culvert via trenchless method.

December 24, 2024: Caltrans submitted a California Natural Diversity Database query for the project area.

August 4, 2025: Caltrans submitted an updated California Natural Diversity Database species list request for the project area.

3.2.4 California Native Plant Society

December 24, 2024: Caltrans submitted a California Native Plant Society query for the project area.

3.3 Community Coordination

The Caltrans public outreach process for the project is intended to facilitate engagement with partner and resource agencies, other stakeholder groups, and the general public regarding potential issues, concerns, and opportunities that may affect a given project. Outreach efforts should also help ensure that Caltrans supports equity by connecting with, and seeking input from, underrepresented/traditionally marginalized communities.

The engagement process for the project is also intended to ensure that the project is consistent with existing local planning efforts such as the San Benito County Council of Governments' Regional Transportation Plan 2020-2045 (2020).

Caltrans District 5 held an online informational meeting for project stakeholders and partner on June 19, 2025. The meeting consisted of a slide

presentation summarizing project features and goals, followed by a brief question-and-answer period.

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Caltrans held an online public open forum hearing about the project's Draft Environmental Document on October 23, 2025.

Appendix A Title VI Policy Statement

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.]

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

September 2025

TITLE VI/NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the assurances set forth in the Caltrans' Title VI Program Plan, to ensure that no person in the United States shall on the grounds 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. Related non-discrimination authorities, remedies, and state law further those protections, including sex, disability, religion, sexual orientation, age, low income, and Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

Caltrans is committed to complying with 23 C.F.R. Part 200, 49 C.F.R. Part 21, 49 C.F.R. Part 303, and the Federal Transit Administration Circular 4702.1B. 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 (including LEP). In addition, Caltrans will facilitate meaningful participation in the transportation planning process in a non-discriminatory manner.

The overall responsibility for this policy is assigned to the Caltrans Director. The Caltrans Title VI Coordinator is assigned to the Caltrans Office of Civil Rights Deputy Director, who then delegates sufficient responsibility and authority to the Office of Civil Rights' managers, including the Title VI Branch Manager, to effectively implement the Caltrans Title VI Program. Individuals with questions or requiring additional information relating to the policy or the implementation of the Caltrans Title VI Program should contact the Title VI Branch Manager at title.vi@dot.ca.gov or at (916) 639-6392, or visit the following web page: https://dot.ca.gov/programs/civil-rights/title-vi.

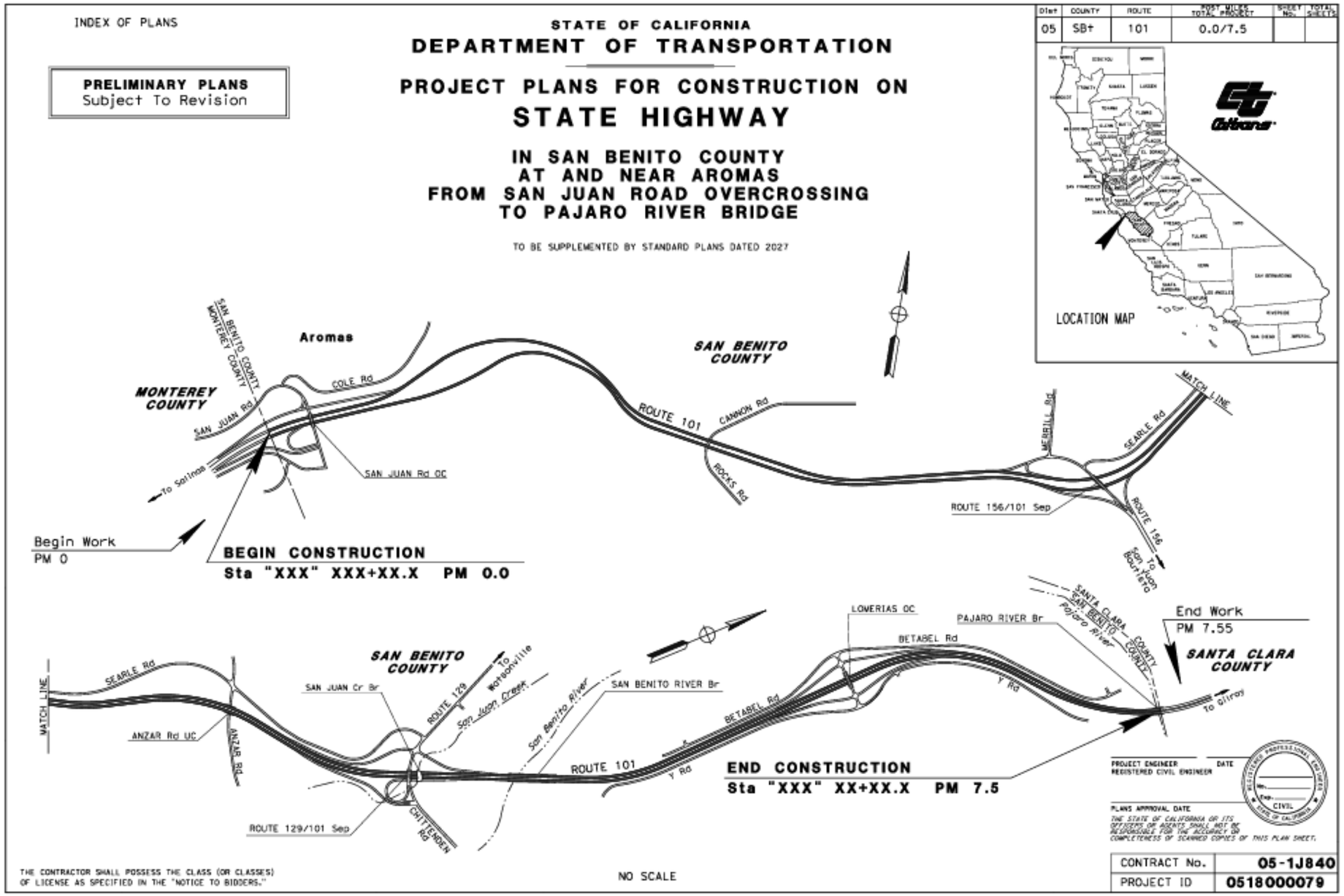
Dina El-Tawansy (Sep 12, 2025 16:52:12 PDT)

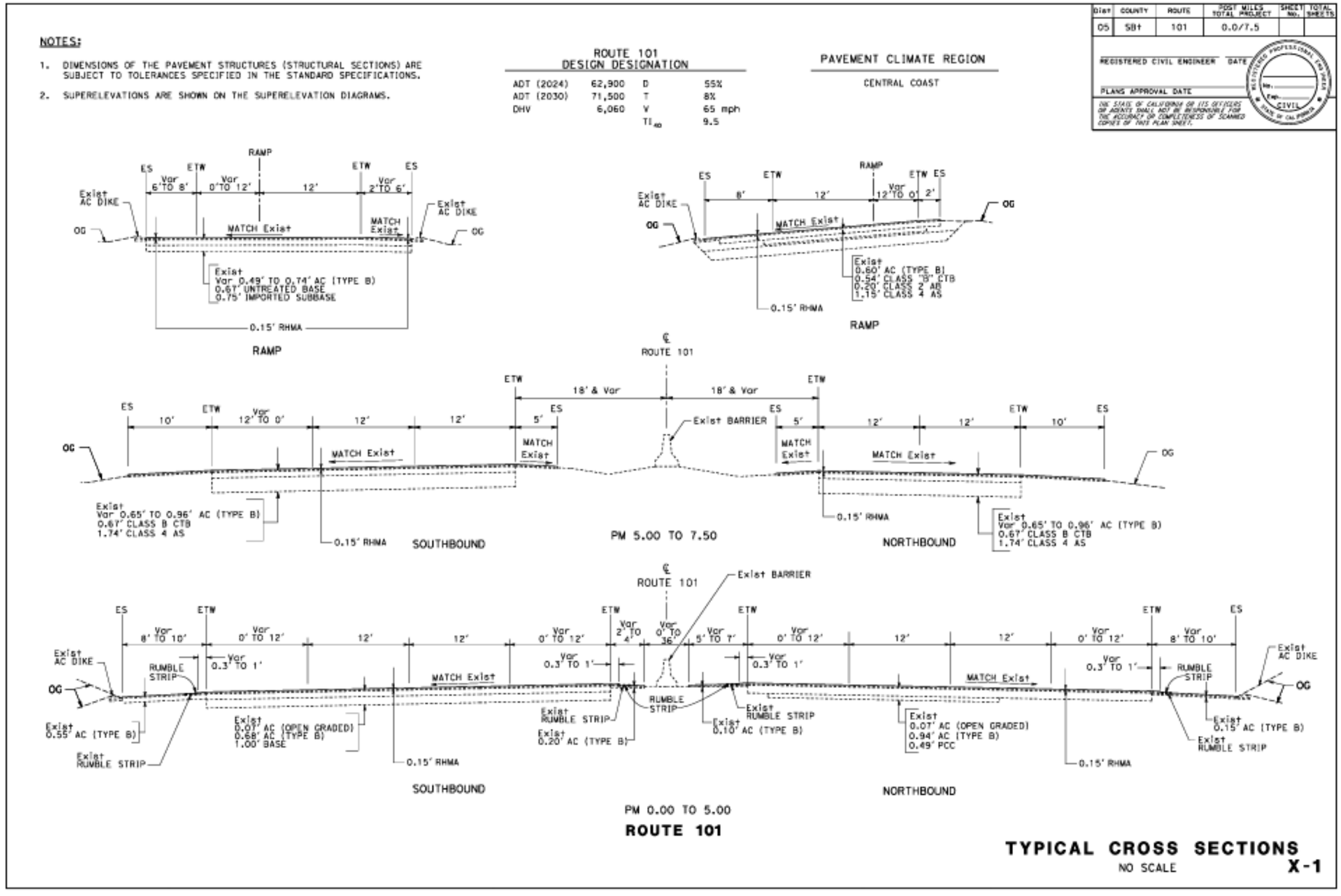
DINA A. EL-TAWANSY
Director

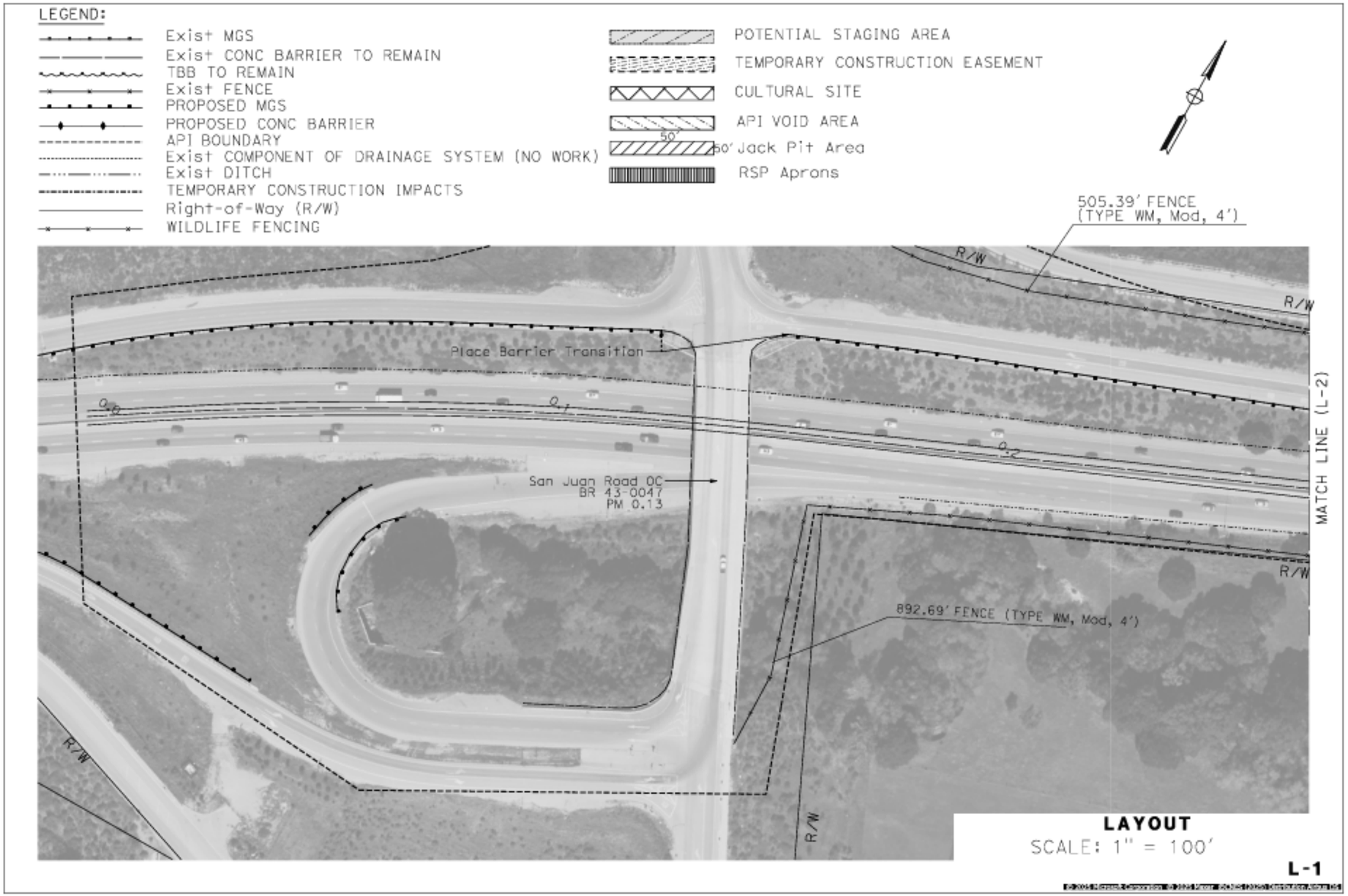
"Improving lives and communities through transportation."

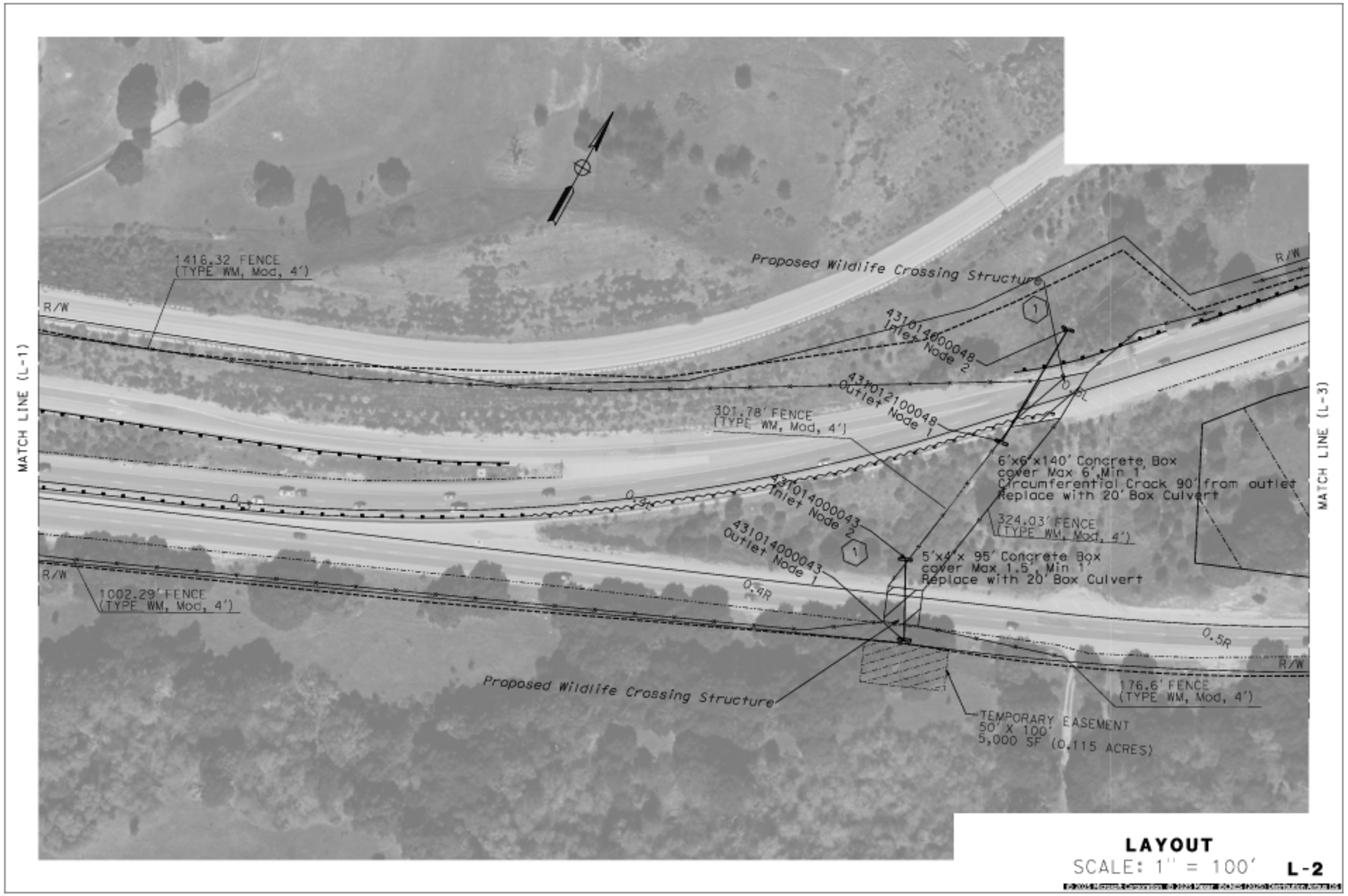
Appendix B Preliminary Project Mapping

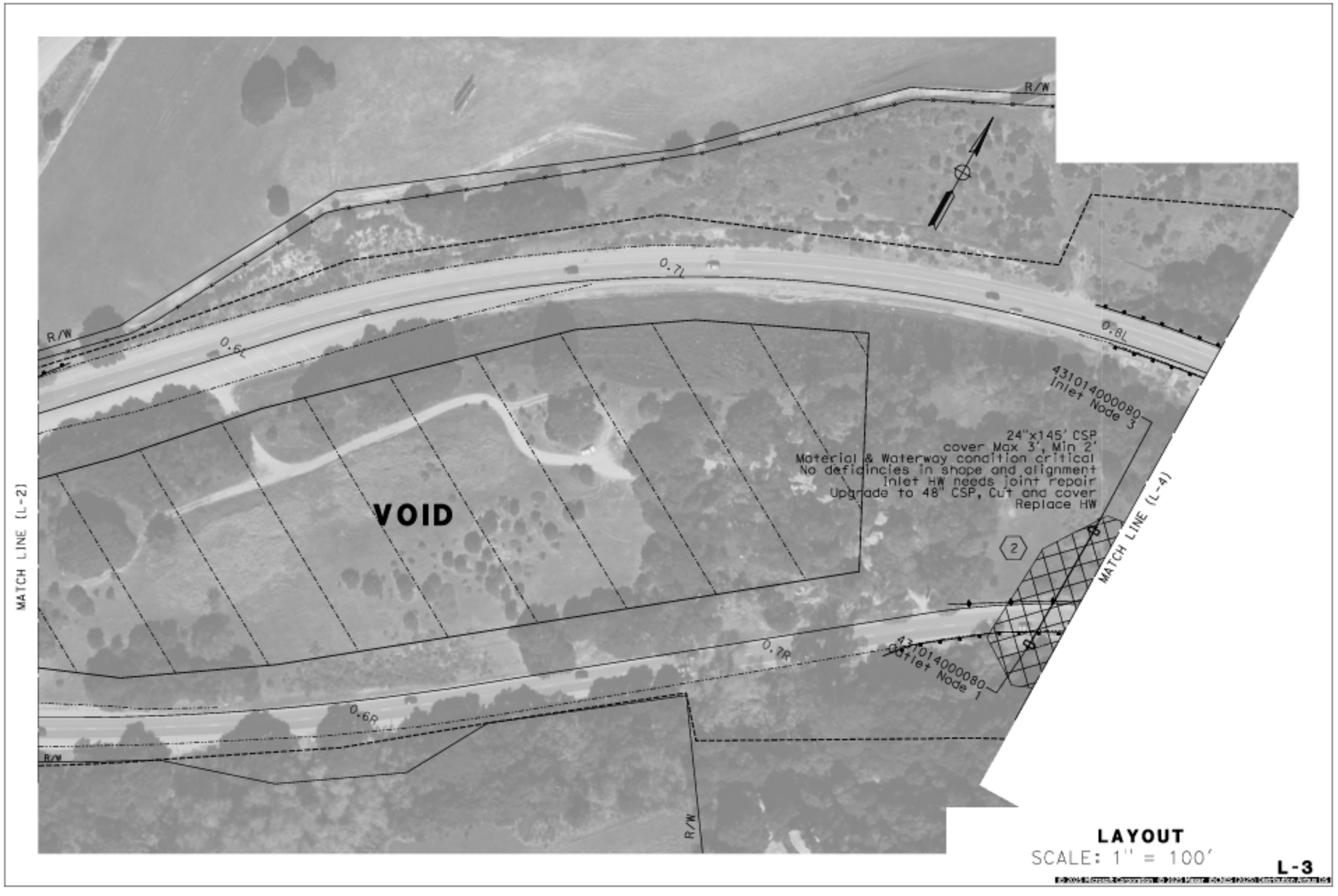
This appendix contains the preliminary project plans and preliminary right-of-way mapping for the planned project improvements.


INDEX OF PLANS
PRELIMINARY PLANS
Subject To Revision
STATE OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
PROJECT PLANS FOR CONSTRUCTION ON
STATE HIGHWAY
IN SAN BENITO COUNTY
AT AND NEAR AROMAS
FROM SAN JUAN ROAD OVERCROSSING
TO PAJARO RIVER BRIDGE
TO BE SUPPLEMENTED BY STANDARD PLANS DATED 2027
Dist
COUNTY
ROUTE
POST MILES TOTAL PROJECT
SHEET No.
TOTAL SHEETS
05
SB†
101
0.0/7.5
LOCATION MAP
Aromas
MONTEREY COUNTY
SAN BENITO COUNTY
SAN BENITO COUNTY MONTEREY COUNTY
COLE Rd
SAN JUAN Rd
To Salinas
SAN JUAN Rd OC
ROUTE 101
CANNON Rd
ROCKS Rd
MERRILL Rd
SEARLE Rd
MATCH LINE
ROUTE 156/101 Sep
ROUTE 156
To San Juan Bautista
Begin Work
PM 0
BEGIN CONSTRUCTION
Sta "XXX" XXX+XX.X PM 0.0
End Work
PM 7.55
SANTA CLARA COUNTY
SANTA CLARA COUNTY
SAN BENITO COUNTY
Pajaro River
LOVERIAS OC
PAJARO RIVER Br
BETABEL Rd
Y Rd
To Gilroy
SEARLE Rd
MATCH LINE
ANZAR Rd UC
ANZAR Rd
SAN JUAN Cr Br
ROUTE 129
To Hollister
San Juan Creek
San Benito River
SAN BENITO RIVER Br
ROUTE 101
BETABEL Rd
Y Rd
END CONSTRUCTION
Sta "XXX" XX+XX.X PM 7.5
ROUTE 129/101 Sep
CHITTENDEN Rd
PROJECT ENGINEER
REGISTERED CIVIL ENGINEER
DATE
PLANS APPROVAL DATE
THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA OR ITS OFFICERS OR AGENTS SHALL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF SCANNED COPIES OF THIS PLAN SHEET.
CIVIL
STATE OF CALIFORNIA
THE CONTRACTOR SHALL POSSESS THE CLASS (OR CLASSES) OF LICENSE AS SPECIFIED IN THE "NOTICE TO BIDDERS."
NO SCALE
CONTRACT No.
05-1J840
PROJECT ID
0518000079


NOTES:
1. DIMENSIONS OF THE PAVEMENT STRUCTURES (STRUCTURAL SECTIONS) ARE SUBJECT TO TOLERANCES SPECIFIED IN THE STANDARD SPECIFICATIONS.
2. SUPERELEVATIONS ARE SHOWN ON THE SUPERELEVATION DIAGRAMS.
ROUTE 101 DESIGN DESIGNATION
ADT (2024) 62,900 D 55%
ADT (2030) 71,500 T 8%
DHV 6,060 V 65 mph
TI40 9.5
PAVEMENT CLIMATE REGION
CENTRAL COAST
Dist COUNTY ROUTE POST MILES TOTAL PROJECT SHEET No. TOTAL SHEETS
05 SBt 101 0.0/7.5
REGISTERED CIVIL ENGINEER DATE
PLANS APPROVAL DATE
THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA OR ITS OFFICERS OR AGENTS SHALL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF SCANNED COPIES OF THIS PLAN SHEET.
REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER
CIVIL
STATE OF CALIFORNIA
RAMP
ES ETW Var 6' TO 8' Var 0' TO 12' 12' ETW Var 2' TO 6' ES
Exist AC DIKE
OG
MATCH Exist
Exist Var 0.49' TO 0.74' AC (TYPE B) 0.67' UNTREATED BASE 0.75' IMPORTED SUBBASE
0.15' RHMA
RAMP
ES ETW RAMP ETW ES
8' 12' Var 12' TO 0' 2'
Exist 0.60' AC (TYPE B) 0.54' CLASS "B" CTB 0.20' CLASS 2 AB 1.15' CLASS 4 AS
0.15' RHMA
RAMP
℄ ROUTE 101
ETW 18' & Var 18' & Var ETW
ES 10' ETW Var 12' TO 0' 12' 12' 5' ES
Exist BARRIER
ES 5' 12' 12' ETW 10' ES
MATCH Exist
Exist Var 0.65' TO 0.96' AC (TYPE B) 0.67' CLASS B CTB 1.74' CLASS 4 AS
0.15' RHMA
SOUTHBOUND
PM 5.00 TO 7.50
NORTHBOUND
℄ ROUTE 101
Exist BARRIER
ES ETW Var 8' TO 10' Var 0' TO 12' 12' 12' Var 0' TO 12' ETW Var 2' TO 4' Var 0' TO 36' Var 5' TO 7' ETW Var 0' TO 12' 12' 12' Var 0' TO 12' ETW Var 8' TO 10' ES
Var 0.3' TO 1'
RUMBLE STRIP
MATCH Exist
Exist AC DIKE
Exist 0.55' AC (TYPE B)
Exist RUMBLE STRIP
Exist 0.07' AC (OPEN GRADED) 0.68' AC (TYPE B) 1.00' BASE
0.15' RHMA
Exist RUMBLE STRIP
Exist 0.20' AC (TYPE B)
Exist 0.10' AC (TYPE B)
Exist 0.07' AC (OPEN GRADED) 0.94' AC (TYPE B) 0.49' PCC
Exist 0.15' AC (TYPE B)
SOUTHBOUND
NORTHBOUND
PM 0.00 TO 5.00
ROUTE 101
TYPICAL CROSS SECTIONS
NO SCALE
X-1


LEGEND:
Exist MGS
Exist CONC BARRIER TO REMAIN
TBB TO REMAIN
Exist FENCE
PROPOSED MGS
PROPOSED CONC BARRIER
API BOUNDARY
Exist COMPONENT OF DRAINAGE SYSTEM (NO WORK)
Exist DITCH
TEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS
Right-of-Way (R/W)
WILDLIFE FENCING
POTENTIAL STAGING AREA
TEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION EASEMENT
CULTURAL SITE
API VOID AREA
50'
50' Jack Pit Area
RSP Aprons
505.39' FENCE
(TYPE WM, Mod, 4')
R/W
R/W
Place Barrier Transition
0.0
0.1
0.2
San Juan Road OC
BR 43-0047
PM 0.13
MATCH LINE (L-2)
R/W
892.69' FENCE (TYPE WM, Mod, 4')
R/W
R/W
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-1


MATCH LINE (L-1)
MATCH LINE (L-3)
R/W
1416.32 FENCE
(TYPE WM, Mod, 4')
Proposed Wildlife Crossing Structure
431014000048
Inlet Node 2
431012100048
Outlet Node 1
301.78' FENCE
(TYPE WM, Mod, 4')
6'x6'x140' Concrete Box
cover Max 6', Min 1'
Circumferential Crack 90' from outlet
Replace with 20' Box Culvert
324.03' FENCE
(TYPE WM, Mod, 4')
431014000043
Inlet Node 2
431014000043
Outlet Node 1
5'x4'x 95' Concrete Box
cover Max 1.5', Min 1'
Replace with 20' Box Culvert
1002.29' FENCE
(TYPE WM, Mod, 4')
0.4R
0.5R
176.6' FENCE
(TYPE WM, Mod, 4')
Proposed Wildlife Crossing Structure
TEMPORARY EASEMENT
50' X 100'
5,000 SF (0.115 ACRES)
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-2


R/W
0.7L
0.6L
0.8L
R/W
431014000080
Inlet Node 3
24"x145' CSP
cover Max 3', Min 2'
Material & Waterway condition critical
No deficincies in shape and alignment
Inlet HW needs joint repair
Upgrade to 48" CSP, Cut and cover
Replace HW
VOID
MATCH LINE (L-2)
MATCH LINE (L-4)
2
0.7R
431014000080
Outlet Node 1
0.6R
R/W
R/W
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-3

R/W
0.9L
1.0L
MATCH LINE (L-3)
0.9R
0.8R
1.0R
R/W
R/W
R/W
MATCH LINE (L-5)
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-4

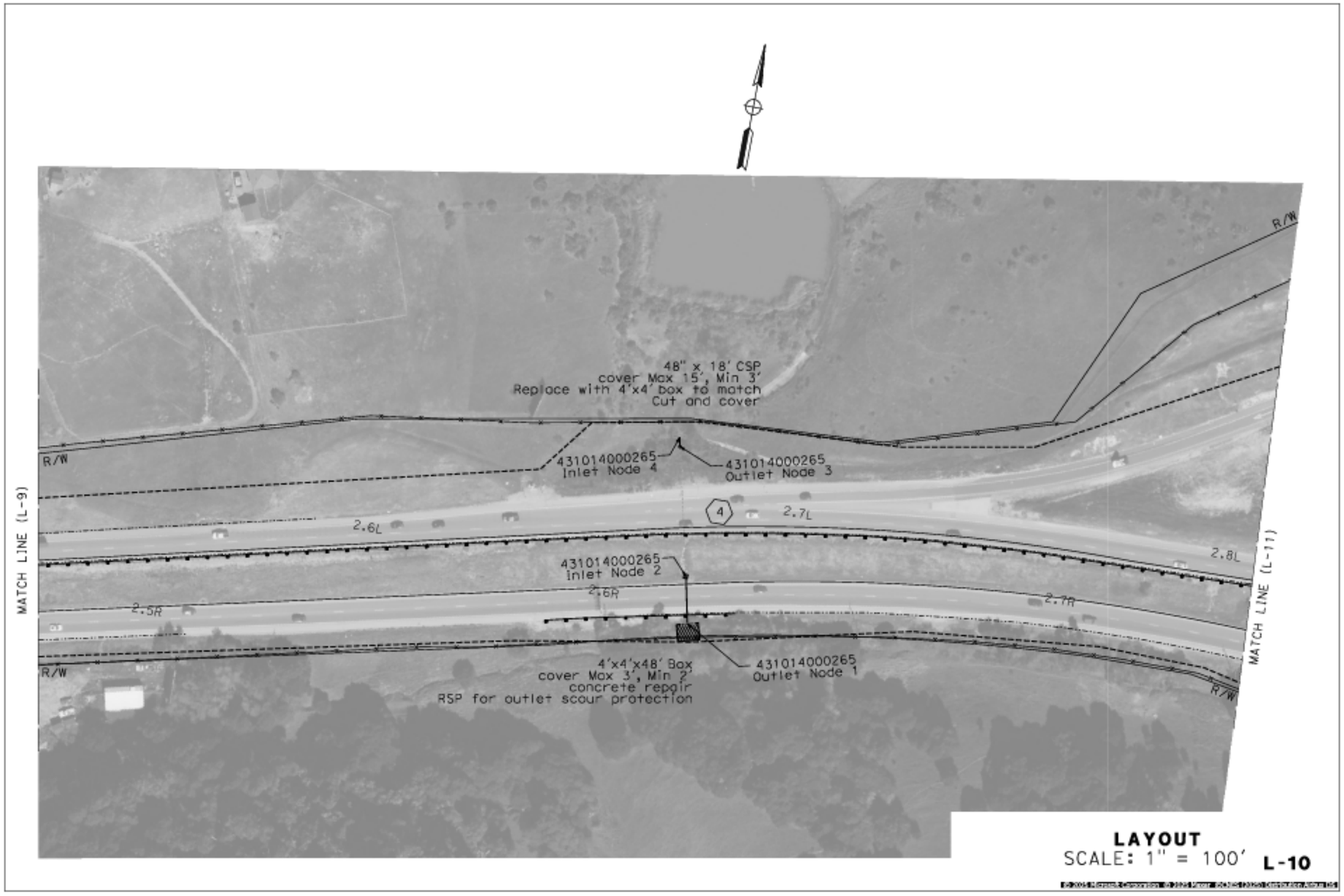
MATCH LINE (L-4)
R/W
1.1L
431014000112
Inlet Node 2
1.2L
3
1.3R
1.3L
R/W
431014000112
Outlet Node 1
36"x60' CSP
cover, Max 2.50', Min 1'
Only invert shows wear
Upgrade to 48" CSP, Cut and cover
RSP for outlet scour protection
R/W
MATCH LINE (L-6)
R/W
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-5

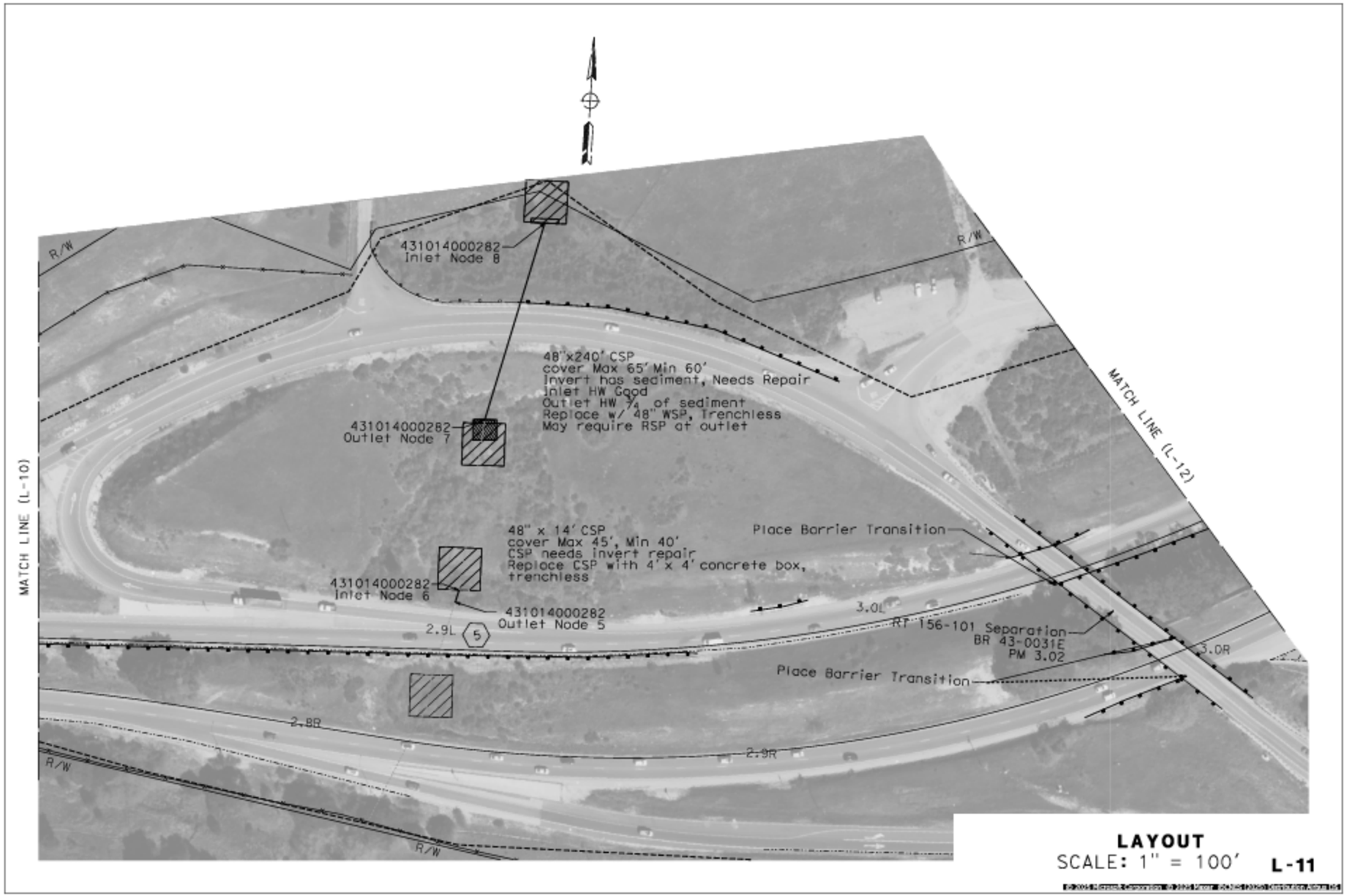
MATCH LINE (L-5)
MATCH LINE (L-7)
R/W
R/W
R/W
R/W
1.4L
1.5L
1.6L
1.4R
1.5R
1.6R
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-6

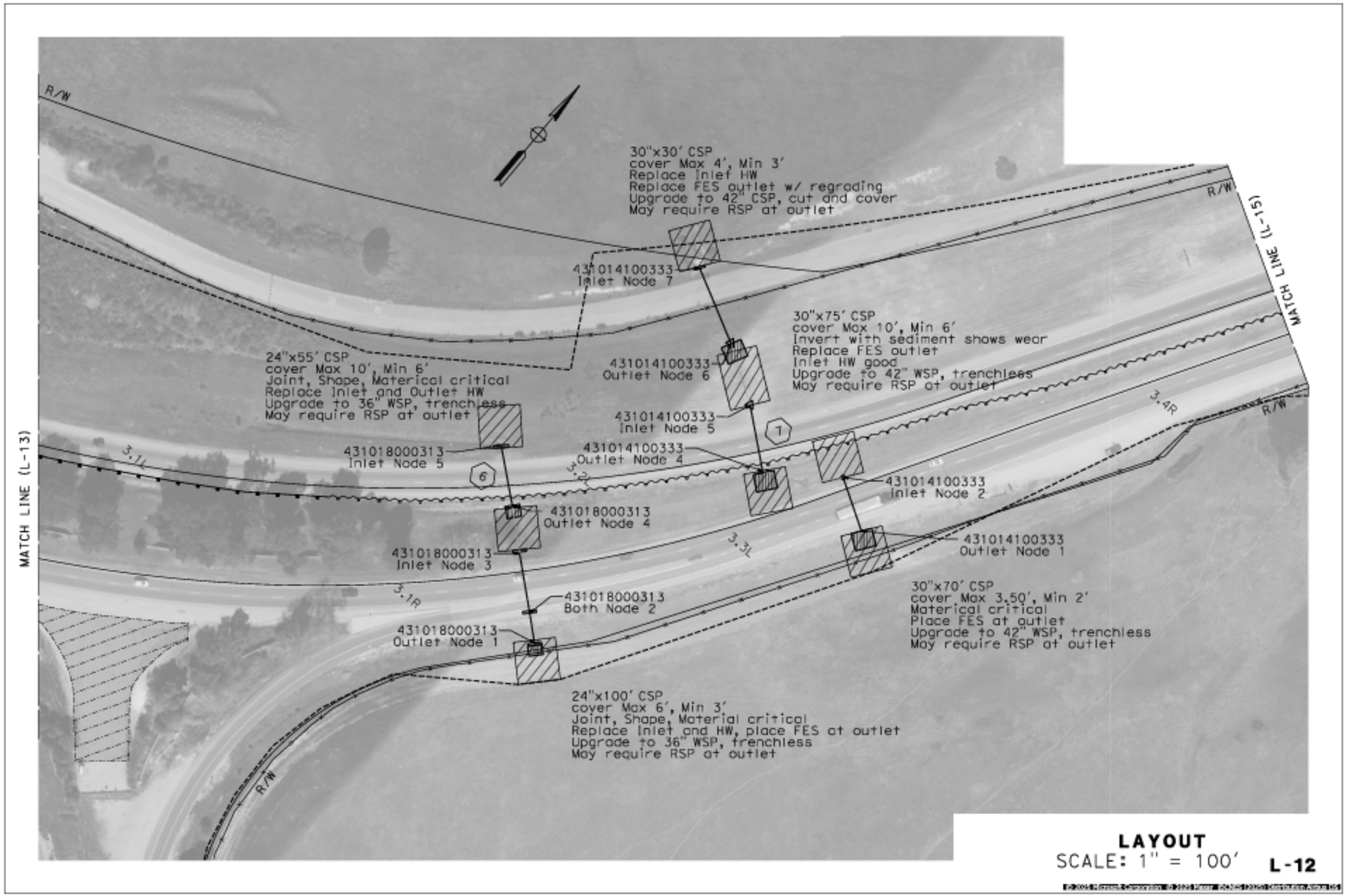
R/W
R/W
R/W
R/W
R/W
1.7L
1.8L
1.9L
1.7R
1.8R
1.9R
MATCH LINE (L-6)
MATCH LINE (L-8)
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-7

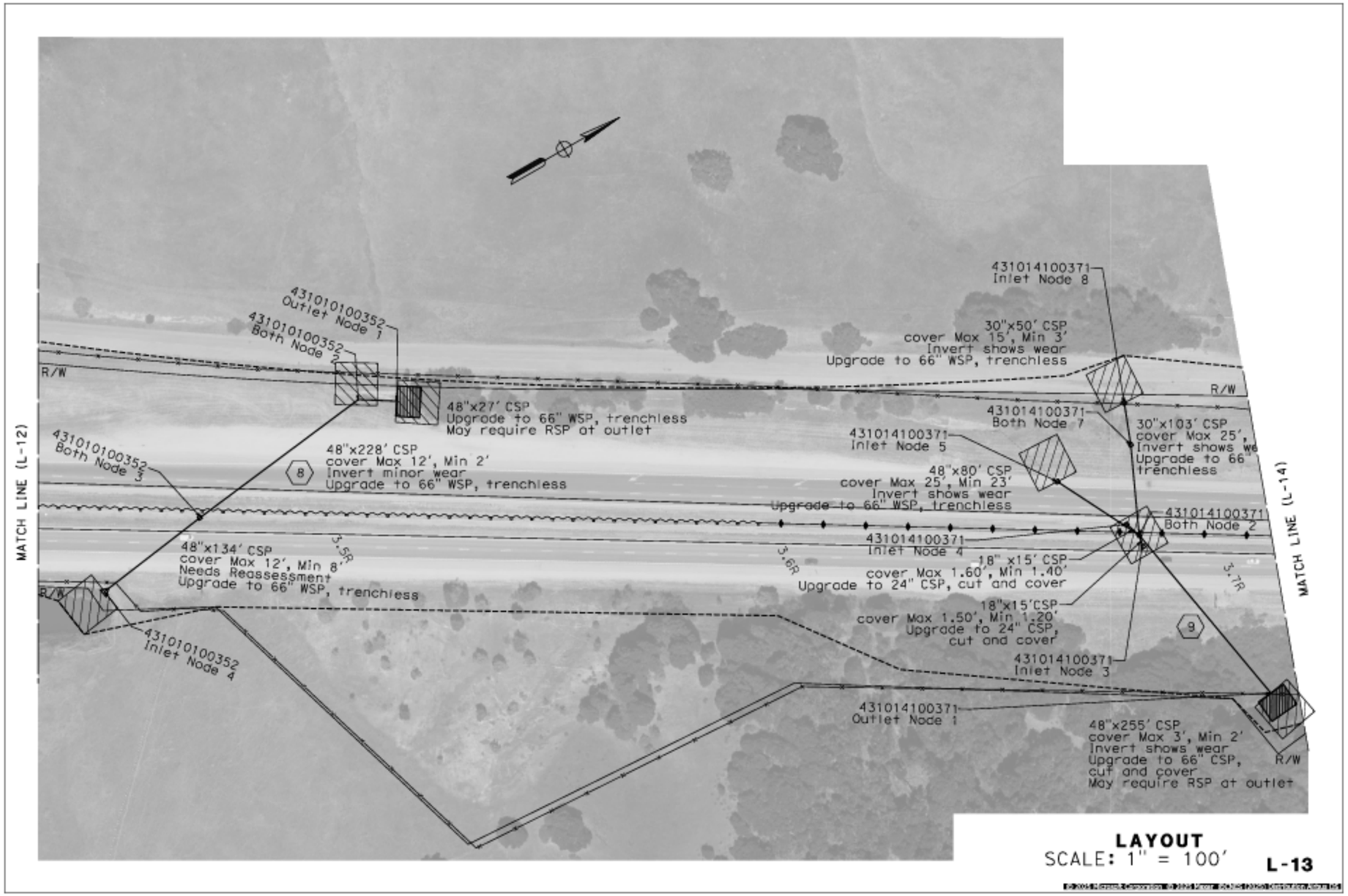
MATCH LINE (L-7)
MATCH LINE (L-9)
R/W
R/W
R/W
R/W
2.0L
2.1L
2.2L
2.0R
2.1R
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-8

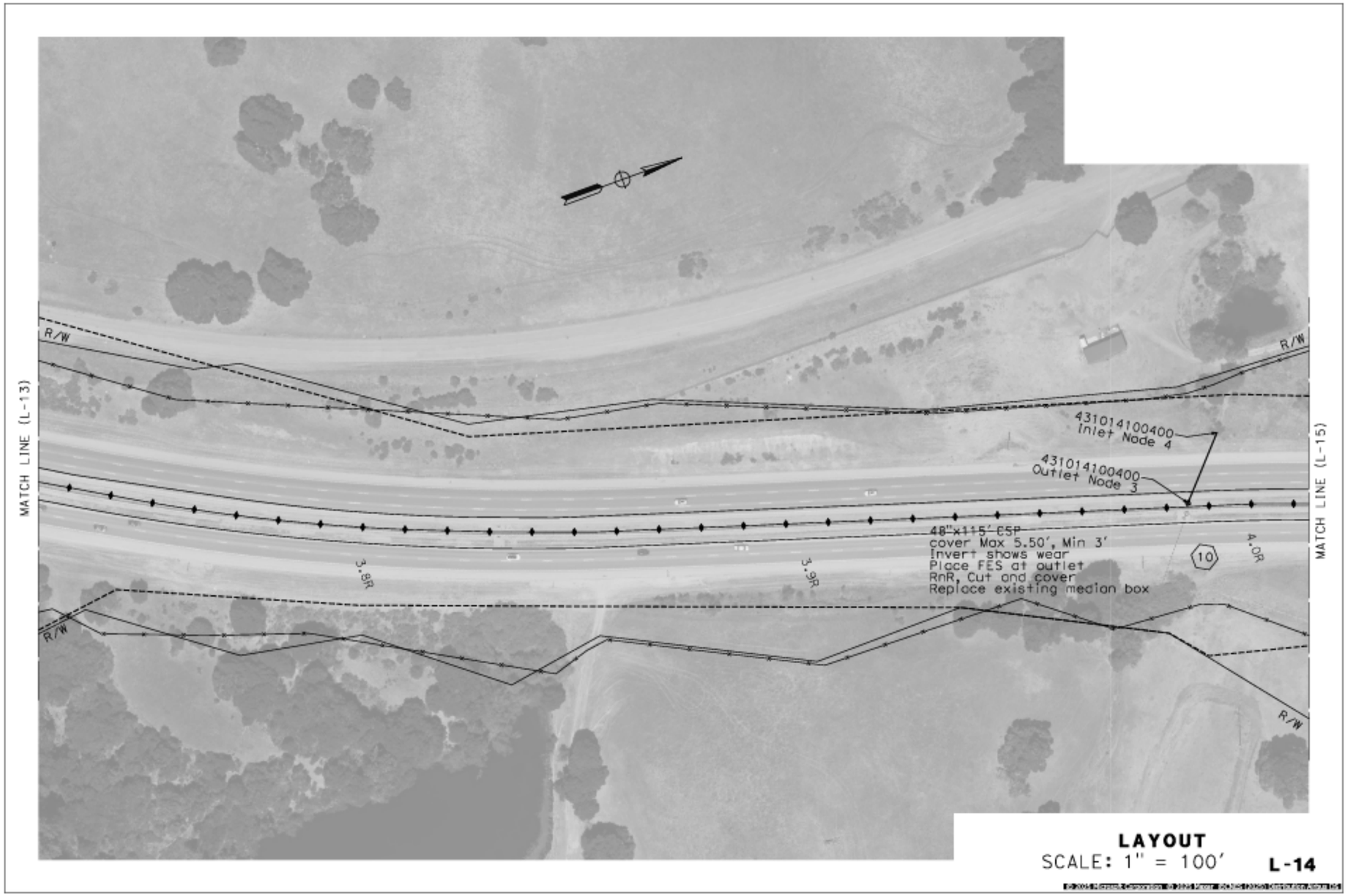
R/W
R/W
R/W
R/W
2.5L
2.4L
2.3L
2.4R
2.3R
2R
MATCH LINE (L-8)
MATCH LINE (L-10)
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-9

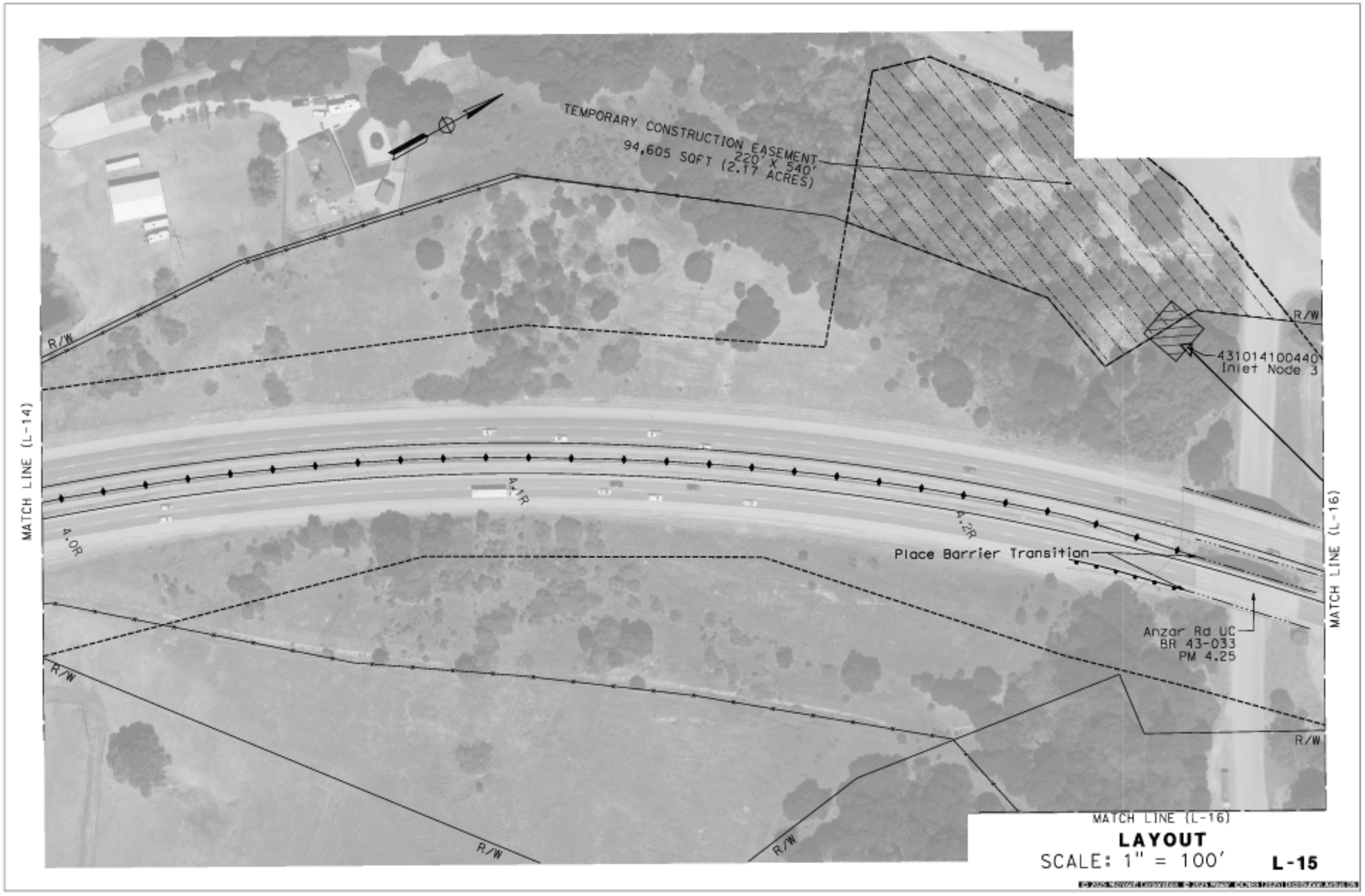

48" x 18' CSP
cover Max 15', Min 3'
Replace with 4'x4' box to match
Cut and cover
R/W
431014000265
Inlet Node 4
431014000265
Outlet Node 3
4
2.6L
2.7L
2.8L
431014000265
Inlet Node 2
2.6R
2.5R
2.7R
4'x4'x48' Box
cover Max 3', Min 2'
concrete repair
RSP for outlet scour protection
431014000265
Outlet Node 1
MATCH LINE (L-9)
MATCH LINE (L-11)
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-10

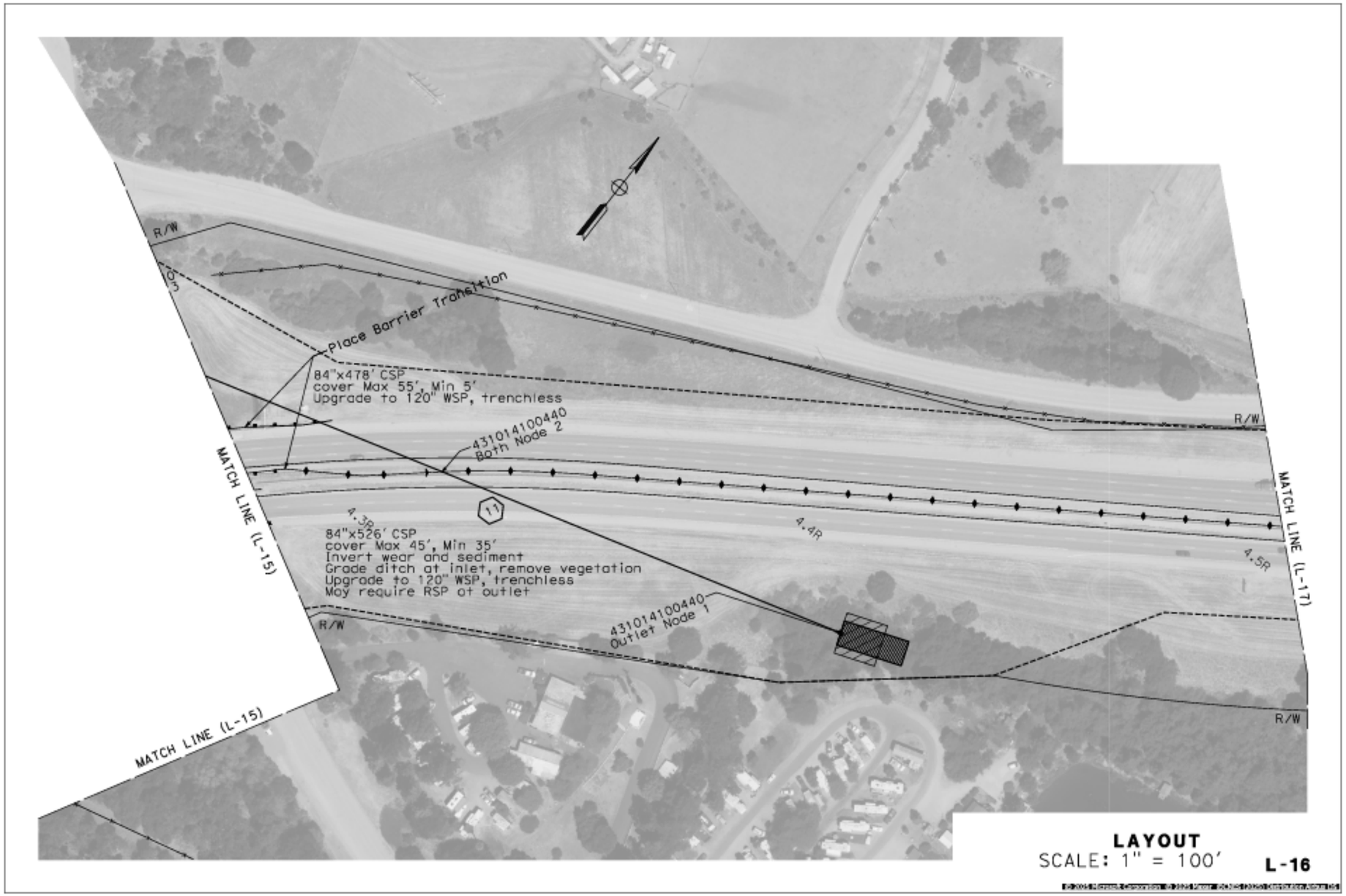

R/W
431014000282
Inlet Node 8
R/W
48"x240' CSP
cover Max 65' Min 60'
Invert has sediment, Needs Repair
Inlet HW Good
Outlet HW 3/4 of sediment
Replace w/ 48" WSP, Trenchless
May require RSP at outlet
431014000282
Outlet Node 7
MATCH LINE (L-12)
MATCH LINE (L-10)
48" x 14' CSP
cover Max 45', Min 40'
CSP needs invert repair
Replace CSP with 4' x 4' concrete box,
trenchless
Place Barrier Transition
431014000282
Inlet Node 6
431014000282
Outlet Node 5
2.9L
5
3.0L
RT 156-101 Separation
BR 43-0031E
PM 3.02
3.0R
Place Barrier Transition
2.8R
2.9R
R/W
R/W
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-11

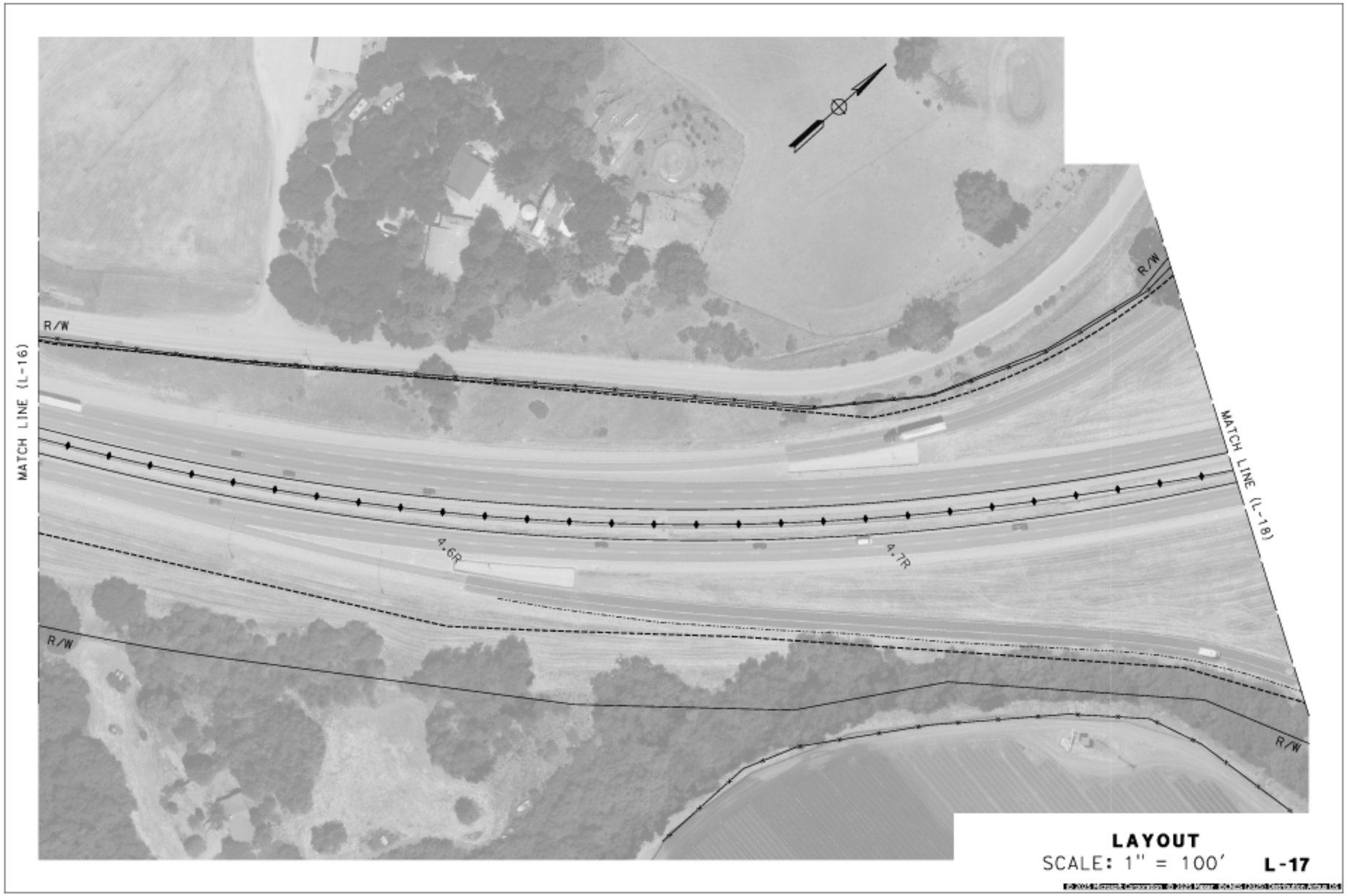

R/W
30"x30' CSP
cover Max 4', Min 3'
Replace Inlet HW
Replace FES outlet w/ regrading
Upgrade to 42" CSP, cut and cover
May require RSP at outlet
431014100333
Inlet Node 7
30"x75' CSP
cover Max 10', Min 6'
Invert with sediment shows wear
Replace FES outlet
Inlet HW good
Upgrade to 42" WSP, trenchless
May require RSP at outlet
431014100333
Outlet Node 6
24"x55' CSP
cover Max 10', Min 6'
Joint, Shape, Material critical
Replace Inlet and Outlet HW
Upgrade to 36" WSP, trenchless
May require RSP at outlet
431014100333
Inlet Node 5
431018000313
Inlet Node 5
431014100333
Outlet Node 4
431014100333
Inlet Node 2
431018000313
Outlet Node 4
431014100333
Outlet Node 1
431018000313
Inlet Node 3
431018000313
Both Node 2
431018000313
Outlet Node 1
30"x70' CSP
cover Max 3.50', Min 2'
Material critical
Place FES at outlet
Upgrade to 42" WSP, trenchless
May require RSP at outlet
24"x100' CSP
cover Max 6', Min 3'
Joint, Shape, Material critical
Replace Inlet and HW, place FES at outlet
Upgrade to 36" WSP, trenchless
May require RSP at outlet
3.1L
3.1R
3.2L
3.3L
3.4R
MATCH LINE (L-13)
MATCH LINE (L-15)
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-12

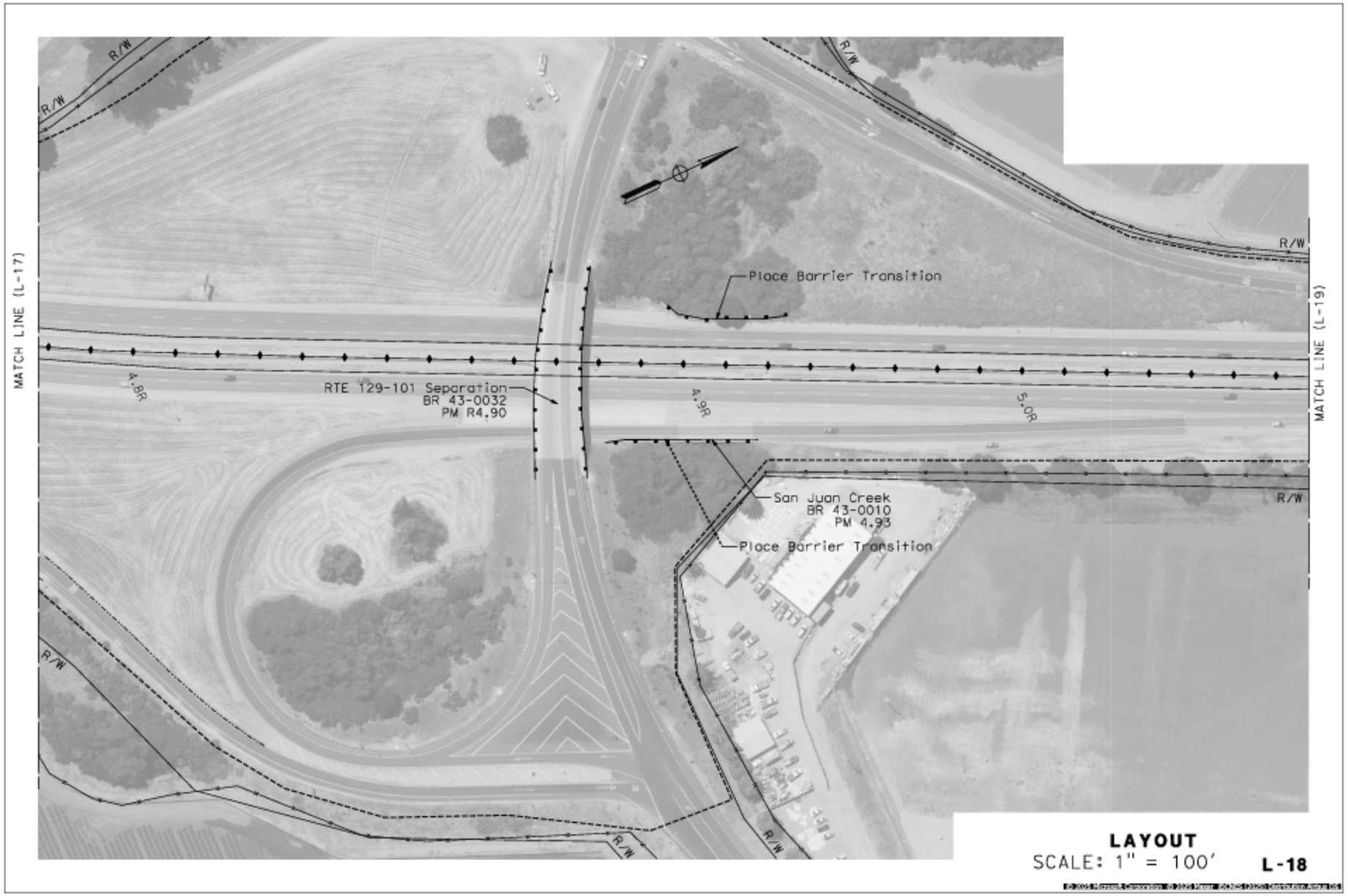

431010100352
Outlet Node 1
431010100352
Both Node 2
R/W
48"x27' CSP
Upgrade to 66" WSP, trenchless
May require RSP at outlet
431010100352
Both Node 3
48"x228' CSP
cover Max 12', Min 2'
Invert minor wear
Upgrade to 66" WSP, trenchless
8
MATCH LINE (L-12)
48"x134' CSP
cover Max 12', Min 8'
Needs Reassessment
Upgrade to 66" WSP, trenchless
3.5R
R/W
431010100352
Inlet Node 4
431014100371
Inlet Node 8
30"x50' CSP
cover Max 15', Min 3'
Invert shows wear
Upgrade to 66" WSP, trenchless
R/W
431014100371
Both Node 7
30"x103' CSP
cover Max 25',
Invert shows we
Upgrade to 66"
trenchless
431014100371
Inlet Node 5
48"x80' CSP
cover Max 25', Min 23'
Invert shows wear
Upgrade to 66" WSP, trenchless
431014100371
Both Node 2
431014100371
Inlet Node 4
3.6R
18" x15' CSP
cover Max 1.60', Min 1.40'
Upgrade to 24" CSP, cut and cover
18"x15'CSP
cover Max 1.50', Min 1.20'
Upgrade to 24" CSP,
cut and cover
3.7R
9
MATCH LINE (L-14)
431014100371
Inlet Node 3
431014100371
Outlet Node 1
48"x255' CSP
cover Max 3', Min 2'
Invert shows wear
Upgrade to 66" CSP,
cut and cover
May require RSP at outlet
R/W
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-13

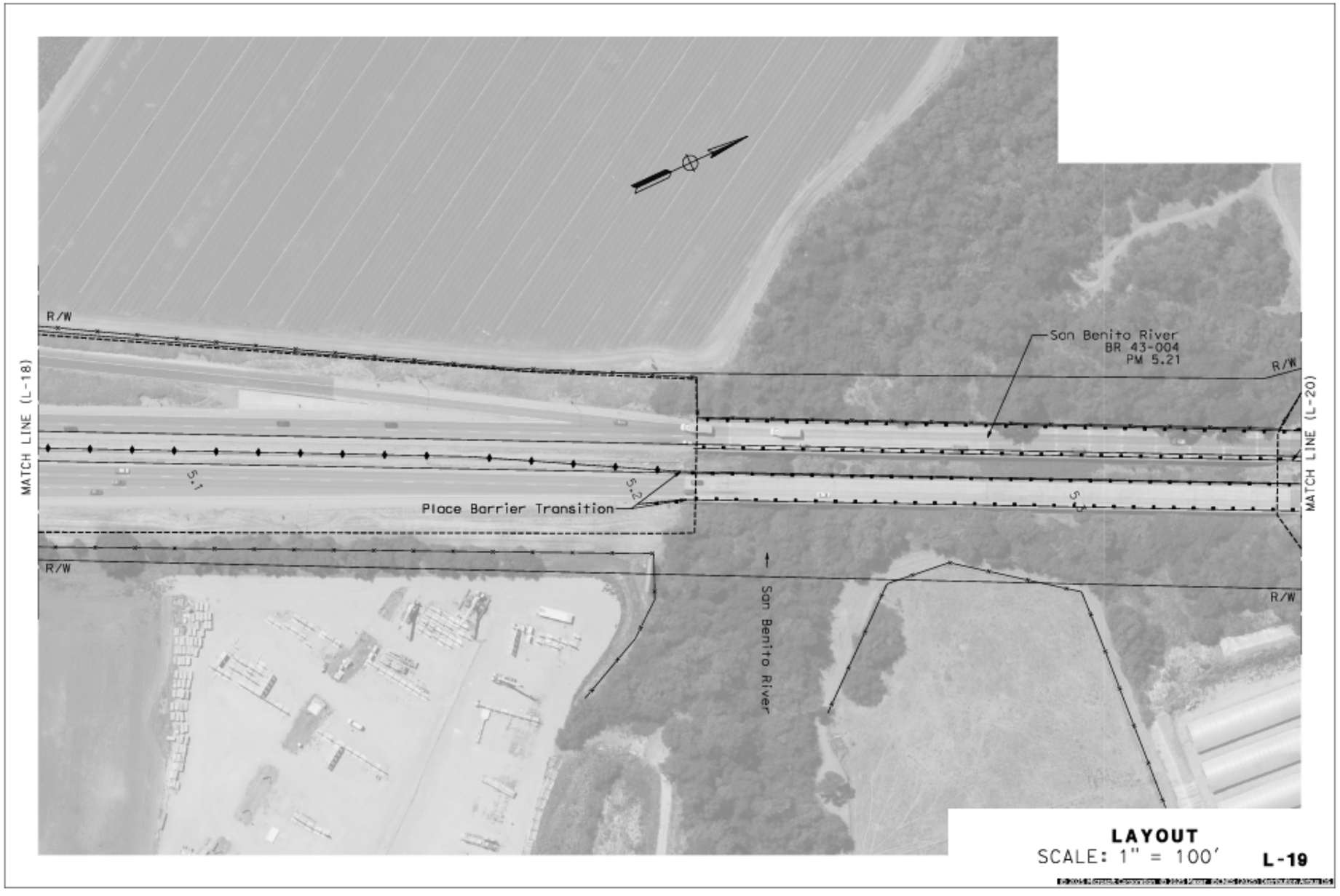

MATCH LINE (L-13)
MATCH LINE (L-15)
R/W
R/W
R/W
R/W
431014100400
Inlet Node 4
431014100400
Outlet Node 3
48"x115' CSP
cover Max 5.50', Min 3'
Invert shows wear
Place FES at outlet
RnR, Cut and cover
Replace existing median box
3.8R
3.9R
4.0R
10
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-14

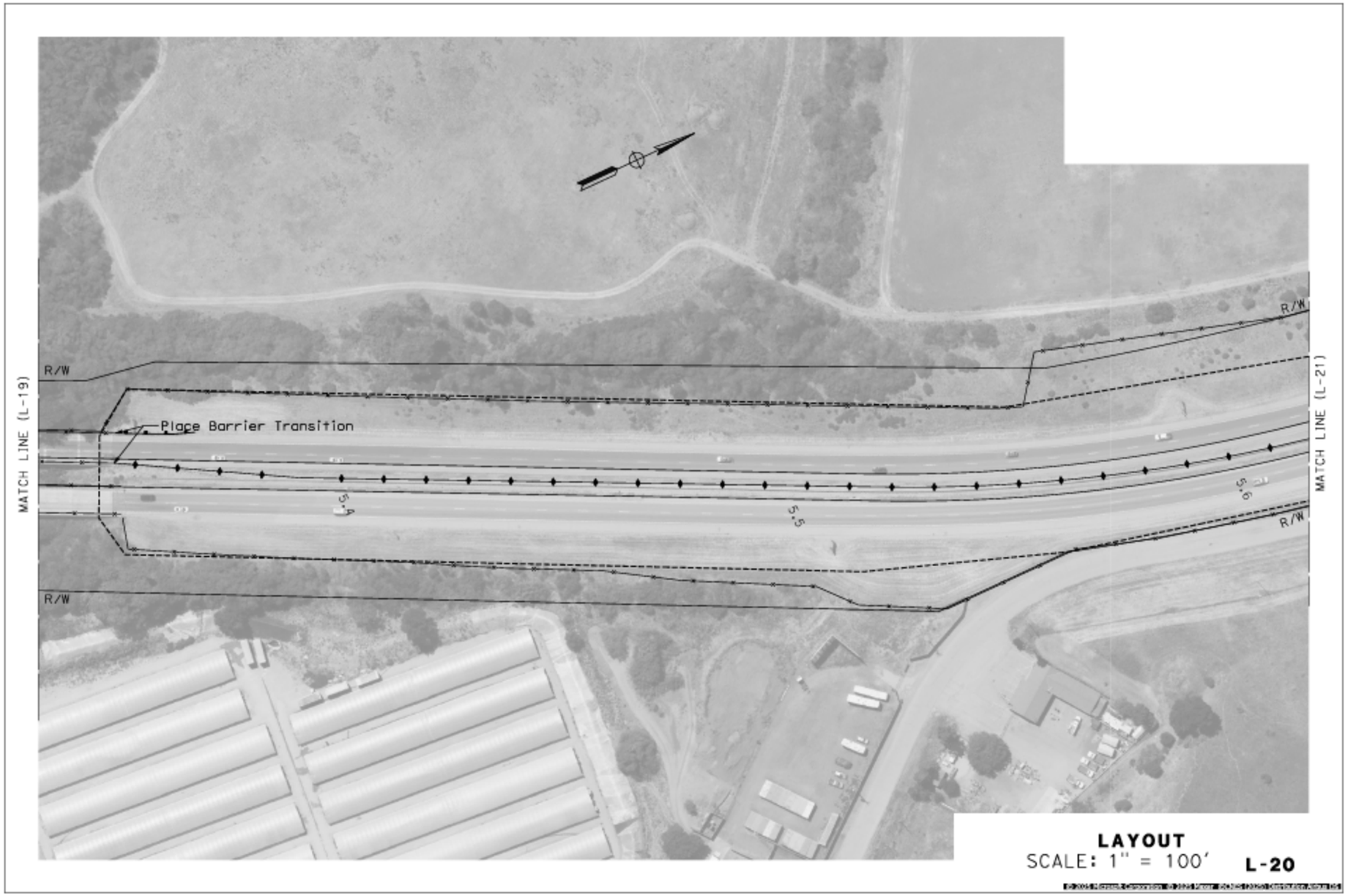

TEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION EASEMENT
220' X 540'
94,605 SQFT (2.17 ACRES)
R/W
MATCH LINE (L-14)
4.0R
4.1R
4.2R
Place Barrier Transition
431014100440
Inlet Node 3
Anzar Rd UC
BR 43-033
PM 4.25
MATCH LINE (L-16)
MATCH LINE (L-16)
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-15


R/W
Place Barrier Transition
84"x478' CSP
cover Max 55', Min 5'
Upgrade to 120" WSP, trenchless
431014100440
Both Node 2
MATCH LINE (L-15)
4.3R
11
4.4R
4.5R
84"x526' CSP
cover Max 45', Min 35'
Invert wear and sediment
Grade ditch at inlet, remove vegetation
Upgrade to 120" WSP, trenchless
May require RSP at outlet
431014100440
Outlet Node 1
R/W
MATCH LINE (L-17)
MATCH LINE (L-15)
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-16


MATCH LINE (L-16)
R/W
R/W
4.6R
4.7R
R/W
R/W
MATCH LINE (L-18)
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-17

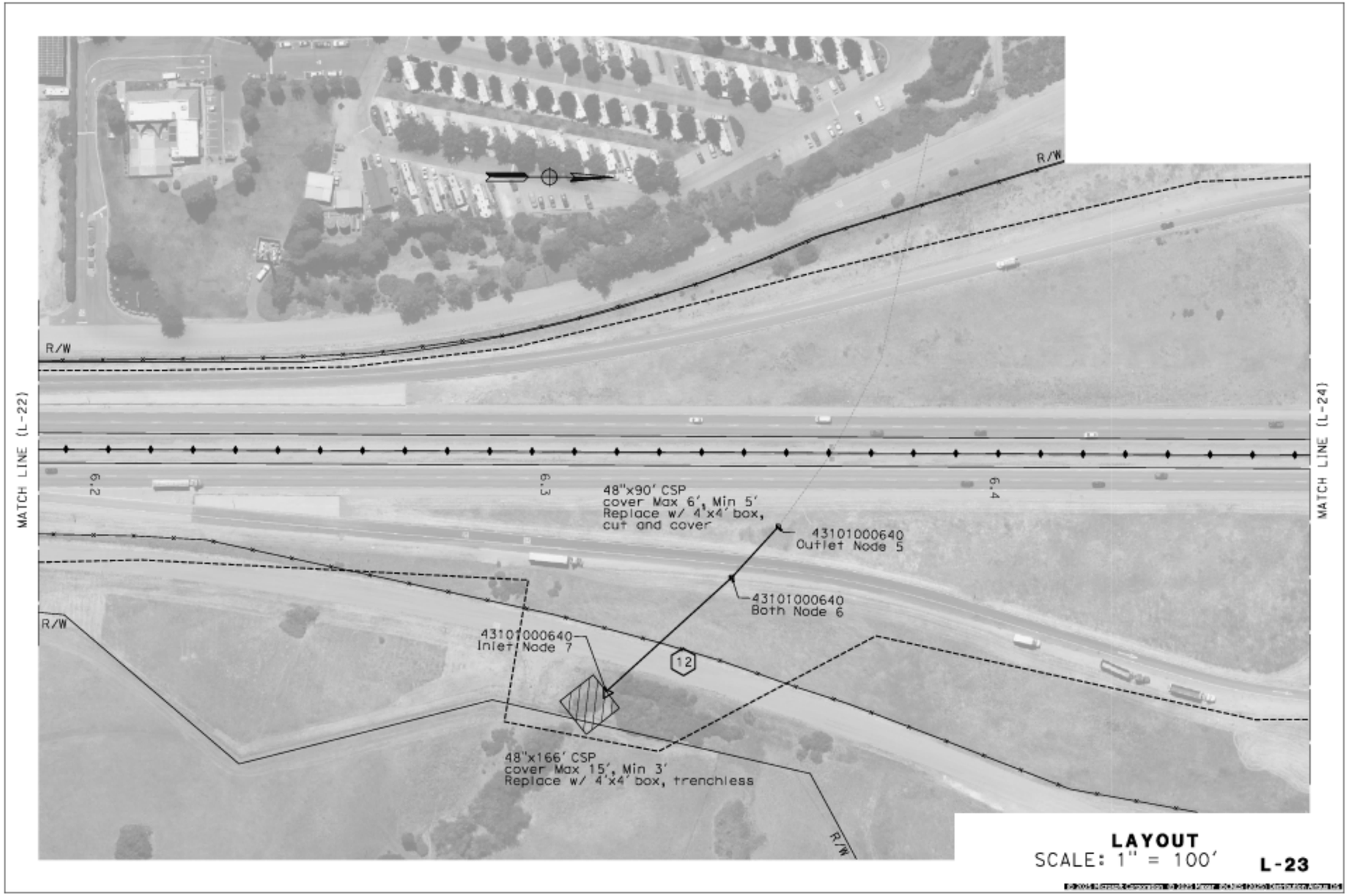

MATCH LINE (L-17)
MATCH LINE (L-19)
R/W
Place Barrier Transition
RTE 129-101 Separation
BR 43-0032
PM R4.90
4.8R
4.9R
5.0R
San Juan Creek
BR 43-0010
PM 4.93
Place Barrier Transition
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-18


R/W
MATCH LINE (L-18)
5.1
5.2
Place Barrier Transition
San Benito River
BR 43-004
PM 5.21
R/W
MATCH LINE (L-20)
5.3
R/W
San Benito River
R/W
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-19


MATCH LINE (L-19)
R/W
Place Barrier Transition
5.4
5.5
5.6
R/W
R/W
R/W
MATCH LINE (L-21)
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-20

LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-21

R/W
R/W
MATCH LINE (L-21)
MATCH LINE (L-23)
6.0
6.1
R/W
R/W
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-22


R/W
R/W
R/W
R/W
MATCH LINE (L-22)
MATCH LINE (L-24)
6.2
6.3
6.4
48"x90' CSP
cover Max 6', Min 5'
Replace w/ 4'x4' box,
cut and cover
43101000640
Outlet Node 5
43101000640
Both Node 6
43101000640
Inlet Node 7
12
48"x166' CSP
cover Max 15', Min 3'
Replace w/ 4'x4' box, trenchless
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-23

MATCH LINE (L-23)
Lomerias OC
BR 43-0019
PM R6.48
6.5
6.6R
6.7R
R/W
R/W
R/W
R/W
MATCH LINE (L-25)
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-24

MATCH LINE (L-24)
R/W
6.8R
6.9R
R/W
R/W
7.0R
MATCH LINE (L-26)
R/W
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-25

MATCH LINE (L-25)
R/W
7.1R
7.2R
7.3R
R/W
R/W
MATCH LINE (L-27)
R/W
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-26

MATCH LINE (L-26)
R/W
7.4R
7.5R
7.55R R/W
R/W
LAYOUT
SCALE: 1" = 100'
L-27

Appendix C Comment Letters and Responses

[Appendix C has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] This appendix contains the comments received during the public circulation and comment period from September 26, 2025, to October 27, 2025, retyped for readability. The comment letters are stated verbatim as submitted, with acronyms, abbreviations, and any original grammatical or typographical errors included. A Caltrans response follows each comment presented. Copies of the original comment letters and documents can be found in Volume 2 of this document.

1. **Commenter: California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM)**

<u>Comment CALGEM-1:</u>

VIA EMAIL

Public Resources Code (PRC) section 3208.1 establishes re-abandonment responsibility when previously plugged and abandoned oil, gas or geothermal wells will be impacted by planned property development or construction activities. Local permitting agencies, property owners, and/or developers should be aware of, and fully understand, that significant and potentially dangerous issues may be associated with development near previously abandoned oil, gas, and geothermal wells.

The California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) has received the above-referenced project dated July 10, 2025. To assist local permitting agencies, property owners, and developers in making safe and practical land use decisions regarding potential development near oil, gas, or geothermal wells, CalGEM provides a table in the attached enclosure of the wells within the parcel boundary or in its vicinity, based on CalGEM's Well Finder database (https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/doggr/wellfinder/).

CalGEM categorically advises against building over, or in any way impeding access to, oil, gas, or geothermal wells. Impeding access to a well could result in the need to remove any structure or obstacle that prevents or impedes access including, but not limited to, buildings, housing, fencing, landscaping, trees, pools, patios, sidewalks, roadways, and decking at the landowner's expense if there is a need to access a well. Maintaining sufficient access is considered the ability for a well servicing unit and associated necessary equipment (consisting of well servicing rig, pumping equipment, pipe trailer) to reach a well from a public street or access way, solely over the parcel on which the well is located. A well servicing unit, and any necessary equipment, should be able to pass unimpeded along and over the route, and

should be able to access the well without disturbing the integrity of surrounding infrastructure. Impermeable barriers such as asphalt, concrete, and plastic may trap hazardous gases and liquids underneath and could create a safety hazard if built over a well that later develops a leak.

CalGEM recommends that any well for which access is impeded or built over, against CalGEM's advice, should be evaluated by a qualified petroleum professional for compliance with the statutory objectives of isolating all hydrocarbon-bearing strata; protecting underground and surface waters; prevention of subsequent damage to life, health, property, and other resources; and prevention of loss of oil, gas, or reservoir energy. CalGEM recommends that wells that do not meet these standards are abandoned or re-abandoned prior to construction. The well information can be accessed through CalGEM's Well Finder database mentioned above. PRC section 3208, subdivision (a), provides the primary statutory authority for CalGEM to oversee adequate abandonment of wells. Additionally, CalGEM has developed the regulatory guidance for operators to be followed during well abandonment, which are listed within California Code of Regulation, title 14 (CCR) section 1723 and associated sub-sections (for onshore wells), and section 1745 and associated sub-sections (for offshore wells).

There is no guarantee that a well abandoned in compliance with current Division requirements as prescribed by law will not start leaking in the future. Due to the inability to predict all subsurface conditions or changes, it always remains a possibility that any well may start to leak oil, gas, and/or water after abandonment, no matter how thoroughly the well was plugged and abandoned. CalGEM acknowledges wells plugged and abandoned to the most current Division requirements as prescribed by law have a lower probability of leaking in the future, however there is no guarantee that such abandoned wells will not leak.

CalGEM advises that all wells identified on the development parcel prior to, or during, development activities be tested for liquid and gas leakage. Surveyed locations in Latitude and Longitude, NAD 83 decimal format, and leak testing results should be provided to CalGEM. CalGEM expects any wells found leaking to be reported to CalGEM immediately.

PRC section 3208.1 gives CalGEM the authority to order or permit the re-abandonment of any well where it has reason to question the integrity of the previous abandonment. Responsibility for re-abandonment costs may be affected by the choices made by the local permitting agency, property owner, and/or developer in considering the general advice set forth in this letter. The PRC continues to define the person or entity responsible for re-abandonment as:

1. The property owner - If the well was plugged and abandoned in conformance with Division requirements at the time of abandonment, and in its current condition does not pose an immediate danger to life, health, and property, but requires additional work solely because the owner of the property on which the well is located proposes construction on the property that would prevent or impede access to the well for purposes of remedying a currently perceived future problem, then the owner of the property on which the well is located shall obtain all rights necessary to re-abandon the well and be responsible for the re-abandonment.

2. The person or entity causing construction over or near the well - If the well was plugged and abandoned in conformance with Division requirements at the time of plugging and abandonment, and the property owner, developer, or local agency permitting the construction failed either to obtain an opinion from the supervisor or district deputy as to whether the previously abandoned well is required to be re-abandoned, or to follow the advice of the supervisor or district deputy not to undertake construction that impedes access, then the person or entity causing the construction over or near the well shall obtain all rights necessary to re-abandon the well and be responsible for the re-abandonment.

3. The party or parties responsible for disturbing the integrity of the abandonment - If the well was plugged and abandoned in conformance with Division requirements at the time of plugging and abandonment, and after that time someone other than the operator or an affiliate of the operator disturbed the integrity of the abandonment in the course of developing the property, then the party or parties responsible for disturbing the integrity of the abandonment shall be responsible for the re-abandonment.

Should any wells require abandonment or re-abandonment, the responsible party must submit a Notice of Intention (NOI) to CalGEM through WellSTAR. The NOI form can be accessed in the ‘Plugging and Abandonment’ section of the following link: https://www.conservation.ca.gov/calgem/for_operators.

No well work may be performed on any oil, gas, or geothermal well without written approval from CalGEM. Well work requiring approval includes, but is not limited to, mitigating leaking gas or other fluids from abandoned wells, modifications to well casings, and/or any other re-abandonment work. CalGEM also regulates the top of a plugged and abandoned well's minimum and maximum depth below final grade. CCR section1723.5 states well casings shall be cut off at least 5 feet but no more than 10 feet below the surface of the ground. If any well needs to be lowered or raised (i.e. casing cut down or casing riser added) to meet this regulation, a permit from CalGEM is required before work can start.

CalGEM makes the following additional recommendations to the local permitting agency, property owner, and developer:

1. To ensure that present and future property owners are aware of (a) the existence of all wells located on the property, and (b) potentially significant issues associated with any improvements near oil or gas wells, CalGEM recommends that information regarding the below identified well(s), and any other pertinent information obtained after the issuance of this letter, be communicated to the appropriate county recorder for inclusion in the title information of the subject real property.

2. CalGEM recommends that any soil containing hydrocarbons be disposed of in accordance with local, state, and federal laws. Please notify the appropriate authorities if soil containing significant amounts of hydrocarbons is discovered during development.

As indicated in PRC section 3106, CalGEM has statutory authority over the drilling, operation, maintenance, and abandonment of oil, gas, and geothermal wells, and attendant facilities, to prevent, as far as possible, damage to life, health, property, and natural resources; damage to underground oil, gas, and geothermal deposits; and damage to underground and surface waters suitable for irrigation or domestic purposes. In addition to CalGEM's authority to order work on wells pursuant to PRC sections 3208.1 and 3224, it has authority to issue civil and criminal penalties under PRC sections 3236, 3236.5, and 3359 for violations within CalGEM's jurisdictional authority. CalGEM does not regulate grading, excavations, or other land use issues.

Should you have any questions, or if any wells are encountered that were not part of this letter, contact CalGEM at 916.322.1110 or via email at CalGEMNorthern@conservation.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

May Soe

Supervising Oil and Gas Engineer – Northern District

Enclosure

Cc: N/A

Enclosure: The wells listed below are reported to be located within and nearby the parcel boundary and may have future access impeded.

API No.	Well Name
No wells in the project area	

Response to Comment CALGEM-1:

Thank you for your comment. The proposed project is not expected to impact any oil, gas or geothermal wells, as none are known to exist within the project limits.

2. Commenter: California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Comment CDFW-1:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) received an MND prepared by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), as lead agency, for the above-referenced Project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines. (Footnote: CEQA is codified in the California Public Resources Code, section 21000 et seq. The "CEQA Guidelines" are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with section 15000.)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations regarding those activities involved in the Project that may affect California fish and wildlife resources. 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 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. (Id., § 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 is also submitting comments 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.), the project proponent may seek related take authorization as provided by the Fish and Game Code.

In these roles, CDFW is responsible for providing, as available, biological expertise during public agency environmental review efforts (i.e., CEQA), focusing specifically on project activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources. CDFW provides recommendations to identify potential impacts and possible measures to avoid or reduce those impacts.

Nesting Birds: CDFW has jurisdiction over actions with potential to result in the disturbance or destruction of active nest sites or the unauthorized take of birds. Fish and Game Code sections that protect birds, their eggs and nests include sections 3503 (regarding unlawful take, possession, or needless destruction of the nest or eggs of any bird), 3503.5 (regarding the take, possession, or destruction of any birds-of-prey or their nests or eggs), and 3513 (regarding unlawful take of any migratory nongame bird).

Unlisted Species: Species of plants and animals need not be officially listed as Endangered, Rare, or Threatened (E, R, or T) on any State or Federal list to be considered E, R, or T under CEQA. If a species can be shown to meet the criteria for E, R, or T, as specified in the CEQA Guidelines, section 15380, CDFW recommends it be fully considered in the environmental analysis for the Project.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Proponent: Caltrans

Objective: Caltrans proposes to rehabilitate a 7.55-mile section of U. S. 101 in San Benito County (Project). The Project proposes to rehabilitate approximately 30 lane miles of existing pavement, improve 28 culverts at 12 locations, upgrade traffic safety systems, improve Traffic Management Systems, and improve wildlife connectivity within the Project corridor.

Location: The Project is in San Benito County on U. S. Route 101 between post miles 0.0 and 7.55, from just southwest of the San Juan Road overcrossing (Monterey-San Benito County line) to a location northeast of the Betabel and Y Road overcrossing (San Benito-Santa Clara County line).

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CDFW offers the following comments and recommendations to assist Caltrans in adequately identifying the Project's significant, or potentially

significant, direct, and indirect impacts on fish and wildlife (biological) resources. Editorial comments or other suggestions may also be included to improve the document. A Recommended Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program is attached (Attachment 1).

CDFW is concerned regarding potential Project related impacts to fish and wildlife connectivity and the following special-status species: the State candidate western burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*), and species of special concern Monterey hitch (*Lavinia exilicauda harengus*) and central California coast roach (*Hesperoleucus symmetricus symmetricus*).

Response to Comment CDFW-1:

Thank you for your introductory comments.

Comment CDFW-2:

Western Burrowing Owl (BUOW)

The California Fish and Game Commission approved western burrowing owl (BUOW) as a candidate for potential listing as a protected species under CESA on October 10, 2024, and published these findings in the California Regulatory Notice Register (Notice Register) on October 25, 2024. As such, BUOW is now a candidate under CESA and receives the same legal protection afforded to an endangered or threatened species (Fish & G. Code, §§ 2074.2 & 2085). The protected status is for the species, whether nesting or overwintering.

The Project area lies in the transition between year-long and wintering habitat (CDFW and CIWTG 2025). As identified in the MND, BUOW nesting and wintering records are found in the Project vicinity and BUOW may occupy a variety of habitat types including highly urban settings. The MND discounts the potential presence of BUOW in the Project area due to lack of observations during non-focus surveys and presence of higher quality habitat nearby, CDFW does not concur.

As there is a possibility that BUOW could be impacted by Project activities, CDFW recommends the following:

- Recommended Mitigation Measure 1: BUOW Surveys

  Prior to construction, CDFW recommends assessing presence/absence of BUOW on the Project site, as well as a 500-meter buffer surrounding the Project site, by having a qualified biologist conduct surveys following the 2012 Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (2012 Staff Report; CDFG 2012).

- Recommended Mitigation Measure 2: BUOW Avoidance Buffer

Should a BUOW or known BUOW den (active or inactive) be discovered during pre-construction surveys or during construction, CDFW recommends implementing the no-disturbance buffers outlined in the 2012 Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (CDFG 2012), prior to and during any ground-disturbing activities. CDFW also recommends that these buffers be implemented for both wintering and breeding BUOW.

- Recommended Mitigation Measure 3: BUOW Take Authorization

  If a BUOW or known BUOW den (active or inactive) is detected, and the no-disturbance buffers outlined in the 2012 Staff Report on Burrowing Mitigation are not feasible, consultation with CDFW is warranted to discuss how to implement the Project and avoid take. If take cannot be avoided, take authorization through the acquisition of an Incidental Take Permit (ITP), pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081 subdivision (b), is necessary to comply with CESA.

<u>Response to Comment CDFW-2:</u>

Caltrans project biology staff have evaluated the comments pertaining to Western burrowing owl and offer the following responses.

- Recommended Mitigation Measure 1: BUOW Surveys

  Caltrans acknowledges the comment.

- Recommended Mitigation Measure 2: BUOW Avoidance Buffer

  Caltrans acknowledges the comment and in response has revised two of the project's previously existing avoidance and minimization measures, BIO-62 and BIO-67, as well as adding a new measure, BIO-74.

  Measure BIO-62 now reads as follows: "Prior to construction, vegetation removal shall be scheduled to occur from September 16 to January 31, outside of the typical nesting bird season, if possible, to avoid potential impacts to nesting birds. If tree removal or other construction activities are proposed to occur within 500 feet of potential habitat during the nesting season (February 1 to September 15), a nesting bird survey shall be conducted by a biologist determined qualified by Caltrans no more than ten calendar days prior to vegetation removal. If an active nest is found, a biologist shall monitor baseline behavior with ambient conditions and implement an appropriate buffer or monitoring strategy based on the habits and needs of the species. The buffer area or monitoring strategy shall be implemented until a qualified biologist has determined that juveniles have fledged and are no longer reliant on the nest or nesting activity

has otherwise ceased. A 250-foot buffer around active nests of non-listed bird species and a 500-foot buffer around active nests of non-listed raptors shall be established unless a biologist is present to monitor within the buffer for potential disturbance. If the biologist determines that behavior has changed due to project activities, work activities within the buffer shall be stopped and the buffer shall be expanded as needed to avoid disturbance."

Measure BIO-67 now reads as follows: "If a burrowing owl or inactive burrowing owl den is detected within the project limits, an appropriately sized protective buffer will be established in coordination with a qualified biologist and in consideration of the 2012 Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (California Department of Fish and Game 2012). The inactive burrow and/or animal will be monitored to ensure work does not disturb it and the buffer will be in place until the animal leaves on its own. If an active burrowing owl burrow (breeding or nonbreeding) is identified within 1,640 feet (500 meters) of the construction activities, a no-disturbance buffer zone for the burrow or burrow complex will be defined. Caltrans will coordinate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and permits will be acquired if needed."

In addition, the following new protective measure has been added to the project as BIO-74:

"BIO-74. The 2012 Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (2012 Staff Report; California Department of Fish and Game 2012) protocol will be used to inform the survey methodology for burrowing owl to be conducted by a qualified biologist within and adjacent to suitable habitat in the project area prior to construction. The survey area will include a subset of locations where off-highway ground disturbance will occur or construction will cause higher-than ambient levels of disturbance."

- Recommended Mitigation Measure 3: BUOW Take Authorization

  Caltrans acknowledges the comment. The following new protective measure has been added to the project as BIO-75:

  "BIO-75. If take of burrowing owl cannot be avoided, take authorization through the acquisition of an Incidental Take Permit, pursuant to California Fish and Game Code section 2081 subdivision (b), will be completed to comply with the California Endangered Species Act."

<u>Comment CDFW-3:</u>

Monterey Hitch and Southern Coastal Roach (resident fish)

The MND indicates that there is no suitable habitat for Monterey hitch and southern coastal roach in the Project area, CDFW does not concur with this determination. There is suitable habitat in one or more of the streams in the Project area. These resident fish species are adapted to streams with intermittent hydrology, low oxygen, and high temperatures and can persist in isolated pools for extended periods of time and move during seasonal flow events (Moyle et al. 2015). The culverts at postmiles 0.42, 4.4, 6.4 and potentially others in the Project area appear to convey intermittent streams that may support resident fish, and the culverts may provide passage between necessary habitat features in some seasons. There may also be pool habitat features in the Project area that could serve as refuge during seasonally dry periods.

- Recommended Mitigation Measure 4: Special Status Resident Fish

  CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist evaluate stream habitats in the Project area to determine if they could support passage or refugia for resident fish under various flow conditions. In streams that may provide habitat for resident fish, CDFW recommends that Caltrans design drainage systems that do not hinder passage or refuge for resident fish, including associated end treatments (e.g., rock slope protection, aprons).

<u>Response to Comment CDFW-3:</u>

Caltrans project biology staff offer the following response regarding resident fish species:

On October 24, 2023, California Department of Fish and Wildlife sent an email to Caltrans stating: “Regarding the unnamed tributaries of Los Carneros Creek and the US 101 culverts at PM (post mile) 0.48 [which is the same tributary as the culvert at PM 0.42] and PM 0.8: we concur with you that these 2 tributaries do not have sufficient hydrology to support steelhead or probably any fish. CDFW is not concerned with fish passage at the culverts associated with your upcoming project.” Nevertheless, culvert improvements at post miles 0.42 and 0.48 consisting of replacing the existing 4-side box culvert with a larger, 3-sided open bottom box culvert, will improve wildlife connectivity as well as natural stream processes, which will, in turn, support passage and habitat for any resident fish that may be present.

As discussed at a site visit with California Department of Fish and Wildlife on October 16, 2023, Caltrans acknowledges that the channel downstream of the culvert at post mile 4.4 could support Monterey hitch or Southern coastal roach. However, the stream conditions upstream of the culvert do not support suitable habitat due to the extensive human disturbance immediately upstream of the culvert, and the narrow, shallow, and relatively steep habitat further upstream. Additionally, accommodation of fish passage at post mile

4.4 is technically infeasible due to the length and slope of the culvert and the extent of fill over the culvert.

At post mile 6.4, the stream is ephemeral with a small contributing watershed; the upstream channel is flat and lacks any visible stream habitat features such as pools or riffles; and within 1,000 feet of the culvert, the channel becomes steep and lacks riparian vegetation. Therefore, resident fish habitat is not expected upstream from the culvert at post mile 6.4.

The Natural Environment Study for the project has been updated to reflect that suitable habitat for these species occurs in the project area, and the following new protective measures have been added to the project as BIO-76 and BIO-77:

"BIO-76. Caltrans will schedule project activities to minimize adverse effects to the Monterey hitch and southern coastal roach and their habitat. Disturbance to aquatic habitat, including temporary stream diversions, will be timed to occur in the dry season (typically June 1 to October 31) when surface water is likely to be at a seasonal minimum, or as otherwise permitted by the regulatory agencies."

"BIO-77. If permanent impacts are required at the outlets of culverts at either post mile 4.4 or 6.4, Caltrans will coordinate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife during 1600 permitting to determine offsetting mitigation, which may include refugia creation (e.g., woody debris installation, pool creation, riparian planting).

<u>Comment CDFW-4:</u>

Editorial Comments and/or Suggestions

Nesting Birds: CDFW encourages that project implementation occur during the bird non-nesting season; however, if ground-disturbing or vegetation-disturbing activities must occur during the breeding season (February 1 through September 15), the Project applicant is responsible for ensuring that implementation of the Project does not result in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act or relevant Fish and Game Codes as referenced above.

To evaluate project-related impacts on nesting birds, CDFW recommends that a qualified wildlife biologist conduct pre-activity surveys for active nests no more than 10 days prior to the start of ground or vegetation disturbance to maximize the probability that nests that could potentially be impacted are detected. CDFW also recommends that surveys cover a sufficient area around the Project site to identify nests and determine their status. A sufficient area means any area potentially affected by the Project. In addition to direct impacts (i.e., nest destruction), noise, vibration, and movement of workers or equipment could also affect nests. Prior to initiation of construction activities, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct a survey to

establish a behavioral baseline of all identified nests. Once construction begins, CDFW recommends having a qualified biologist continuously monitor nests to detect behavioral changes resulting from the Project. If behavioral changes occur, CDFW recommends halting the work causing that change and consulting with CDFW for additional avoidance and minimization measures.

If continuous monitoring of identified nests by a qualified wildlife biologist is not feasible, CDFW recommends a minimum no-disturbance buffer of 250 feet around active nests of non-listed bird species and a 500-foot no-disturbance buffer around active nests of non-listed raptors. These buffers are advised to remain in place until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified biologist has determined that the birds have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest or on-site parental care for survival. Variance from these no-disturbance buffers is possible when there is compelling biological or ecological reason to do so, such as when the construction area would be concealed from a nest site by topography. CDFW recommends that a qualified wildlife biologist counsel and support any variance from these buffers and notify CDFW in advance of implementing a variance.

Response to Comment CDFW-4:

Caltrans project biology staff have updated existing avoidance and minimization measure BIO-62, which addresses this comment. Please refer to Response to Comment CDFW-2, above.

Comment CDFW-5:

Wildlife Movement and Habitat Connectivity: CDFW supports the wildlife crossing improvements proposed for this Project to offset impacts that the existing highway currently imposes on landscape-scale habitat connectivity, meeting the intent in California Assembly Bill 2344 (“Safe Roads”). Because the analysis in the MND is focused on landscape-scale connectivity for large animals, CDFW recommends that Caltrans includes an evaluation of habitat connectivity for other terrestrial and aquatic species in the MND, such as locally present rare species including resident fish (e.g., Monterey hitch), amphibians (e.g., California tiger salamander), reptiles (e.g., western pond turtle), and mesocarnivores (e.g., American badger). CDFW requests that Caltrans consider additional passage improvement opportunities in the Project area that may benefit a variety of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife. CDFW recommends that Caltrans coordinate with CDFW’s Region 4 staff on the wildlife crossing and fencing design plans as they are being developed. CDFW also recommends that Caltrans develop and implement a long-term management program to monitor the effectiveness of the structures for at least five years after construction (e.g., Federal Highway Administration 2011; Hardy et al. 2003) and for the long-term maintenance of the integrity of the wildlife crossing structures.

Response to Comment CDFW-5:

Culvert improvements at post miles 0.43 and 0.48 will consist of replacing the existing 4-side box culverts with larger, 3-sided open bottom box culverts. These actions will improve wildlife connectivity, not only for large animals, but also other locally present rare species including amphibians, reptiles, and mesocarnivores. These culverts were identified as priority connectivity improvement locations in the 2024 Caltrans Wildlife Connectivity Program Report (Caltrans 2024): "San Benito 101 PM - R0.49" (Aromas Hills 1) will be improved as part of this project. The other location identified in this report within the project limits (Aromas Hills 2) will be addressed as a separate project which is currently in the environmental study phase. Both projects are being designed in consideration of each other, to ensure corridor-level connectivity improvements."

Caltrans will coordinate with California Department of Fish and Wildlife during the California Endangered Species Act's Incidental Take Permit application process to discuss potential connectivity improvements for California tiger salamander. Other connectivity improvements will also be considered as the project is refined during the Plans, Specifications, and Estimates phase and permit coordination.

Additionally, Caltrans will conduct five years of post-construction monitoring of the undercrossing structures and directional fencing to determine their efficacy and ensure their functionality. This monitoring will be performed concurrently with required monitoring for the project's jurisdictional permits.

Comment CDFW-6:

Lake and Streambed Alteration: The MND states the Project could disturb the bed or bank of streams and permits are required. CDFW concurs, as Project activities that will substantially change or use any material from the bed, bank, and channel of any river, stream, or lake are subject to CDFW's regulatory authority pursuant Fish and Game Code section 1600 et seq. Fish and Game Code section 1602 requires an entity to notify CDFW prior to commencing any activity that may (a) substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow of any river, stream, or lake; (b) substantially change or use any material from the bed, bank, or channel of any river, stream, or lake (including the removal of riparian vegetation); (c) deposit or dispose of debris, waste or other materials that could pass into any river, stream, or lake. "Any river, stream, or lake" includes those that are ephemeral or intermittent as well as those that are perennial and may include those that are highly modified such as canals and retention basins.

CDFW is required to comply with CEQA prior to issuance of a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement; therefore, if the CEQA document approved for the Project does not adequately describe the Project and its impacts to

lakes or streams, a subsequent CEQA analysis may be necessary for Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement issuance. For information on notification requirements, please refer to CDFW's website (https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/LSA) or contact CDFW Central Region Caltrans liaison staff.

Response to Comment CDFW-6:

Caltrans acknowledges the comment. Thank you.

Comment CDFW-7:

CNDDB Positive Submission of Data: Please note that the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) is populated by and records voluntary submissions of species detections. As a result, species may be present in locations not depicted in the CNDDB but where there is suitable habitat and features capable of supporting species. A lack of an occurrence record in the CNDDB does not mean a species is not present. In order to adequately assess any potential Project-related impacts to biological resources, surveys conducted by a qualified wildlife biologist/botanist during the appropriate survey period(s) and using the appropriate protocol survey methodology are warranted to determine whether or not any special-status species are present at or near the Project site.

Response to Comment CDFW-7:

Botanical surveys followed the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special Status Native Plant Populations and Sensitive Natural Communities (California Department of Fish and Wildlife 2018a) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service guidelines (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2000). Vegetation community types were identified following the Manual of California Vegetation, second edition (Sawyer et al. 2009) and online keys, descriptions, and updates (California Native Plant Society 2023b). General reconnaissance-level fish and wildlife surveys and habitat assessments for California tiger salamander, California red-legged frog, and other special-status animals were conducted by a qualified wildlife biologist for all accessible areas. Habitat assessments for California tiger salamander and California red-legged frog were conducted in accordance with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service site assessment protocols (California Department of Fish and Game and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2003; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2005a).

Protocol-level presence/absence surveys were not conducted for all species due to land access, schedule constraints, and cost. Instead, where suitable habitat is present, the species is assumed to be present. For some species, further studies prior to construction will be conducted to confirm presence or absence. Where suitable habitat is absent, it is assumed that the species

does not occur within the project limits. For plants where suitable habitat is present, but the species was not detected during appropriately-timed floristic surveys, it is assumed that the species does not occur in the project limits. Additionally, pre-construction surveys will be performed prior to ground and vegetation disturbance.

Comment CDFW-8:

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 CNNDB field survey form can be filled out and submitted online at the following link: https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDB/Submitting-Data. The types of information reported to CNDDB can be found at the following link: https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDB/Plants-and-Animals.

Response to Comment CDFW-8:

Caltrans acknowledges the comment. Thank you.

Comment CDFW-9:

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT 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.)

Response to Comment CDFW-9:

Caltrans acknowledges the comment. Thank you.

Comment CDFW-10:

CONCLUSION

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Project to assist Caltrans in identifying and mitigating Project impacts on biological resources. A Mitigation Monitoring and Report Program (Attachment 1) is included to

assist Caltrans with incorporating the recommended mitigation measures provided above. If you have any questions, please contact Mindy Trask, Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist), at the address provided on this letterhead, by telephone at (559) 939-0282, or by electronic mail at Mary.Trask@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

Julie A. Vance

Regional Manager

Attachment 1: Recommended Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP)

cc: State Clearinghouse

Land Use and Climate Innovation

state.clearinghouse@lci.ca.gov

Response to Comment CDFW-10:

Thank you for supplying the Mitigation Monitoring and Report Program, and for providing comments on the project.

3. Commenter: The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County

Comment LTSCC-1:

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County (Land Trust), I write to express strong support for the Caltrans San Benito US 101 Pavement Rehabilitation Project. In addition to improving traffic safety on a critical stretch of Highway 101, we are particularly supportive of the project's proposed improvements to wildlife connectivity including repairs to culverts and the creation of a wildlife undercrossing by improving existing culverts on the southbound side of Highway 101 at post mile 0.43L and the northbound side of Highway 101 at post mile 0.48R. Wildlife-friendly infrastructure is not just good for nature, it reduces dangerous vehicle-wildlife collisions and keeps all of us safe.

The Land Trust is the owner of Rocks Ranch, a 2,667-acre property with Highway 101 frontage along the southern portion of the proposed project area. For the last two years, the Land Trust has let a robust conservation

planning effort involving more than 40 organizations and agencies for the southern Santa Cruz Mountains, Aromas Hills, and northern Gabilan Range region, which is a recognized by the state of California as an “Essential and Irreplaceable Connectivity Area” for wildlife movement. This planning effort identified a number of infrastructure improvement projects to enhance wildlife connectivity in the region, including the improved culvert undercrossing proposed as part of this Caltrans project.

Additionally, The Land Trust is supporting Caltrans District 5 in the planning of a purpose-built wildlife crossing over Highway 101 that, when completed, would complement this project’s wildlife undercrossing improvements.

We thank Caltrans District 5 for their leadership integrating wildlife connectivity infrastructure and highway improvement projects for the safety of our drivers, community, and wildlife.

Sincerely,

/s/

Eric Lombardo, Director of External Affairs

Land Trust of Santa Cruz County

Response to Comment LTSCC-1:

Thank you for your comments and support.

Appendix D Avoidance, Minimization and/or Mitigation Summary

To be sure that all of the environmental measures identified in this document are executed at the appropriate times, the following mitigation program (as articulated in the proposed Environmental Commitments Record which follows) will be implemented. During project design, avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures will be incorporated into the project's final plans, specifications, and cost estimates, as appropriate. All permits will be obtained prior to implementation of the project. During construction, environmental and construction/engineering staff will ensure that the commitments contained in this Environmental Commitments Record are fulfilled. Following construction and appropriate phases of project delivery, long-term mitigation maintenance and monitoring will take place, as applicable.

2.1.1 Aesthetics/Visual Resources

VIS-1. Preserve the existing vegetation to the maximum extent feasible. Prescriptive clearing, grubbing, and grading techniques that will save the most existing vegetation possible should be employed.

VIS-2. Replacement planting shall include aesthetic considerations as well as the inherent biological goals. Revegetation shall include native trees and plants as determined by the Caltrans Biologist and Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architect. Plantings should be maintained until established.

VIS-3. Preserve existing rock outcroppings and historic architecture elements.

VIS-4. All visible concrete drainage elements, including but not limited to headwalls, drain inlet aprons, and rock slope protection, will be colored to blend with the surroundings and reduce reflectivity. The specific colors of these concrete elements shall be determined by Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architecture.

VIS-5. Within eligible scenic highway portions of the project, stain the proposed cable railing or other metal components as directed by District 5 Landscape Architecture.

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] VIS-6. Where concrete median barrier is installed, stain and/or apply architectural treatment through project limits at the direction of District 5 Landscape Architecture. Color treat cable rail if applicable.

VIS-7. Placement, scale, and color of wildlife passage fencing and materials should be coordinated with District 5 landscape architecture to reduce visual impacts and limit vegetation removal.

VIS-8. Bridge rails, if required for proposed culverts within eligible scenic highway limits, should be open style where feasible, and color treated or textured under the direction of District 5 Landscape Architecture and in coordination with Caltrans Structures.

VIS-9. Following construction, re-grade and re-contour all new construction staging areas and other temporary uses as necessary to match the surrounding pre-project topography.

VIS-10. Inert vegetation control under guardrail will be selected to blend in with the natural surrounding and reduce reflectivity. The selection of the vegetation control material and/or color shall be determined and approved by District 5 Landscape Architecture in coordination with District 5 field maintenance.

VIS-11. Aesthetic treatments such as bridge barriers selection, concrete barrier color and aesthetics need coordination with the community.

VIS-12. If feasible, underground new or relocated utilities.

VIS-13. Delineate the Mission Monument Marker as an Environmentally Sensitive Area or other protection area as appropriate.

2.1.4 Biological Resources

BIO-1. Removal of coast live oak trees will be avoided at the greatest extent feasible.

BIO-2. All coast live oak trees that will remain in the project vicinity will be delineated on design plans. Prior to ground-disturbing activities, temporary Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing or flagging will be installed around trees to be protected.

BIO-3. (Compensatory Mitigation) Coast live oak trees will be replaced onsite at a 1-to-1 ratio in non-jurisdictional areas. Coast live oak trees that occur within jurisdictional areas will be replaced at a 3-to-1 ratio. Replacement plantings will be detailed in the project Landscape Planting Plans. [The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Tree plantings will be monitored to ensure successful revegetation at six months and then once a year for five years. Off-site mitigation is not anticipated.

BIO-4. Prior to construction, Caltrans shall obtain a Section 404 Nationwide Permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a Section 401 Water Quality Certification from the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, and a Section 1602 Streambed Alternation Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. All permit terms and conditions will be incorporated into construction plans and implemented.

BIO-5. Prior to any ground-disturbing activities, Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing shall be installed around jurisdictional waters, and the dripline of trees to be protected within the project limits. Caltrans-defined Environmentally Sensitive Areas shall be noted on design plans and delineated in the field prior to the start of construction activities.

BIO-6. Construction activities in jurisdictional waters and temporary stream diversion shall be timed to occur between June 1 and October 31 in any given year, or as otherwise directed by the regulatory agencies, when the surface water is likely to be dry or at a seasonal minimum. Deviations from this work window will only be made with permission from the relevant regulatory agencies.

BIO-7. During construction, all project-related hazardous materials spills within the project site shall be cleaned up immediately. Readily accessible spill prevention and cleanup materials shall be kept by the contractor on-site at all times during construction.

BIO-8. During construction, erosion control measures shall be implemented. Fiber rolls and barriers shall be installed as needed between the project site and jurisdictional other waters and riparian habitat. At a minimum, erosion controls shall be maintained by the contractor on a daily basis throughout the construction period.

BIO-9. During construction, the staging areas shall conform to Best Management Practices applicable to attaining zero discharge of stormwater runoff. At a minimum, all equipment and vehicles shall be checked and maintained by the contractor on a daily basis to ensure proper operation and avoid potential leaks or spills.

BIO-10. Prior to the removal of the diversion, stream contours shall be restored as close as possible to their original condition.

BIO-11. (Compensatory Mitigation) Restoration (re-establishment) is proposed at a 1-to-1 ratio (acreage) for temporary impacts to jurisdictional areas. Compensatory mitigation is proposed at a 3-to-1 ratio (acreage) for permanent impacts to jurisdictional areas and a 1.5-to-1 ratio (acreage) for degradation impacts to jurisdictional areas (e.g. installation of rock slope protection over gravel filter). Replacement plantings will include appropriate native tree and understory species. In order to ensure success, some locations will require a one-year plant establishment period, and others may require a three-year plant establishment period. Both will include monitoring, semiannual (twice a year) inspections, weeding, and replacement of dead plants. [The following text has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] It is anticipated that these revegetation areas will be monitored for success for five years.

Replacement plantings will be detailed in Caltrans' Landscape Architecture Landscape Planting Plan and the final Restoration, Mitigation, and Monitoring Plan, which will be prepared prior to construction. This plan will be developed in coordination with a biologist and will include developed planting specifications and grading plans to ensure survival of planted vegetation and re-establishment of functions and values. The final Restoration, Mitigation, and Monitoring Plan will detail methodologies and will be consistent with standards and mitigation commitments from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Restoration, Mitigation, and Monitoring Plan will be finalized through the permit review process with regulatory agencies. It is anticipated that restoration plantings will consist mainly of native riparian species and associated riparian understory and bank species. Caltrans shall implement the Restoration, Mitigation, and Monitoring Plan as necessary during construction and immediately following project completion.

BIO-12. During construction, Caltrans will ensure that the spread or introduction of invasive exotic plant species will be avoided to the maximum extent possible.

BIO-13. Only clean fill shall be imported. When practicable, invasive exotic plants in the project site shall be removed and properly disposed of. Any plant species rated as "High" on the Cal-IPC Invasive Plant Inventory that are removed from the construction site shall be taken to a landfill to prevent the spread of invasive species.

BIO-14. Plant species that the California Invasive Plant Council, California Department of Agriculture, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, or other resource organizations consider to be invasive or potentially invasive will not be used in erosion control seed mix or to revegetate areas of disturbance. Caltrans erosion control mix will only contain native species to the central coast of California.

BIO-15. Construction equipment shall be inspected as "weed-free" by Caltrans before entering the construction site. If necessary, wash stations onsite shall be established for construction equipment under the guidance of Caltrans in order to avoid/minimize the spread of invasive plants and/or seed within the construction area.

BIO-16. If Pajaro manzanita plants require removal, they will be replanted in-kind.

BIO-17. To protect any mountain lions in the project area, night work will be limited to the extent necessary to complete project activities. Any temporary lighting will be shielded or focused to avoid adjacent habitat.

BIO-18. During the design phase, a Crotch and western bumble bee habitat assessment will be conducted following California Department of Fish and Wildlife's "Survey Considerations for California Endangered Species Act Candidate Bumble Bee Species" dated June 6, 2023. Where Crotch and western bumble bee habitat is determined to be present within the project site a focused non-invasive survey will be conducted within suitable habitat prior to ground disturbance for Crotch and western bumble bee and their nests, following California Department of Fish and Wildlife guidance (2023).

BIO-19. Prior to any ground-disturbing activities, Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing shall be installed, as appropriate, around Crotch and western bumble bee feeding and nesting habitat to be avoided. Environmentally Sensitive Areas shall be noted on design plans and delineated in the field prior to the start of construction activities.

BIO-20. A Worker Environmental Awareness Training will be provided for all construction personnel prior to the start of any ground-disturbance or vegetation removal to discuss Crotch and western bumble bee identification, ecology, habitat, and avoidance and minimization measures.

BIO-21. If Crotch or western bumble bee is identified in the project area, Caltrans will coordinate with California Department of Fish and Wildlife and, if necessary, a 2081 Incidental Take Permit will be acquired, on-site mitigation may be required, and the following will be implemented:

> a) Any blooming flowering plants that are scoped for removal will be inspected immediately prior to work to ensure that no bumble bees are on or near the plant. If a bumble bee is identified on or adjacent to vegetation that is to be removed, work in that area will not proceed until the bumble bee leaves the area of its own accord.
>
> b) No work will occur within 50 feet of an active Crotch or western bumble bee nest unless approved by California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

BIO-22. Caltrans will obtain U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife approval of biologist(s) prior to project-related activities that may result in impacts to California tiger salamander. An approved biologist will be present at preconstruction surveys and during all initial ground disturbing activities in areas of potential California tiger salamander habitat to help minimize or avoid impact to the California tiger salamander and to minimize disturbance of habitat. If burrow excavations are required prior to ground disturbance by regulatory agencies, the approved biologist shall be present to direct crews and relocate any individuals as needed.

BIO-23. Biologists shall ensure that their activities do not transmit diseases or pathogens harmful to amphibians, such as chytrid fungus (*Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*), by following the fieldwork code of practice developed by the Declining Amphibians Task Force.

BIO-24. Before any activities begin, the approved biologist shall conduct an education program for all persons employed or otherwise working on the project site prior to performing any work on-site. The program shall include a discussion of the biology of the California tiger salamander and project-specific avoidance and minimization measures. Upon completion of the program, employees shall sign a form stating they attended the program and understand all protection measures.

[The following text has been deleted since the draft environmental document was circulated, due to redundancy with measure BIO-32.] BIO-25. During project activities, all trash that may attract predators will be properly contained, removed from the work site, and disposed of regularly. Following construction, all trash and construction debris will be removed from work areas.

[The following text has been deleted since the draft environmental document was circulated, due to redundancy with measure BIO-33.] BIO-26. All refueling, maintenance, and staging of equipment and vehicles will occur at least 60 feet from riparian and pond habitat. Measures will be taken to avoid situations where a spill could drain directly toward aquatic habitat.

BIO-27. Temporary amphibian exclusion fencing and environmentally sensitive habitat area fencing/flagging shall be installed, as appropriate, prior to ground disturbance.

BIO-28. (Compensatory Mitigation) Caltrans anticipates that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife will require compensatory mitigation for potential California tiger salamander upland habitat impacts. Caltrans will mitigate for these impacts at a 1-to-1 ratio onsite, through restoration of impacted habitats. Permanent impacts to suitable habitat are proposed for mitigation at a 3-to-1 ratio, or as required by regulatory agencies, using mitigation credits at a California Department of Fish and Wildlife-approved California tiger salamander mitigation bank.

BIO-29. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist shall survey the project area at locations with suitable California red-legged frog habitat no more than 48 hours before the onset of work activities. If found, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist shall relocate the California red-legged frogs the shortest distance possible to a location that contains suitable habitat and will not be affected by the activities associated with the project. The relocation site shall be in the same drainage to the extent practicable.

BIO-30. Before any activities begin on a project, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist shall conduct a training session for all construction personnel. At a minimum, the training shall include a description of the California red-legged frog and its habitat, the specific measures that are being implemented to conserve the California red-legged frog for the current project, and the boundaries within which the project may be accomplished.

BIO-31. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist shall be present at the project locations with suitable California red-legged frog habitat until all California red-legged frogs have been removed, workers have been instructed, and initial disturbance of habitat has been completed. If work is stopped because California red-legged frogs would be affected in a manner not anticipated by Caltrans and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service during review of the proposed action, they shall notify the Resident Engineer immediately. When work is stopped, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service shall be notified as soon as possible.

BIO-32. During project activities, all trash that may attract predators or scavengers shall be properly contained, removed from the work site, and disposed of at the end of each work week. Following construction, all trash and debris shall be removed from work areas.

BIO-33. All refueling, maintenance and staging of equipment and vehicles shall occur at least 100 feet from riparian habitat or water bodies and not in a location from where a spill would drain directly toward aquatic habitat, unless otherwise preapproved by the necessary agencies.

BIO-34. Habitat contours shall be returned to a natural configuration at the end of the project activities. This measure shall be implemented in all areas disturbed by activities associated with the project at locations with suitable California red-legged frog habitat unless the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Caltrans determine that it is not feasible, or modification of original contours would benefit the California red-legged frog. See also measure VIS-9.

BIO-35. The number of access routes, size of staging areas, and the total area of activity shall be limited to the minimum necessary to achieve the project. Environmentally Sensitive Areas shall be established to confine access routes and construction areas to the minimum area necessary to complete construction, and minimize the impact to California red-legged frog habitat; this goal includes locating access routes and construction areas outside of wetlands and riparian areas to the maximum extent practicable.

BIO-36. Caltrans shall attempt to schedule work for times of the year when impacts to the California red-legged frog would be minimal. For example, work that would affect large pools that may support breeding will be avoided,

to the maximum degree practicable, during the breeding season (November through May).

BIO-37. To control sedimentation during and after project completion, Caltrans shall implement Best Management Practices outlined in any authorizations or permits issued under the authorities of the Clean Water Act received for the project.

BIO-38. If a work site is to be temporarily dewatered by pumping, intakes shall be completely screened with wire mesh not larger than 0.2 inch to prevent California red-legged frogs from entering the pump system. Water shall be released or pumped downstream at an appropriate rate to maintain downstream flows during construction. Upon completion of construction activities, any diversions or barriers to flow shall be removed in a manner that will allow flow to resume with the least disturbance to the substrate. Alteration of the streambed shall be minimized to the maximum extent possible; any imported material shall be removed from the streambed upon completion of the project.

BIO-39. Unless approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, water shall not be impounded in a manner that may attract California red-legged frogs.

BIO-40. Project sites shall be revegetated with an assemblage of native riparian, wetland, and upland vegetation suitable for the area. Locally collected plant materials shall be used to the extent practicable. Invasive, exotic plants shall be controlled to the maximum extent practicable.

BIO-41. Caltrans shall not use herbicides as the primary method to control invasive, exotic plants.

BIO-42. Upon completion of the project, Caltrans shall ensure that a Project Completion Report is completed and provided to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, following the template provided with the Programmatic Biological Opinion.

BIO-43. During the winter season prior to start of construction, a qualified biologist shall survey areas of the project with suitable habitat when pools/puddles will be present. If spadefoot are present, Caltrans shall coordinate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service unless otherwise outlined in the project's Biological Opinion.

BIO-44. Caltrans will schedule project activities to minimize adverse effects to the western spadefoot and their habitat. Disturbance to aquatic habitat will be confined to the dry season, generally June 1 through October 31 (or the first measurable fall rain of 1 inch or greater) because that is the time period when the western spadefoot are less likely to be moving through upland areas. However, if seasonal avoidance is not possible, grading, and other disturbance in pools and ponds will occur only when they are dry, typically

between July 15 and October 31. Work within a pool or wetland may begin prior to July 15 if the pool or wetland has been dry for a minimum of 30 days prior to initiating work.

BIO-45. No construction activities will occur during rain events.

BIO-46. No more than 24 hours prior to the date of initial ground disturbance and vegetation clearing, a qualified biologist with experience in the identification of the western spadefoot will conduct a pre-construction survey within suitable habitat at the project site. The survey will consist of walking the subject area to determine possible presence of the species. The qualified biologist will investigate all areas that could be used by western spadefoot for feeding, breeding, sheltering, movement, and other essential behaviors, such as small woody debris, refuse, burrows, etc. If burrow excavations are conducted and/or amphibian exclusion fencing is installed, surveys will instead occur immediately prior to those activities.

BIO-47. Biological monitoring by a qualified biologist(s) will be carried out for initial ground disturbance activities, unless the area has had burrow excavation and amphibian exclusion fencing installed. If spadefoot are detected during initial ground disturbance monitoring, the qualified biologist(s) will periodically visit the site throughout the construction period. No construction work will be initiated until the biologist(s) determines that the work area is clear of spadefoot.

BIO-48. A Caltrans-approved biologist shall survey the project site no more than 48 hours before the onset of work activities in drainages with suitable habitat for Coast Range newt. If found, the biologist shall relocate the species the shortest distance possible to a location that contains suitable habitat and will not be affected by the activities associated with the project. The relocation site shall be in the same drainage to the extent practicable.

BIO-49. Before any project activities begin, a Caltrans-approved biologist shall conduct a training session for all construction personnel. At a minimum, the training shall include a description of Coast Range newt and their habitat, the specific measures for the project that are being implemented to conserve the species, and the boundaries of the work area.

BIO-50. Biological monitoring by a qualified biologist(s) will be carried out for initial ground disturbance activities, unless the area has had burrow excavation and amphibian exclusion fencing installed. If Coast Range newt are detected during initial ground disturbance monitoring, the qualified biologist(s) will periodically visit the site throughout the construction period. No construction work will be initiated until the biologist(s) determines that the work area is clear of Coast Range newt.

BIO-51. The project includes Environmentally Sensitive Areas to minimize impacts to sensitive areas and species. The project plans will delineate Environmentally Sensitive Areas that restrict access to the minimum required for construction, minimizing impacts to northwestern pond turtle and their habitat. No vehicle access within these Environmentally Sensitive Areas will be permitted. During construction, the Resident Engineer and biological monitor will determine and agree upon the exact placement of Environmentally Sensitive Area markers, based on the project plans, and will determine and agree upon the appropriate material for marking Environmentally Sensitive Areas.

BIO-52. Prior to construction, a qualified biologist will provide an environmental awareness training to all personnel on the potential for northwestern pond turtle to occur in the project area. The contractor shall submit a written request to the Resident Engineer 14 calendar days prior to the performance of any work to schedule training.

BIO-53. Prior to the start of excavation or construction activities, a qualified biologist will conduct a pre-construction survey for northwestern pond turtle. If any are found within the Area of Potential Impacts, they will be relocated to a suitable location outside of the Area of Potential Impacts by a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approved biologist. The qualified biologist will use the most current survey protocols available for the species to ensure highest level of species detection including visual encounter surveys and nesting survey techniques.

BIO-54. A qualified biologist shall be present on-site during all initial vegetation removal and ground disturbing activities. If pond turtle are encountered, only a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approved biologist shall handle and relocate the animal.

BIO-55. As required by regulatory agencies, focused surveys following U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey guidelines for least Bell's vireo shall be completed to determine the presence/absence of least Bell's vireo wherever suitable habitat is present. If least Bell's vireo is detected during these surveys, Caltrans will coordinate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to determine if formal consultation will be required or if additional avoidance and minimization measures will be needed.

BIO-56. Worker Environmental Awareness Trainings will be provided in accordance with the Programmatic Biological Opinion for Projects Funded or Approved under the Federal Highway Administration's Federal Aid Program 8-8-10-F-58 for California red-legged frog. Worker trainings will include information about least Bell's vireo, and its habitat.

[The following text has been deleted since the draft environmental document was circulated, due to redundancy with measure BIO-62.] BIO-57. Prior to

construction, vegetation removal shall be scheduled to occur from October 1 to January 31, outside of the typical nesting bird season, if possible, to avoid potential impacts to nesting birds. If tree removal or other construction activities are proposed to occur within 100 feet of potential habitat during the nesting season (February 1 to September 30), a nesting bird survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist no more than five calendar days prior to construction.

BIO-58. If least Bell's vireo is observed within 100 feet of the project area during construction or during the preconstruction surveys, all project activities shall cease immediately, and the relevant resource agencies shall be consulted. Development of additional avoidance and minimization measures will occur as necessary in coordination with the pertinent agencies.

BIO-59. If an active Swainson's hawk or white-tailed kite nest are observed within 800 meters (2,624 feet) of construction activities, an adequate buffer and monitoring will be implemented and developed in consultation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

BIO-60. Surveys for raptor nests within one mile of construction activities, as feasible and accessible, will be conducted as described below in measure BIO-62.

BIO-61. If an active eagle nest is identified within one mile of and line-of-sight to project activities, a protective buffer will be established using best available data and developed in consultation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] BIO-62. Prior to construction, vegetation removal shall be scheduled to occur from September 16 to January 31, outside of the typical nesting bird season, if possible, to avoid potential impacts to nesting birds. If tree removal or other construction activities are proposed to occur within 500 feet of potential habitat during the nesting season (February 1 to September 15), a nesting bird survey shall be conducted by a biologist determined qualified by Caltrans no more than ten calendar days prior to vegetation removal. If an active nest is found, a biologist shall monitor baseline behavior with ambient conditions and implement an appropriate buffer or monitoring strategy based on the habits and needs of the species. The buffer area or monitoring strategy shall be implemented until a qualified biologist has determined that juveniles have fledged and are no longer reliant on the nest or nesting activity has otherwise ceased. A 250-foot buffer around active nests of non-listed bird species and a 500-foot buffer around active nests of non-listed raptors shall be established unless a biologist is present to monitor within the buffer for potential disturbance. If the biologist determines that behavior has changed due to project activities, work activities within the buffer

shall be stopped and the buffer shall be expanded as needed to avoid disturbance.

BIO-63. During construction, active bird nests shall not be disturbed and eggs or young of birds covered by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish and Game Code shall not be killed, destroyed, injured, or harassed at any time.

BIO-64. Trees to be removed shall be noted on design plans. Prior to any ground-disturbing activities, Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing shall be installed around the dripline of trees to be protected within project limits.

BIO-65. All initial clearing/grubbing and vegetation removal shall be monitored and documented by a qualified biologist regardless of time of year.

BIO-66. If a tricolored blackbird is detected within the project limits or within 250 feet of the construction activities, the qualified biologist will determine whether a nesting colony is present in the area. If nesting tricolored blackbirds are confirmed, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife will be notified, and a buffer zone for the colony will be defined. No take of tricolored blackbird shall occur. Caltrans will coordinate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and if needed, permits will be acquired.

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] BIO-67. If a burrowing owl or inactive burrowing owl den is detected within the project limits, an appropriately sized protective buffer will be established in coordination with a qualified biologist and in consideration of the 2012 Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (California Department of Fish and Game 2012). The inactive burrow and/or animal will be monitored to ensure work does not disturb it and the buffer will be in place until the animal leaves on its own. If an active burrowing owl burrow (breeding or nonbreeding) is identified within 1,640 feet (500 meters) of the construction activities, a no-disturbance buffer zone for the burrow or burrow complex will be defined. Caltrans will coordinate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and permits will be acquired if needed.

BIO-68. Preconstruction surveys will be conducted by a qualified biologist to identify potential roosting bat activity. The biologist(s) conducting the preconstruction surveys will also identify the nature of the bat utilization of the area (i.e., roosting, night roost, day roost, maternity roost). If there is roosting bat activity, a buffer shall be established until the roost is no longer active or exclusionary devices are installed. Any exclusionary devices and exclusion methodology will be approved by a qualified biologist prior to installation. A qualified Caltrans biologist shall determine an appropriate buffer based on the habits and needs of the roosting species. The buffer area shall be avoided until a qualified biologist has determined that roosting activity has ceased or

exclusionary methods have successfully evicted roosting bats. No exclusions will be installed on a maternal roosting site.

BIO-69. Tree removal shall be scheduled to occur from October 1 to January 31, outside of the typical bat maternity roosting season, if possible, to avoid potential impacts to tree roosting bats.

BIO-70. Prior to any ground disturbance, the contractor, all employees of the contractor, subcontractors, and subcontractors' employees will attend an employee education program conducted by a qualified biologist. The program will consist of a brief presentation by persons knowledgeable in American badger biology, legislative protection, and measures to avoid impacts to the species during project implementation.

BIO-71. The project plans shall delineate Environmentally Sensitive Areas to minimize impacts to sensitive areas and species by limiting access to the minimum required for construction within the Area of Potential Impacts. No vehicle access within the Environmentally Sensitive Areas will occur.

BIO-72. Prior to any ground disturbance in suitable habitat, a preconstruction survey will be conducted for American badger. The survey will identify any potential badger dens. The status of all potential dens will be determined and mapped. Potentially active dens will be monitored with tracking medium or infrared camera for three consecutive days to determine the current use. If no badger activity is observed during this period, then the den will be excavated by hand or carefully with equipment provided by the contractor or blocked during the duration of construction under the direction of the biologist to preclude subsequent use. If American badger activity is observed at a den, Caltrans will coordinate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for suitable buffer implementation or exclusion methods.

BIO-73. Observations of Species of Special Concern or other special-status species shall be documented on California Natural Diversity Database forms and submitted to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife upon project completion.

[The following four measures, BIO-74 through BIO-77, have been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.]

BIO-74. The 2012 Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (2012 Staff Report; California Department of Fish and Game 2012) protocol will be used to inform the survey methodology for burrowing owl to be conducted by a qualified biologist within and adjacent to suitable habitat in the project area prior to construction. The survey area will include a subset of locations where off-highway ground disturbance will occur or construction will cause higher-than ambient levels of disturbance.

BIO-75. If take of burrowing owl cannot be avoided, take authorization through the acquisition of an Incidental Take Permit, pursuant to California Fish and Game Code section 2081 subdivision (b), will be completed to comply with the California Endangered Species Act.

BIO-76. Caltrans will schedule project activities to minimize adverse effects to the Monterey hitch and southern coastal roach and their habitat. Disturbance to aquatic habitat, including temporary stream diversions, will be timed to occur in the dry season (typically June 1 to October 31) when surface water is likely to be at a seasonal minimum, or as otherwise permitted by the regulatory agencies.

BIO-77. If permanent impacts are required at the outlets of culverts at either post mile 4.4 or 6.4, Caltrans will coordinate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife during 1600 permitting to determine offsetting mitigation, which may include refugia creation (e.g., woody debris installation, pool creation, riparian planting).

2.1.5 Cultural Resources

CR-1. An Environmentally Sensitive Area Action Plan has been prepared for this project. The project contractor shall adhere to the requirements of this plan, which includes:

- Methods for Environmentally Sensitive Area delineation and installation of temporary fencing;
- General archaeological and Native American monitoring procedures during ground-disturbing activities associated with the project;
- Protocol for inadvertent discoveries of potentially significant cultural materials from known or unidentified resources;
- Treatment of human remains if they were to be discovered during the course of the project;
- Responsible parties for all aspects of the action plan;
- Protocol for the event of an inadvertent violation of the Environmentally Sensitive Area Action Plan during the course of the project.

CR-2. If previously unidentified cultural resources (including human remains), or concerns pertaining to a known cultural resource, are identified during construction, it is Caltrans policy that work be halted until a qualified archaeologist or architectural historian (as applicable) can assess the significance of the finding and recommend appropriate action. Additional cultural resources-related studies will be needed if the project limits are extended beyond the present study limits.

2.1.7 Geology and Soils

GEO-1. (CEQA Mitigation) Caltrans shall retain a Principal Paleontologist that meets Caltrans qualifications to prepare or oversee preparation of a Paleontological Mitigation Plan during the project Plans, Specifications, and Estimates phase. The Paleontological Mitigation Plan provides detailed information about the implementation of mitigation fieldwork (construction monitoring, fossil recovery), laboratory techniques for fossil preparation and identification, and the designation of a curation (repository) facility to receive the fossils. Elements of the Paleontological Mitigation Plan shall conform to Caltrans guidelines. Paleontological Monitoring during construction will be required as a component of the Paleontological Mitigation Plan.

2.1.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.]

GHG-1: Limit idling to five minutes for delivery and dump trucks and other diesel-powered equipment.

GHG-2: Schedule truck trips outside of peak morning and evening commute hours.

GHG-3: Schedule longer-duration lane closures to reduce number of equipment mobilization efforts.

GHG-4: For improved fuel efficiency from construction equipment:

- Maintain equipment in proper tune and working condition;
- Use right sized equipment for the job;
- Use equipment with new technologies.

List of Technical Studies Bound Separately (Volume 2)

[The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.]

Air Quality, Noise and Water Quality Technical Assessment Memo (May 8, 2026)

Natural Environment Study (May 2026), including:

- San Benito US 101 Pavement Rehabilitation Project Jurisdictional Delineation Report (May 2025)

Natural Environment Study Addendum: Updated Mountain Lion California Endangered Species Act Listing (April 20, 2026)

Location Hydraulic Study (October 15, 2024)

Historic Property Survey Report: SBT 101 Asset Management Project, San Benito County, California (April 2025), including:

- Archaeological Survey Report and Extended Phase I Cultural Resource Inventory
- Historic Resource Evaluation Report

0-Phase Initial Site Assessment, EA 05-1J840, SBt 101 Asset Management Project (revised June 9, 2026)

Visual Impact Assessment of the Proposed SBt US101 Pavement Rehabilitation Project (June 1, 2026)

Geologic Hazards Report for San Benito US 101 Pavement Rehabilitation (April 11, 2025)

Structures Preliminary Geotechnical Report (March 14, 2025)

Cumulative Impact Report, San Benito U.S. 101 Pavement Rehabilitation Project (August 2025)

Climate Change Report, San Benito U.S. 101 Pavement Rehabilitation Project (April 2026)

Paleontological Identification Report, EA 05-1J840, SBT 101 Asset Management Project (revised June 9, 2026)

Paleontological Cumulative Impact Report, EA 05-1J840, SBT US101 Pavement Rehabilitation Project (August 11, 2025)

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

Matt Fowler
Environmental Branch Chief, District 5
California Department of Transportation
50 Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo, California 93401

Or send your request via email to: SBT101Pavement@dot.ca.gov

Or call: (805) 779-0793

Please provide the following information in your request:

Project title: San Benito U.S. Route 101 Pavement Rehabilitation Project

General location information: On U.S. Route 101 from the Monterey County line to the Santa Clara County line

District number-county code-route-post mile: 05-SBt-101-PM 0.0/7.55

Project ID number: 0518000079/EA 05-1J840