Gold Rush Multi-Use Path Phase I Project

In the City of Sonora in Tuolumne County

10-TUO-49-17.2/17.9

EA 10-1S350/Project Number 1024000070

Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration

Volume 1 of 2



Prepared by the

State of California Department of Transportation

June 2026

Caltrans

General Information About This Document

What's in this document:

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has prepared this Initial Study, which examines the potential environmental impacts of alternatives being considered for the proposed project in Tuolumne in California. The document explains why the project is being proposed, the alternatives being considered for the project, the existing environment that could be affected by the project, potential impacts of each of the alternatives, and proposed avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures.

What you should do:

- Please read the document. Additional copies of the document and the related technical studies are available for review at the Caltrans district office at 1976 East Doctor Martin Luther King, Junior, Boulevard, Stockton, California 95205 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday; Sonora City Hall at 94 North Washington Street, Sonora, California 95370 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday; and the Tuolumne County Library at 480 Greenly Road, Sonora, California 95370 from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday. This document may be downloaded at the following website: https://dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-10/district-10-current-projects#tuolumne
- Tell us what you think. If you have any comments regarding the proposed project, please attend the Sonora City Council meeting on August 3rd, 2026 at 94 North Washington Street, Sonora, California, 05370 and/or send your written comments to Caltrans by the deadline below. Submit comments via U.S. mail to: Jonathan Coley, Senior Environmental Scientist, District 10 Environmental Division, California Department of Transportation, 1976 East Doctor Martin Luther King Junior Boulevard, Stockton, California 95205. Submit comments via email to: Jonathan.Coley@dot.ca.gov
- Submit comments by the deadline: August 14, 2026

What happens next:

After comments are received from the public and the reviewing agencies, Caltrans may 1) give environmental approval to the proposed project, 2) do additional environmental studies, or 3) abandon the project. If the project is given environmental approval and funding is appropriated, Caltrans could design and construct all or part of the project.

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10-TUO-49-17.2/17.9
EA 10-1S350/Project Number 1024000070

Construction of a multi-use bicycle and pedestrian tail along State Route 49 from post mile 17.2 to post mile17.9 and adjacent areas within the City of Sonora in Tuolumne County

INITIAL STUDY
with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration

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

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Transportation
and
City of Sonora
Cooperating Agencies: Tuolumne County Transportation Council
Responsible Agency: California Transportation Commission

C. Scott Guidi

C. Scott Guidi
Office Chief, District 10 Environmental
California Department of Transportation
CEQA Lead Agency

07/09/2026

Date

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

Jonathan Coley, 1976 East Doctor Martin Luther King Junior Boulevard, Stockton, California 95205, email: Jonathan Coley@dot.ca.gov, phone: 209-479-4083

DRAFT
Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

State Clearinghouse Number: Pending

District-County-Route-Post Mile: 10-TUO-49-17.2/17.9

EA/Project Number: EA 10-1S350/Project Number 1024000070

Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to construct a 1.5-mile multi-use trail, beginning in the city of Sonora at State Route 49 and South Green Street, extending south down to State Route 49 to an existing trail located near the Motherlode Fairgrounds. In addition, a trail junction would be constructed at the State Route 49 and Woods Creek Drive intersection, forming a T in the trail. Phase I of the project can be broken into three segments: South Green Street to Woods Creek Drive, Woods Creek Drive to Motherlode Fairgrounds, and Woods Creek Drive to Snell Street. Project-wide improvements would consist of construction of a Class I pedestrian and bicycle path, Americans with Disabilities Act improvements, and restriping portions of State Route 49 to narrow and shift the existing lanes.

Determination

An Initial Study has been prepared by Caltrans District 10. 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 would have no effect on: Agriculture and Forest Resources, Land Use and Planning, and Population and Housing.

The project would have less than significant effects to: Aesthetics, Air Quality, Cultural Resources, Energy, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Mineral Resources, Noise, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation, Tribal Cultural Resources, Utilities and Service Systems, and Wildfire.

With the following mitigation measures incorporated, the project would have less than significant effects to Biological Resources:

- BIO-11: Compensatory mitigation would be provided for any riverine habitats that would be permanently impacted by the project, resulting in no net loss of aquatic resources or habitat. Mitigation would be provided using an agency-approved mitigation ratio via one of the following compensatory mitigation options:

- Payment of an in-lieu fee or mitigation credits to an agency-approved mitigation site.
- Compensatory off-site mitigation at an agency-approved mitigation site.
- Compensatory on-site mitigation.
- A combination of the above compensatory mitigation options.

Consultation efforts with the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Water Quality Control Board, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife through Section 404, Section 401, and Section 1602 permitting processes would determine final mitigation ratios for permanent impacts to Waters of the United States and Waters of the State.

_____

C. Scott Guidi
Office Chief, District 10 Environmental
California Department of Transportation
CEQA Lead Agency

_____

Date

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Chapter 1 Proposed Project

1.1 Introduction

California participated in the "Surface Transportation Project Delivery Pilot Program" (Pilot Program) pursuant to 23 U.S. Code 327, for more than five years, beginning July 1, 2007, and ending September 30, 2012. Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (Public Law 112-141), signed by President Barack Obama on July 6, 2012, amended 23 U.S. Code 327 to establish a permanent Surface Transportation Project Delivery Program. As a result, Caltrans entered into a Memorandum of Understanding pursuant to 23 U.S. Code 327 (National Environmental Policy Act Assignment MOU) with the Federal Highway Administration. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Assignment Memorandum of Understanding became effective October 1, 2012, and was renewed on May 27, 2022, for a term of 10 years. In summary, Caltrans continues to assume Federal Highway Administration responsibilities under NEPA and other federal environmental laws in the same manner as was assigned under the Pilot Program, with minor changes. With NEPA Assignment, the Federal Highway Administration assigned and Caltrans assumed all of the U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary's responsibilities under NEPA. This assignment includes projects on the State Highway System and Local Assistance projects off of the State Highway System within the State of California, except for certain categorical exclusions that Federal Highway Administration assigned to Caltrans under the 23 U.S. Code 326 Categorical Exclusion Assignment Memorandum of Understanding, projects excluded by definition, and specific project exclusions.

As the project is located on the State Highway System (State Route 49), Caltrans is the Lead Agency under NEPA and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The project is funded through the California Active Transportation Program and the Federal Highway Administration's Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program.

1.1.1 Project History

The Gold Rush Multi-Use Path was originally proposed by the Tuolumne County Transportation Council in 2022 as a larger project corridor, linking Jamestown, Sonora, and Columbia via State Route 49. The presented estimated cost for the entire project was projected between $9.5 and $20 million. This larger project is listed in the Tuolumne County Transportation Council 2024-2029 Final Regional Transportation Plan (Regional Transportation Plan 2025) as the State Route 49 Jamestown to Columbia Multi-Modal Corridor Plan. The proposed project is Phase I of the larger trail project and would implement the multi-use path within the City of Sonora.

In 2026, the City of Sonora, Tuolumne County Transportation Council, Caltrans, the Chicken Ranch Rancheria Tribe, and other local stakeholders decided to change the name of this project from the Gold Rush Multi-Use Path Phase I Project, to the Tuolumne Heritage Trail Phase I Project. For continuity with the project's federal funding, the project name would be officially changed during the Final Design phase.

The Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors, Tuolumne County Transportation Council, and the existing Regional Transportation Plan have prioritized State Route 49 corridor improvements. The State Route 49 Congested Corridor Plan and State Route 49 Complete Streets Plan engaged in extensive public outreach. Following that, both point to a pedestrian and bicyclist pathway, separate from the highway, connecting Jamestown, Sonora, and Columbia to each other for those choosing to travel without motorized vehicles.

Between 2009 and 2020, 68 non-fatal pedestrian and cyclist collisions with motorized vehicles and 4 fatal pedestrian and cyclist collisions with motorized vehicles occurred within the project corridor. The community lacks adequate pedestrian and bicycle facilities linking residents with resources found community-wide.

1.2 Purpose and Need

1.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the project is to enhance non-motorized circulation within the community and encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation. This project would serve as the first step in improving a multi-modal network for the community, linking individuals with community resources.

1.2.2 Need

The City of Sonora lacks continuous pedestrian and bicycle facilities along the State Route 49 corridor. The Project is needed to provide dedicated bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and to enhance accessibility for non-motorized users.

The Tuolumne County Transportation Council Regional Transportation Plan has identified the Gold Rush Multi-Use Path as a priority project that would implement multi-modal transportation planning goals throughout the County. This project would implement the first phase of this regional trail plan and is needed to advance local and regional transportation planning goals.

1.3 Project Description

The project proposes construction of a 1.5-mile multi-use trail, beginning in the city of Sonora at State Route 49 and South Green Street, extending south down State Route 49 to an existing trail located near the Motherlode Fairgrounds. In addition, a trail junction would be constructed at the State Route 49/Woods Creek Drive intersection, forming a T in the trail. The project can be broken into three sections: South Green Street to Woods Creek Drive, Woods Creek Drive to Motherlode Fairgrounds, and Woods Creek Drive to Snell Street. Project-wide improvements would consist of construction of a Class I pedestrian and bicycle path, Americans with Disabilities Act improvements, and restriping portions of State Route 49 to narrow and shift the existing lanes.

Figure 1-1 Project Vicinity Map

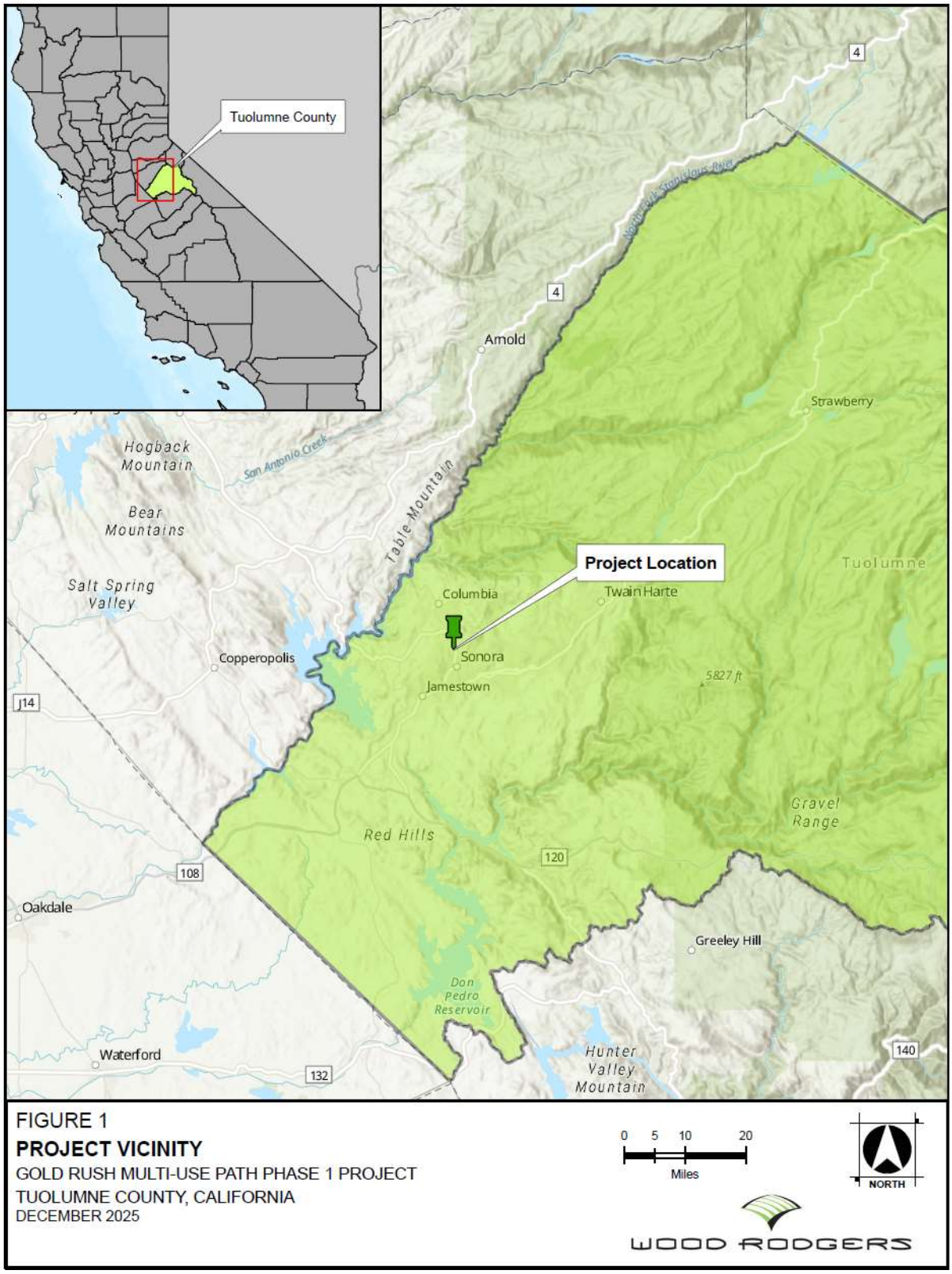


Figure 1-2 Project Location Map

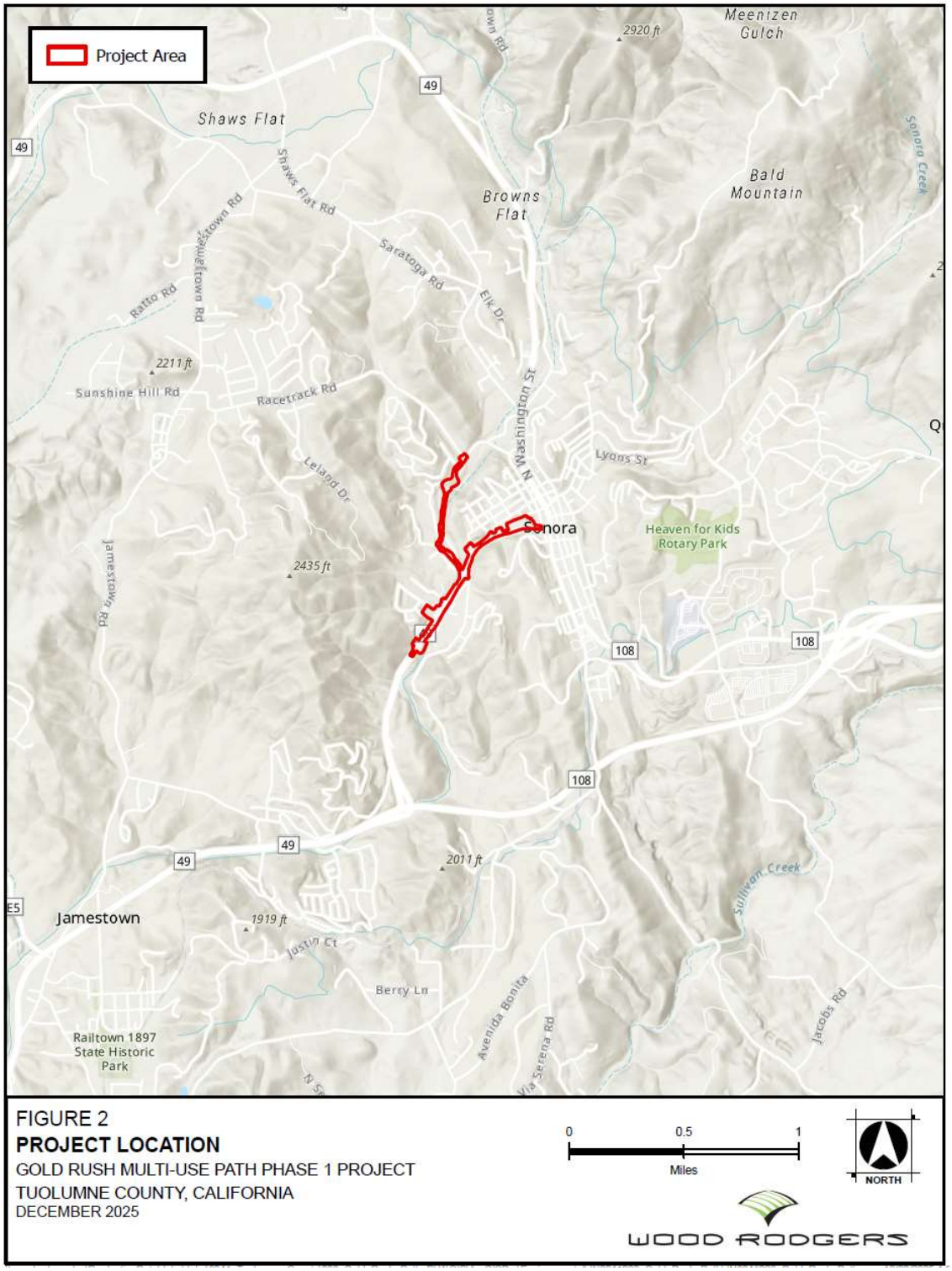


Figure 1-3 Project Features – Page 1 of 5

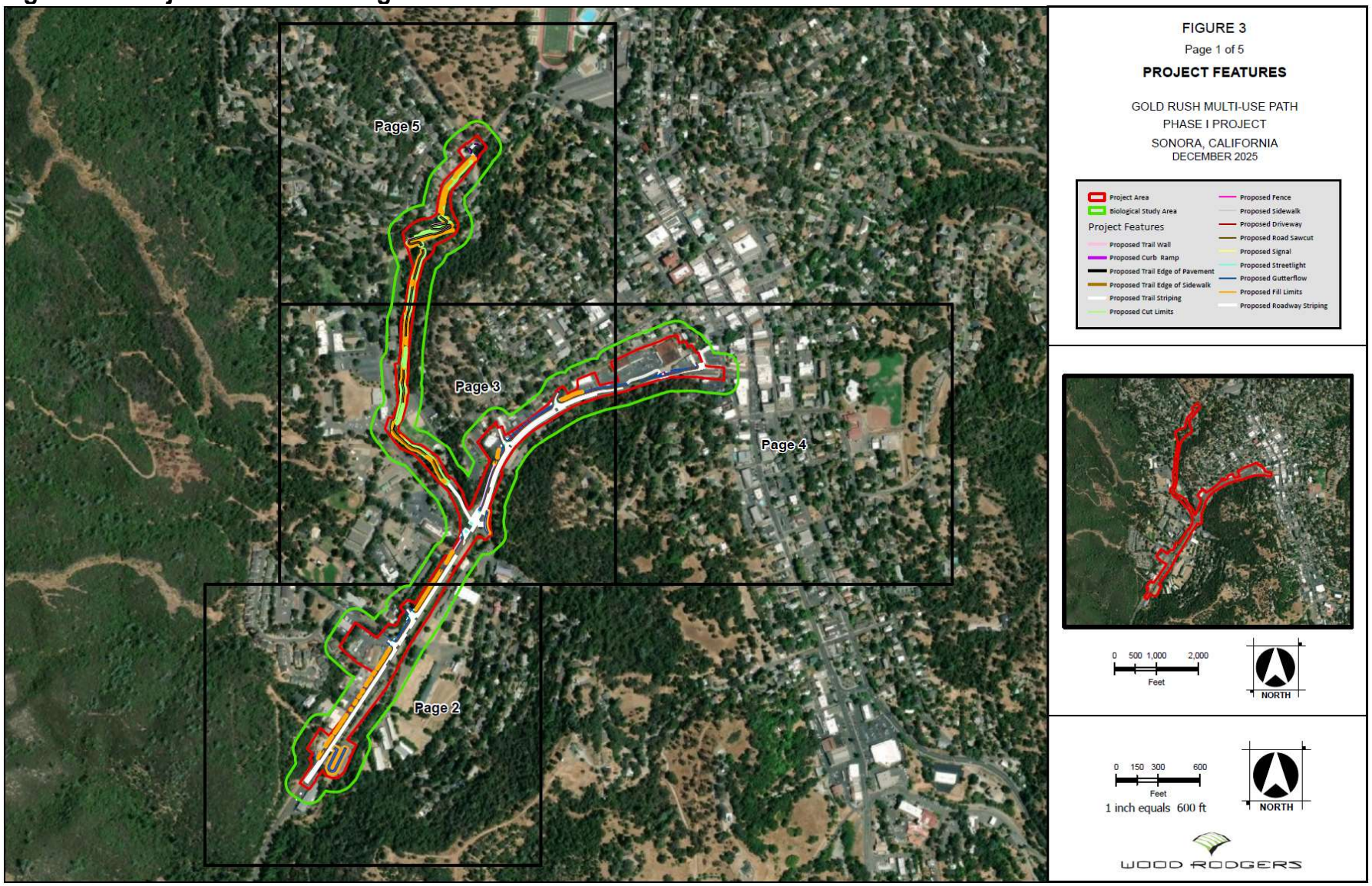


Figure 1-3 Project Features – Page 2 of 5

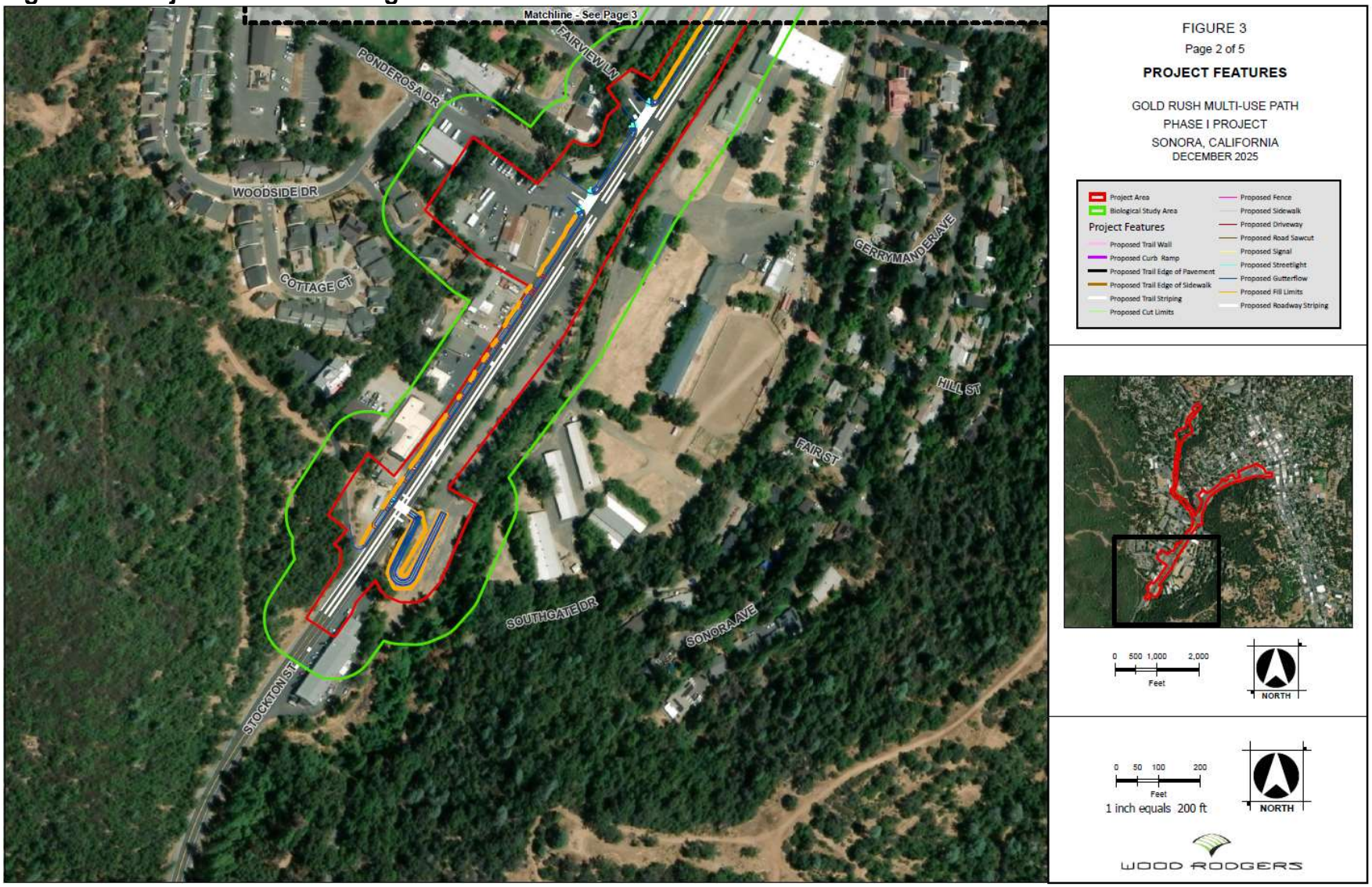


Figure 1-3 Project Features – Page 3 of 5

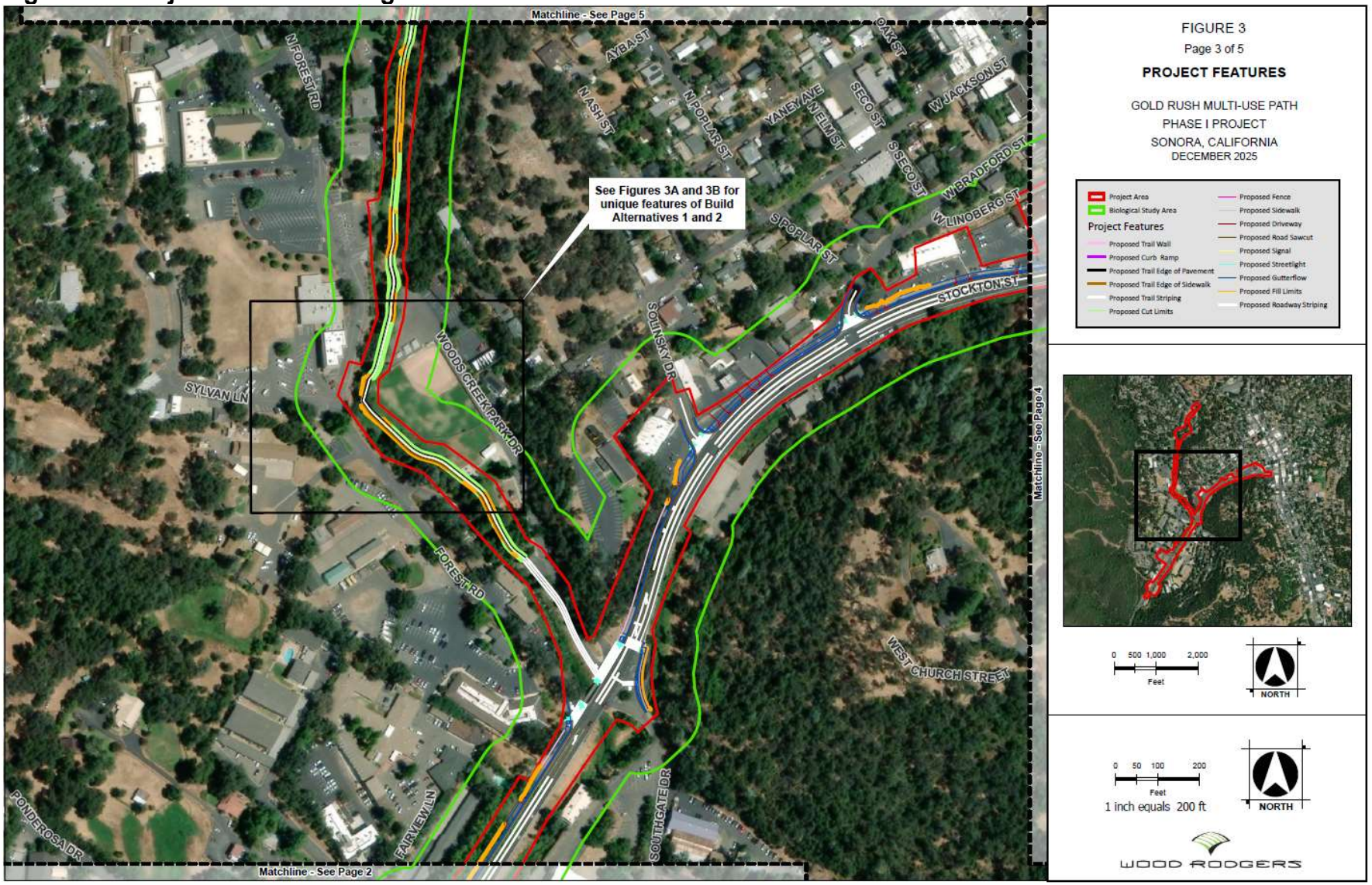


Figure 1-3 Project Features – Page 4 of 5



Figure 1-3 Project Features – Page 5 of 5

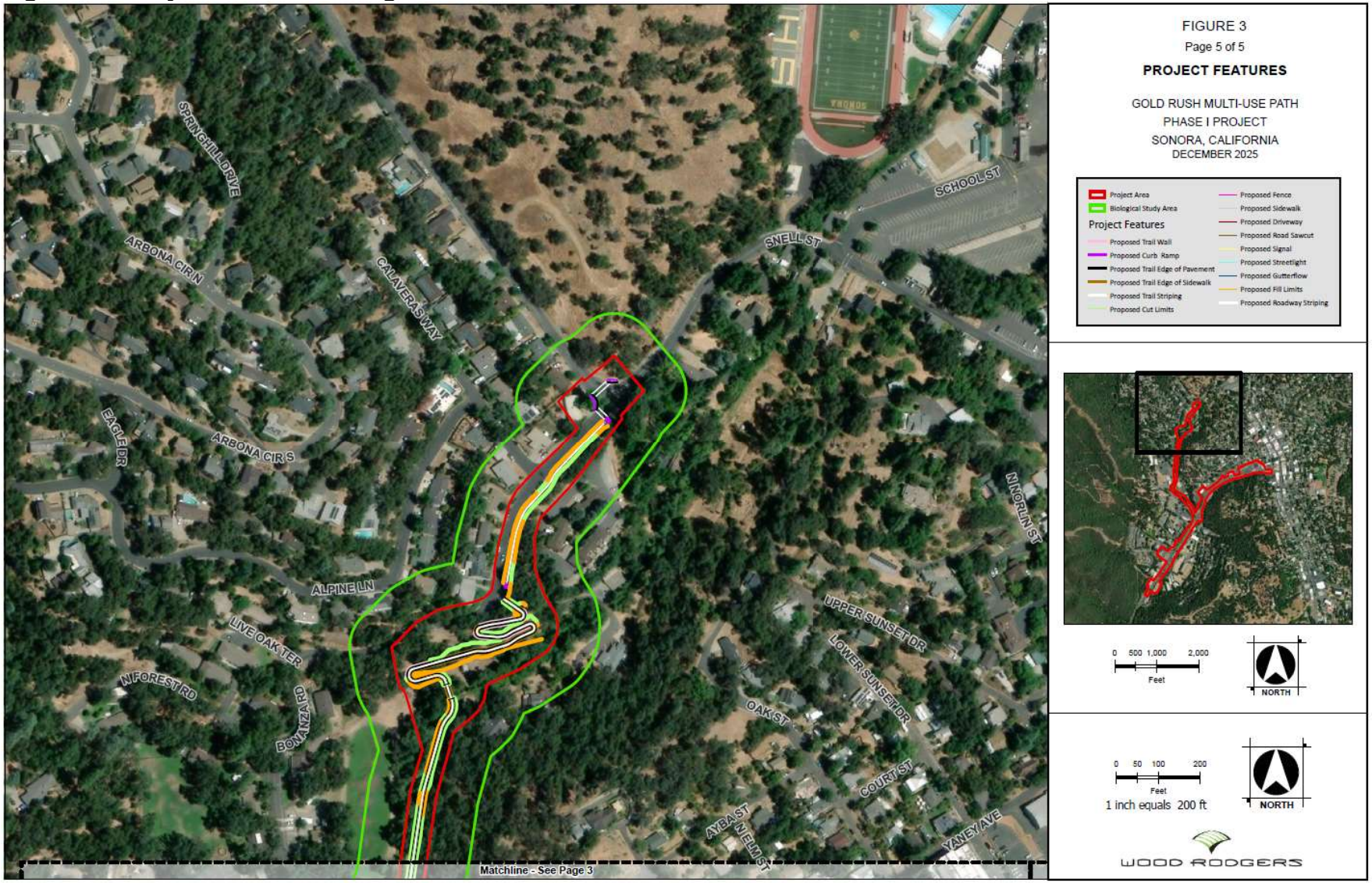
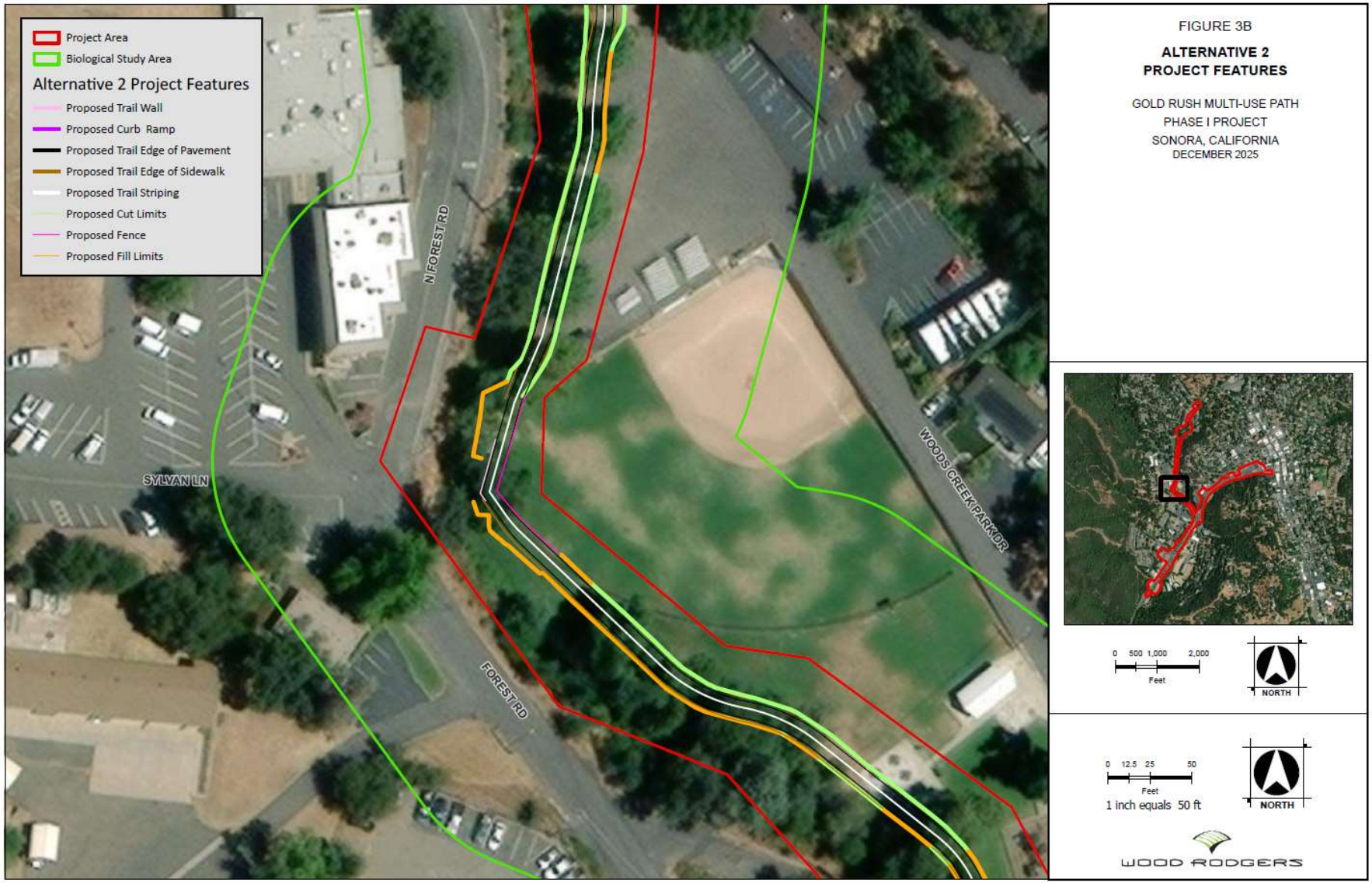


Figure 1-3A Alternative 1 Project Features



Figure 1-3B Alternative 2 Project Features



1.4 Project Alternatives

The project proposes two build alternatives and a no build alternative. These alternatives are discussed below.

1.4.1 Build Alternatives

This project contains a number of standardized project measures that are used on most, if not all, Caltrans projects and were not developed in response to any specific environmental impact resulting from the proposed project. These measures are listed later in this chapter under “Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in All Build Alternatives.”

Common Design Features of the Build Alternatives

Both build alternatives would construct a 1.5-mile multi-use trail in the city of Sonora along State Route 49. Existing utilities may be in conflict with the proposed project. If conflicts are identified, existing utilities would be relocated. Specifically, PG&E gas lines, City of Sonora water lines, and AT&T underground phone and fiber lines may require relocation. The proposed method of relocation would be open trenching with excavators or other similar excavation equipment.

Temporary construction easements may be needed at specific locations within the project area and would be determined during the design phase. Construction staging is expected to occur within Caltrans and City of Sonora right-of-way and adjacent privately owned parcels, where necessary. Permanent right-of-way acquisitions are anticipated. Anticipated right of way acquisition and temporary construction easements are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Anticipated Right of Way Acquisitions

APN	Total Parcel Area (Square Feet)	Fee Acquisition (Square Feet)	Permanent Easement (Square Feet)	Temporary Construction Easement (Square Feet)
001-120-019	51,111	0	6,776	0
001-120-030	626,189	0	31,591	0
002-010-071	133,369	0	7,166	0
002-010-072	31,583	0	394	0
001-131-001	6,031	0	387	0
001-230-017	65,063	0	1,927	0

001-230-026	22,686	0	1,048	0
001-230-030	13,092	0	95	0
001-240-006	22,568	92	0	49
001-280-010	5,472	0	0	306
002-010-080	75,837	1,486	0	324
002-210-014	68,809	4,674	0	809

The proposed work is discussed below, into three geographic segments. The project would be constructed in one phase.

South Green Street to Woods Creek Drive

This section of the trail would be constructed on the southbound side of State Route 49. For both alternatives, project improvements for this section include the following:

- Implementation of a typical landscape buffer between vehicle travel lanes and the new Class I path, from the First Sonora Shopping Center's western entrance to the State Route 49/Jackson Street intersection.
- Reconfiguration of the parking lot of the First Sonora Shopping Center.
- Installation of designated pedestrian and bicycle crossings at the State Route 49/Bradford Street intersection, and State Route 49/West Jackson Street intersection.
- Reconfiguration of State Route 49/Bradford Street and State Route 49/West Jackson Street intersections to standard single point intersections.
- Installation of a retaining wall west of West Jackson Street.
- Installation of a rapid flashing beacon crosswalk at the State Route 49/Woods Creek Drive/Southgate Drive intersection.

Woods Creek Drive to Motherlode Fairgrounds

This section of the trail would continue down the southbound side of State Route 49, where it would connect with an existing trail near the Motherlode Fairgrounds. Project improvements for this section include the following:

- Installation of designated pedestrian and bicycle crossings at the State Route 49/Fairview Lane intersection and State Route 49/Ponderosa Lane intersection.

- Installation of a rapid flashing beacon crosswalk at the State Route 49/Motherlode Fairgrounds trail intersection, approximately 900 feet southbound of the State Route 49/Ponderosa Lane intersection.

Woods Creek Drive to Snell Street

This section of the trail would extend through the western edge of Woods Creek Rotary Park, converging with the Dragoon Gulch Trailhead. The trail would then continue northbound, where it would connect with West Bonanza Road, and end at the West Bonanza Road/Snell Street intersection. Project improvements for this section include the following:

- Construction of a 50-foot by 14-foot full-span bridge over Woods Creek, just south of West Bonanza Road.

- Installation of a retaining wall for the switchback portion of the trail, between the new bridge and West Bonanza Road.

- Installation of two designated pedestrian and bicyclist crossings at the West Bonanza Road/Snell Street intersection.

Unique Features of the Build Alternatives

The following is a discussion of the unique features of the Build Alternatives. The major criteria utilized for alternative analysis include cost, impacts to recreational resources, and impacts to natural resources. Build Alternative 1 would involve lower costs but would require greater impacts to recreational resources. Build Alternative 2 would involve greater costs and greater impacts to natural resources, but reduced impacts to recreational resources. No costs and natural or recreational resource impacts are associated with the No-Build Alternative.

Alternative 1

Build Alternative 1 would consist of constructing the Woods Creek Drive to Snell Street segment of the trail, discussed above, through the edge of the existing baseball field in Woods Creek Rotary Park. This would include shifting the existing baseball field fencing into the field, to allow enough room for the Class I path to be constructed adjacent to Woods Creek. All other project components would be identical to Alternative 2. See Figure 3A. Alternative 1 Project Features.

Alternative 2

Build Alternative 2 would consist of reconstructing the edge of Woods Creek to construct the trail through the park without impacting the existing baseball field. A retaining wall would be constructed and earthen fill placed at the edge of the creek to provide proper trail width. All other project components would be identical to Alternative 1. See Figure 3B. Alternative 2 Project Features.

1.4.2 No-Build (No-Action) Alternative

The No-Build Alternative would result in no permanent infrastructure to improve pedestrian safety along State Route 49 and no advancements in pedestrian connectivity throughout the City would occur.

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

Both build alternatives include the following standardized measures that are included as part of the project description. Standardized measures (such as Best Management Practices) are those measures that are generally applied to most or all Caltrans projects. These standardized or pre-existing measures allow little discretion regarding their implementation and are not specific to the circumstances of a particular project. More information on each measure can be found in the applicable sections of Chapter 2.

- **AIR-1**: Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-9.02 Air Pollution Control
- **AIR-2**: Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 10-5 Dust Control
- **BIO-1**: Environmentally Sensitive Area Fencing
- **BIO-2**: Compliance with the Caltrans Construction Site Best Management Practice Manual
- **BIO-3**: Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-6.03 “Species Protection”
- **CR-1**: Inadvertent Discovery of Cultural Materials
- **CR-2**: Inadvertent Discovery of Human Remains
- **GHG-1**: Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 7-1.02A and 7-1.02C
- **GHG-2**: Caltrans Project-Level Measures to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions Related to Construction Activities
- **HAZ-1**: Evaluation of Concrete for Asbestos
- **HAZ-2**: Evaluation of Soil for Lead
- **HAZ-3**: Evaluation of Painted Hydrants for Lead
- **HAZ-4**: Handling and Disposal of Treated Wood Waste
- **HAZ-5**: Evaluation of Striping Material for Heavy Metals

- **WQ-1**: Compliance with Caltrans Statewide National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit (Order 2022-0033-DWG)
- **WQ-2**: Compliance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Construction General Permit (Order 2022-0057-DWQ).
- **WQ-3**: Preparation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan
- **WQ-4**: Implementation of Design Pollution Best Management Practices
- **WQ-5**: Regulatory Permits for Impacts to Waters
- **NOI-1**: Caltrans Standard Specification and Construction Best Management Practices for Noise

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
United States Army Corps of Engineers	Clean Water Act Section 404	To be obtained prior to construction
Regional Water Quality Control Board	Clean Water Act Section 401	To be obtained prior to construction
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement	To be obtained prior to construction
California Department of Transportation	Statewide National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System	To be obtained prior to construction

Agency	Permit/Approval	Status
	Permit (Order 2022-033-DWQ) Compliance	
State Water Resources Control Board	Construction General Permit (Order 2022-0057-DWQ) Compliance	To be obtained prior to construction

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 information in the project's Minor Level Visual Impact Assessment, dated May 22, 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?	**No Impact**
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	**Less Than Significant Impact**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Aesthetics
c) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from a publicly accessible vantage point.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	**Less Than Significant Impact**

Affected Environment

A Minor Level Visual Impact Assessment (Visual Impact Assessment; Wood Rodgers 2026a) was prepared for the project to analyze existing visual conditions in the project vicinity, potential visual effects resulting from project implementation, and applicable measures to reduce aesthetic impacts. The following is a summary of the findings of the Visual Impact Assessment.

The project area is located within the City of Sonora, Tuolumne County, and follows an east to west orientation along State Route 49, with a section branching off northerly at Woods Creek Road, through to West Bonanza Road, and ending at the Snell Street intersection. The project occurs within the City of Sonora in Tuolumne County, in the Sierran Steppe – Mixed Forest – Coniferous Forest – Alpine Meadow Province, Sierra Nevada Foothills and Sierra Nevada Sections, and ecological subsections 261Fb (Lower Foothills Metamorphic Belt) and 261Eg (Upper Foothills Metamorphic Belt) of California (USDA 2007). The landscape is characterized by a mix of urban and woodland areas.

A key view is defined by Caltrans as a “location from which a viewer (traveler or neighbor) can see either iconic or representative landscapes, with or without the highway, of the project corridor. Usually there is at least one key view for each landscape unit” (Caltrans 2023). The project corridor contains two dominant landscape units: State Route 49 and surrounding urban areas, and Woods Creek Rotary Park and surrounding woodland and riverine habitats. The Visual Impact Assessment identified a total of four key views, two key views for each landscape unit. Along the State Route 49 corridor, key viewpoints of the urban landscape include views of disturbed roadside vegetation along the intersection of State Route 49 and Southgate Drive, as well as views of a concrete lined channel adjacent to Sonora Creek near the

intersection of State Route 49 and West Jackson Street. Along Woods Creek, key viewpoints include views of valley oak woodland south of West Bonanza Road, as well as views of Woods Creek and the surrounding woodland north of Woods Creek Rotary Park along the existing unpaved path. Key views are represented in Photographs 1 through 4 within Appendix B of the Visual Impact Assessment (Volume 2).

There are no officially designated State Scenic Highways within or near the project site. California State Route 49 is listed as an eligible State Scenic Highway throughout the entire project corridor. A highway may be considered scenic depending on how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler's enjoyment of the view. Factors that may support the eligibility of State Route 49 for designation as a State Scenic Highway include the presence of native oak woodlands, roadside creeks and reservoirs, and picturesque and historic gold rush towns along the route. Within the project area, State Route 49 is predominantly surrounded by urban buildings and disturbed or ornamental vegetation within the downtown district of Sonora. No specific scenic resources are present within this segment of State Route 49.

Environmental Consequences

Project effects related to aesthetics for both Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2 are similar based on the proposed project footprints. The following discussions of potential effects are combined and applicable for both build alternatives. The No-Build Alternative would have no impact related to aesthetics. An analysis of project effects pursuant to the CEQA Appendix G Checklist is provided below.

a) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

No Impact. No formal or informal scenic vistas are present in the project corridor or in view of the corridor. Therefore, no impact would occur and no mitigation is required.

b) Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

Less Than Significant Impact. State Route 49 is considered eligible for listing as a State Scenic Highway. The project would construct a multi-use bicycle and pedestrian trail along the existing State Route 49. The project would install new street lighting along State Route 49, but the new lighting is anticipated to be visually consistent with existing lighting in the surrounding urban landscape. Damage to trees or historic buildings adjacent to State Route 49 would not occur.

The build alternatives would include temporary visual impacts due to project construction. Equipment staging may occur along State Route 49 or in areas visible from the roadway, which may temporarily alter views for motorists and pedestrians. Vegetation removal may also be required adjacent to However, construction-related visual impacts would be short-term, and the visual environment would be returned to pre-project or better conditions. All temporary impact areas will be revegetated to ensure color elements and other visual characteristics are maintained following project completion. Construction would additionally be limited to permissible daytime hours to avoid adverse impacts to nighttime views associated with construction lighting.

The project would not substantially damage scenic resources within a state scenic highway, and impacts would be considered less than significant.

c) Would the project, in nonurbanized 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 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. The proposed project would construct a multi-use path adjacent to the existing State Route 49 and within previously disturbed areas along Woods Creek; therefore, the project would be highly compatible with the existing conditions in the area. The multi-use path and associated Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant features, sidewalk, and street lighting would not degrade the existing visual character or quality of the project site.

The project would potentially remove some mature oak trees within valley oak woodland habitats, which could alter the existing visual character for the public. The area in which tree removal would occur is located on a hillslope and is not directly visible from residences along Bonanza Road. Furthermore, vegetation removal may be required adjacent to State Route 49 and within Woods Creek Rotary Park to facilitate construction of the multi-use path. However, construction-related visual impacts would be short-term, and the visual environment would be returned to pre-project or better conditions. All temporary impact areas will be revegetated to ensure color elements and other visual characteristics are maintained following project completion.

No substantial degradation of the existing visual character or quality of public views would occur. Therefore, project impacts would be less than significant and no mitigation is required.

d) Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

Less Than Significant Impact. In total, the project would install 15 streetlights along the project corridor, six of which would replace existing streetlights. Additionally, the project would install four rapid flashing pedestrian beacons at the State Route 49/Woods Creek Drive/Southgate Drive intersection and the State Route 49/Motherlode Fairgrounds trail intersection. All new light sources proposed by the project would be installed along State Route 49, where commercial land uses and proximity to downtown Sonora already contribute to high levels of light pollution. No new lighting would be installed within residential areas. A substantial increase of light or glare would not occur, and new sources of light in correlation with the existing light features along the project corridor would not cause adverse effects for day or nighttime views. Additionally, construction would additionally be limited to permissible daytime hours to avoid adverse impacts to nighttime views associated with construction lighting. Therefore, project effects would be considered less than significant.

Standard Measures/Project Features

The following standard measures and best management practices would be incorporated into the project features to reduce and control aesthetic impacts during construction:

AES-1: Landscape architecture considerations shall be implemented as directed by the Caltrans Highway Design Manual, Chapter 900, and the Caltrans Landscape Architecture PS&E Guide. As such, any highway planting, lighting plans, and aesthetic treatment would be incorporated into the project as appropriate.

AES-2: Caltrans Standard Specifications (2022) “Erosion Control” would be followed during construction. At the conclusion of construction, areas of bare soil shall be hydroseeded with native seed mix to prevent or at least minimize erosion. Hydroseeding would follow Standard Special Provision 21-2.03D for Erosion Control (Hydroseed).

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Potential less than significant impacts to aesthetic resources in the project area would be further avoided or minimized with the following measures:

AES-3: Vegetation clearing would only occur within the delineated project boundaries in an effort to minimize impacts. Trees located in areas along the edge of the construction zone would be trimmed whenever possible and only those trees that lie within the active construction areas would be removed.

AES-4: All disturbed areas including staging of vehicles and equipment would be restored to pre-construction contours and revegetated, either through hydroseeding or other means, with native species.

AES-5: Where feasible, construction lighting would be limited to within the area of work.

AES-6: The contractor would be required to maintain good housekeeping in and around construction sites, staging areas, and equipment storage areas.

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.

No agricultural lands designated by the California Department of Conservation or Williamson Act-contracted lands are present within the project area. Additionally, according to a review of aerial imagery and general plan zoning maps, there is no 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)) within the project corridor. Considering this information, 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**

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

Considering information in the project's Air Quality Memorandum, dated May 15, 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?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	**Less Than Significant Impact**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Air Quality
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	**Less Than Significant Impact**

Affected Environment

An Air Quality Memorandum (Caltrans 2026) was prepared for the project to analyze transportation conformity and identify applicable emission reduction measures. The project, located within Tuolumne County, is situated in the Mountain Counties Air Basin and is subject to the Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District requirements and regulations.

The California Air Resources Board is required to designate areas of the state as attainment, non-attainment, or unclassified for any state standard. An "attainment" designation for an area signifies that pollutant concentrations do not violate the standard for that pollutant in that area. A "non-attainment" designation indicates that a pollutant concentration violated the standard at least once within a calendar year. The area air quality attainment status of Tuolumne County for National Ambient Air Quality Standards and California Ambient Air Quality Standards is shown below in Table 3.

Table 2. National Ambiant Air Quality Standards and California Ambiant Air Quality Standards Attainment Status for Tuolumne County

Pollutant	Federal Standards	State Standards
Ozone – 8-Hour	Nonattainment	Nonattainment
PM_{10}	Unclassified/Attainment	Unclassified
$PM_{2.5}$	Unclassified/Attainment	Unclassified
Carbon Monoxide	Unclassified/Attainment	Attainment
Nitrogen Dioxide	Unclassified/Attainment	Attainment
Sulfur Dioxide	Attainment/Unclassified	Attainment
Sulfates	No Federal Standard	Attainment
Lead	Unclassified/Attainment	Attainment
Hydrogen Sulfide	No Federal Standard	Unclassified
Visibility Reducing Particles	No Federal Standard	Unclassified

Sources: California Air Resources Board 2018

Environmental Consequences

Project effects related to air quality for both Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2 are similar based on the proposed project footprints. The following discussions of potential effects are combined and applicable for both build alternatives. The No-Build Alternative would have no impact related to air quality. An analysis of project effects pursuant to the CEQA Appendix G Checklist is provided below.

a) Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

No Impact. The proposed alternatives would not result in changes to the traffic volume, fleet mix, speed, location of existing facility or any other factor that would cause an increase in emissions relative to the no build alternative; therefore, this project would not cause an increase in operational emissions.

The project is not capacity increasing and would not add additional lanes. The project would not result in additional trips or change the speed or alignment of the roadway. Long-term operational pollutant emissions would not be predicted to increase from the project.

According to 40 CFR Section 93.126, the proposed project is exempt from the requirement to determine conformity under Table 2 – “Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities”. Such projects may proceed toward implementation even in the absence of a conforming transportation plan and Transportation Improvement Program. Therefore, the project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of long-term federal, state or regional air quality plans, and no further analysis is required. No mitigation is required.

b) Would the project 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?

Less Than Significant Impact. A summary of the existing attainment status of criteria pollutants in Tuolumne County is provided in Table 3. Operational and construction-related emissions of criteria pollutants are analyzed below.

Operational Emissions

The project is non-capacity increasing and would include new bicycle and pedestrian facilities, which would not add additional vehicular travel lanes. This would not result in additional trips or change the speed or alignment of the roadway. As such, long-term operational emissions are not projected to increase from the project.

Construction Emissions

Construction activities associated with both project alternatives would result in temporary incremental increases in air pollutants, such as ozone precursors

and particulate matter due to operation of gas-powered equipment and earth moving activities.

To estimate construction-related air quality impacts, the Caltrans Construction Emissions Tool was used. Quantities of the following pollutants were calculated: total organic gases, reactive organic gases, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, inhalable particulate matter (particulate matter 10 and particulate matter 2.5), carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, black carbon, hydrofluorocarbons, and carbon dioxide equivalents. Table 4 below provides a summary of projected pollutant emissions by construction phase. See Section 2.1.8 for a summary of greenhouse gas emissions generated by the CAL-CET.

Table 3. Caltrans Construction Emissions Tool Emissions Summary by Construction Phase

Work Type	Total Organic Gases (Tons)	Reactive Organic Gases (Tons)	Carbon Monoxide (Tons)	Nitrogen Oxides (Tons)	Particulate Matter 10 (Tons)	Particulate Matter 2.5 (Tons)
Land Clearing and Grubbing	0.002	0.002	0.010	0.011	0.043	0.005
Roadway Excavation and Removal	0.025	0.023	0.156	0.159	0.057	0.016
Structural Excavation and Removal	0.005	0.005	0.015	0.027	0.047	0.006
Base/ Subbase/ Imported Borrow	0.020	0.018	0.135	0.128	0.055	0.014
Structure Concrete	0.014	0.014	0.043	0.067	0.004	0.004
Paving	0.116	0.014	0.070	0.167	0.012	0.011
Drainage/ Environment/ Landscaping	0.011	0.014	0.032	0.069	0.005	0.005
Traffic Signalization/	0.007	0.007	0.033	0.051	0.003	0.003

Work Type	Total Organic Gases (Tons)	Reactive Organic Gases (Tons)	Carbon Monoxide (Tons)	Nitrogen Oxides (Tons)	Particulate Matter 10 (Tons)	Particulate Matter 2.5 (Tons)
Signage/ Striping/ Painting						
Other Operation	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total Emissions	0.201	0.194	0.494	0.676	0.226	0.065

The CEQA encourages public agencies to adopt thresholds of significance for determining whether projects have significant adverse impacts. Caltrans does not adopt thresholds of significance; however, the Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District has established the following project-generated emissions thresholds for the following pollutants:

- Reactive Organic Gases – 1,000 pounds/day or 100 tons per year.
- Oxides of Nitrogen – 1,000 pounds/day or 100 tons per year.
- Particulate Matter – 1,000 pounds/day or 100 tons per year.
- Carbon Monoxide – 1,000 pounds/day or 100 tons per year.

Table 5 below provides a comparison of the Caltrans Construction Emissions Tool results for the project, against the Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District project-level thresholds for reactive organic gases, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter 10, and carbon monoxide.

Table 4. Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District Thresholds for Criteria Pollutants of Concern

Pollutant	Total Projected Emissions (Tons)	Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District Threshold of Significance (Tons per Year)	Exceeds Threshold?
Reactive Organic Gases	0.194	100	No
Carbon Monoxide	0.494	100	No

Pollutant	Total Projected Emissions (Tons)	Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District Threshold of Significance (Tons per Year)	Exceeds Threshold?
Nitrogen Oxides	0.676	100	No
Particulate Matter10	0.226	100	No

Construction emissions would not exceed Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District thresholds of significance; however, the project would implement construction best management practices to minimize air quality impacts within surrounding residential and commercial areas. The project contractor would be required to implement standard dust control best management practices to prevent the project from creating a nuisance as described in Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District Rule 205.

Without control, dust emissions from grading, trenching, or land clearing can create nuisances or localized health impacts. The Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District requires that dust emissions be prevented from creating a nuisance to surrounding properties as regulated under the Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District Rule 205, Nuisance. Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District Rule 205 defines “Nuisance” as the following:

> Nuisance. A person shall not discharge from any source whatsoever such quantities of air contaminants or other material which cause injury, detriment, nuisance, or annoyance to any considerable number of persons, or to the public, or which endanger the comfort, repose, health or safety of any such persons, or the public, or which cause, or have a natural tendency to cause injury or damage to business or property.

Even projects not exceeding Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District particulate matter thresholds should implement best management practices to reduce dust emissions and avoid localized health impacts. Despite this variability in emissions, experience has shown that there are several control measures that can be reasonably implemented to significantly reduce construction fugitive dust PM10 emissions. Common measures include watering, chemical stabilization of soils or stockpiles, and reducing surface wind speeds with windbreaks.

As shown in Table 5, the project would not exceed thresholds of significance within the local air quality management district and would not cause

cumulatively considerable net increases of criteria pollutants. The project would emit less than one ton per year of any criteria pollutant; therefore, the project is exempt from the requirement to obtain a Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District Authority to Construct Permit under Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District Regulation IV, Rule 402. To further minimize particulate matter 10 emissions in compliance with Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District guidelines and Rule 205, the project would implement construction dust control best management practices. With implementation of these project features, project impacts relating to the emission of pollutants would be less than significant and no mitigation is required.

c) Would the project expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

Less Than Significant Impact. Under CEQA sensitive receptors are generally defined as a location where human populations, especially children, seniors, or sick persons are found. Examples of sensitive receptor locations are residences, hospitals, and schools. The project would occur within Woods Creek Rotary Park and adjacent to residences along West Bonanza Road and Snell Street. The nearest residence is approximately 65 feet north of the proposed trail location.

According to the Caltrans Construction Emissions Tool the proposed alternatives would not generate construction emissions that would exceed Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District thresholds of significance. However, the project would cause temporary and intermittent construction and dust emissions which could cause nuisance effects to sensitive receptors. The proposed project would not generate any substantial pollutant concentrations, and with the implementation of best management practices, temporary incremental increases of air pollutants would be avoided and minimized in accordance with Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District Rule 205. Therefore, the project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. As such, impacts related to this threshold would be less than significant and no mitigation is required.

d) Would the project result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

Less Than Significant Impact. While offensive odors rarely cause any physical harm, they can be very unpleasant, and lead to considerable distress among the public that often generates citizen complaints to local governments and the Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District. The general nuisance rule, Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District Rule 205, is the basis for this threshold. A project may reasonably be expected to have a significant adverse odor impact where it: 1) generates odorous emissions in such quantities as to cause detriment, nuisance, or annoyance to any considerable number of persons or to the public; 2) if it endangers the comfort, repose,

health, or safety of any such person or the public; or 3) if it causes, or has a natural tendency to cause, injury or damage to business or property.

The proposed project would not generate any substantial pollutant concentrations. Use of diesel-fueled equipment and roadway paving activities during construction would be anticipated to generate odorous emissions when experienced in close range. However, these activities would be temporary and would cease upon completion of construction. Furthermore, with the implementation of best management practices, temporary incremental increases of air pollutants that may cause nuisance odors would be avoided and minimized in accordance with Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District Rule 205. Therefore, the project would not adversely affect a substantial number of people due to air quality emissions. As such, impacts related to this threshold would be less than significant and no mitigation is required.

Standard Measures/Project Features

The following standard measures and best management practices would be incorporated into the project features to reduce and control emission impacts during construction:

AIR-1: Implement Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-9.02 Air Pollution Control where applicable to avoid and minimize criteria pollutant emissions.

AIR-2: Implement Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 10-5 Dust Control where applicable to avoid and minimize the generation of dust and particulate matter.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures relating to air quality are required for the proposed project.

2.1.4 Biological Resources

Considering information in the project's Natural Environment Study – Minimal Impacts, dated March 27, 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?	**No Impact**
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	**No Impact**
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	**No Impact**
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	**No Impact**

Affected Environment

A Natural Environment Study - Minimal Impacts (Natural Environment Study – Minimal Impacts; Wood Rodgers 2026b) was prepared for the project to identify any special-status wildlife or plant species, and any sensitive natural communities (including wetlands) that have the potential to occur on or in the vicinity of the project site. The findings of the Natural Environment Study – Minimal Impacts are summarized below.

The project occurs within the City of Sonora in Tuolumne County, in the Sierran Steppe – Mixed Forest – Coniferous Forest – Alpine Meadow Province, Sierra Nevada Foothills and Sierra Nevada Sections, and ecological subsections 261Fb (Lower Foothills Metamorphic Belt) and 261Eg (Upper Foothills Metamorphic Belt) of California (USDA 2007). The region receives an average of 34.71 inches of precipitation annually in the form of rain. The average annual high temperature is 72 degrees Fahrenheit, and average annual low temperature is 43 degrees Fahrenheit (U.S. Climate Data 2026).

The project area is dominated by developed habitats, consisting of urban and disturbed/ruderal cover classes. Urban habitats are defined by man-made structures within residential, commercial, and industrial areas, as well as paved roadways and gravel roadside shoulders. Within the project vicinity, urban areas included ornamental and other non-native and invasive plant species, with large, developed areas lacking vegetation. Similarly, disturbed/ruderal land cover is defined as areas that have been subject to previous or ongoing disturbances such as roadsides, roadside drainages, and other anthropogenic disturbances. These cover classes are considered to have a low habitat value and are not anticipated to support special-status species.

Natural vegetation communities within the project area include valley oak woodland, blue oak-foothill pine, and valley foothill riparian habitats. Valley oak woodland is present north of Woods Creek Rotary Park and is dominated by valley oak and live oak, with an understory of native and non-native shrubs, grasses, and forbs. Blue oak-foothill pine communities are defined as a mix of hardwoods, conifers, and shrubs. This habitat is dominated by blue oak, interior live oak, foothill pine, and California buckeye and is present on hill slopes surrounding State Route 49 and south of Downtown Sonora. Valley foothill riparian communities typically occur surrounding rivers and creeks and are comprised of Fremont cottonwood, California sycamore, and valley oak, with a subcanopy dominated by white alder, boxelder, and Oregon ash. Throughout the majority of the project area, Woods Creek and Sonora Creek lack riparian vegetation, but this habitat is present surrounding Woods Creek in the southern portion of the biological study area, adjacent to the Motherlode Fairgrounds. These vegetation communities provide a greater habitat value for wildlife; however, these natural habitats are interspersed with urban areas within the City and during field surveys, these communities were observed to include invasive species, litter, and other debris and are considered to be heavily affected by human activity.

Aquatic resources within the project vicinity include Woods Creek and Sonora Creek, both perennial streams (flowing year-round) with a rocky substrate and fast, clear flows. Both Woods Creek and Sonora Creek maintain a direct, continuous surface connection with Don Pedro Reservoir and would be considered Waters of the United States, Waters of the State, and California

Department of Fish and Wildlife jurisdictional habitat. Valley foothill riparian habitat within the project area would not be considered jurisdictional Waters of the United States or Waters of the State; however, this community would be considered fish and wildlife habitat under the jurisdiction of, pursuant to California Fish and Game Code Section 1600.

Prior to field work, literature research was conducted through the United States Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) official species list generator (United States Fish and Wildlife Service 2026), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Marine Fisheries Service West Coast Region California Species List Tool (National Marine Fisheries Service 2026), the California Department of Fish and Wildlife California Natural Diversity Database (California Natural Diversity Database; California Department of Fish and Wildlife 2026b), and the California Native Plant Society Electronic Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants (California Native Plant Society 2026). Literature and database searches were completed to identify habitats and special-status species that have the potential to occur in the project vicinity. These searches identified 49 species of special concern with potential to occur in the vicinity of the project site.

Field surveys, habitat assessments, and analyses of special status species occurrences were conducted to determine the potential for species to occur within the biological study area. Field surveys were conducted on February 21, 2025, by Wood Rodgers biologists Eralise Spokely and Emma Deal. Field surveys included walking meandering transects through the entire biological study area, observing vegetation communities, compiling notes on observed flora and fauna, and assessing the potential for existing habitat to support sensitive plants and wildlife. After biological surveys were conducted, the potential for species to occur within the biological study area was determined by analyzing the habitat requirements for each species, comparing them to available habitat within the biological study area, and analyzing the regional occurrences of the species. Based on these analyses, it was determined that no special status plant species have the potential to occur, and only one special status wildlife species, northwestern pond turtle, would have the potential to occur within the biological study area.

Habitat for the following species is present in the project area: foothill yellow-legged frog – south Sierra, monarch butterfly, coast horned lizard, beaked clarkia, forked hareleaf, grassland suncup, Nissenan manzanita, shaggyhair lupine, spiny-sepaled button-celery, Tuolumne button-celery, Tuolumne fawn lily, Tuolumne iris, and veiny monardella. Although habitat is present in the area, these species have been presumed absent due to a lack of physical observation in the project area during field surveys, a lack of recent documented occurrences in the area, or the distance of documented occurrences. The project area does not contain suitable habitat for the remaining 35 species and these species have been presumed absent. An

analysis of all species identified during literature research is provided in the project's Natural Environment Study – Minimal Impacts.

Northwestern pond turtle is a California Department of Fish and Wildlife Species of Special Concern and is a proposed threatened species under the Federal Endangered Species Act. Habitat for the species includes rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, wetlands, reservoirs, brackish estuaries, canals, and sewage ponds. The species requires basking sites such as rocks, logs, or emergent vegetation, and consequently avoids open waters lacking these features. Nesting sites are located in dry upland areas dominated by grasses and forbs, located an average of 92 feet from aquatic areas. Northwestern pond turtles are threatened by a variety of native and non-native predators, including raccoons, coyotes, bullfrogs, and largemouth bass, as well as competition from invasive species such as red-eared sliders. Additional causes of mortality can include drought, contaminants, disease, and parasites.

Woods Creek and Sonora Creek would provide marginally suitable habitat for northwestern pond turtle due to the urban context of the portions of these creeks within the biological study area. The nearest recent California Natural Diversity Database occurrence of the species was in 2016, located approximately 16.2 miles south of the project area; however, the project area is located within the species' range designated by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Furthermore, there are local observations of the species within Sonora Creek, as well as within Woods Creek between the cities of Sonora and Columbia. These observations are anecdotal; therefore, the species is considered to have a low potential to occur within Woods and Sonora creeks within the project area. No northwestern pond turtles were observed during February 2025 surveys.

Environmental Consequences

An analysis of project effects pursuant to the CEQA Appendix G Checklist is provided below.

a) Would the project 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 NOAA Fisheries?

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated. No special status plant species were determined to have the potential to occur within the biological study area, therefore, no project related impacts to special status plant species would be anticipated. Only one special-status animal species, the northwestern pond turtle, is expected to occur in the project area.

Project Effects to Northwestern Pond Turtle

Project impacts to potentially suitable northwestern pond turtle habitat in Woods Creek are anticipated under both build alternatives. Impacts to northwestern pond turtle habitat in Sonora Creek south of State Route 49 would be fully avoided. No effects to northwestern pond turtle individuals, nests, or habitats would occur under the No-Build Alternative.

Build Alternative 1

Both Build Alternatives would construct a 50' by 14' single-span bridge over Woods Creek, just south of West Bonanza Road. The construction of the bridge structure would impact approximately 0.004 acres of Woods Creek.

Under Build Alternative 1, the fence line of the existing baseball field at Woods Creek Rotary Park would be moved east into the field to accommodate the 14-foot width of the proposed multi-use path. This would allow the project to fully avoid direct impacts to potential northwestern pond turtle habitat in Woods Creek adjacent to the baseball field. Therefore, Build Alternative 1 would result in 0.004 acres of permanent impacts to northwestern pond turtle riverine habitat. Approximately 0.570 acres of potentially suitable northwestern pond turtle upland habitat in urban (Woods Creek Rotary Park) and valley oak woodland communities would also be impacted under Build Alternative 1.

Build Alternative 2

Both Build Alternatives would construct a 50' by 14' full-span bridge over Woods Creek, just south of West Bonanza Road. The construction of the bridge structure would impact 0.004 acres of Woods Creek.

In lieu of displacing the existing baseball field fencing within Woods Creek Rotary Park, Build Alternative 2 would place fill within, and construct a retaining wall along the eastern bank of Woods Creek to accommodate 14-foot width of the multi-use path. The placement of fill would result in an additional 0.012 acres of impacts to habitat within the creek. Therefore, approximately 0.016 acres of northwestern pond turtle riverine habitat would be permanently impacted under Build Alternative 2. Approximately 0.570 acres of potentially suitable northwestern pond turtle upland habitat in urban (Woods Creek Rotary Park) and valley oak woodland communities would also be impacted under Build Alternative 2.

Northwestern pond turtle is considered to have a low potential to occur within the project area, and the project would result in minor impacts to marginal northwestern pond turtle habitats. To ensure no direct effects to northwestern pond turtle occur as a result of project implementation, measure BIO-4 would be included, which would require species-specific surveys to be conducted adjacent to Woods Creek prior to initial ground disturbance in the area. Compensatory mitigation would be provided for aquatic habitat impacts

through the implementation of measure BIO-11. With the inclusion of these measures, no take of northwestern pond turtle is anticipated under the build alternatives.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service is currently not providing conference opinions for northwestern pond turtle (based on the timing of this study). However, given that northwestern turtle is proposed to be listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act, Section 7 consultation would be required with United States Fish and Wildlife Service upon official listing of the species. Based on the small impact area and the distance from the nearest confirmed records, few, if any individuals are expected to be at risk of effects from the project. Although no determination would be made for purposes of Section 7 at this time, once officially listed under the Endangered Species Act, the determination for northwestern pond turtle is proposed to be "may affect, not likely to adversely affect."

Project Effects to Migratory Birds

During biological surveys, habitat for nesting birds was identified within the biological study area. Therefore, native birds, protected under the Migratory Birds Treaty Act and similar provisions under California Fish and Game Code, have the potential to nest within the biological study area. Avoidance and minimization measure BIO-10 has been incorporated into the project to minimize potential impacts to migratory birds.

In summary, project-related impacts to special status species would be considered less than significant with implementation of avoidance and minimization measures BIO-4 and BIO-10, and mitigation measure BIO-11.

b) Would the project 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 with Mitigation. Preliminary jurisdictional delineations were conducted by Wood Rodgers biologists Eralise Spokely and Emma Deal on February 21, 2025, to identify jurisdictional aquatic resources present within the biological study area. Observed ordinary high water mark and wetland delineation sample points were mapped in the field with a R1 Global Navigation Satellite System Receiver and ArcGIS software.

Valley Foothill Riparian

All valley foothill riparian habitats identified during biological surveys were located outside of the project impact area. Both build alternatives would avoid all impacts within this sensitive natural community.

Riverine (Woods Creek and Sonora Creek)

Build Alternative 1

No impacts to Woods Creek or Sonora Creek would occur along State Route 49 as construction would be confined to the existing roadway. Both build alternatives would construct a 50' by 14' single-span bridge over Woods Creek, just south of West Bonanza Road. The construction of the bridge structure would impact approximately 0.004 acres of Woods Creek.

Under Build Alternative 1, the fence line of the existing baseball field at Woods Creek Rotary Park would be moved east into the field to accommodate the 14-foot width of the proposed multi-use path. This would allow the project to fully avoid direct impacts to Woods Creek adjacent to the baseball field. Therefore, Build Alternative 1 would result in 0.004 acres of permanent impacts to jurisdictional non-wetland Waters of the United States, Waters of the State, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife habitat (See Table 6).

Build Alternative 2

No impacts to Sonora Creek would occur as construction along State Route 49 would be confined to the existing roadway. Both build alternatives would construct a 50' by 14' full-span bridge over Woods Creek, just south of West Bonanza Road. The construction of the bridge structure would impact 0.004 acres of Woods Creek.

In lieu of displacing the existing baseball field fencing within Woods Creek Rotary Park, Build Alternative 2 would place fill within, and construct a retaining wall along the eastern bank of Woods Creek to accommodate the 14-foot width of the multi-use path. The fill and retaining wall would result in an additional 0.012 acres of impacts to the creek. Therefore, approximately 0.016 acres of jurisdictional non-wetland Waters of the United States, Waters of the State, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife habitat would be permanently impacted under Build Alternative 2 (See Table 6).

Table 5. Impacts to Jurisdictional Aquatic Resources

Waterbodies	Impacts – No-Build Alternative (acres)	Impacts – Build Alternative 1 (acres)	Impacts – Build Alternative 2 (acres)
Non-Wetland Waters of the United States	0	0.004	0.016

Waters of the State	0	0.004	0.016
California Department of Fish and Wildlife Jurisdictional Habitat	0	0.004	0.016
Total	0	0.004	0.016

Temporary access areas would occur within disturbed areas or non-sensitive natural communities. No temporary impacts to jurisdictional aquatic resources are anticipated under either Build Alternative.

In addition to implementing standard measure BIO-1, the project would provide compensatory mitigation for permanent effects to result in no net loss of aquatic resources or habitat, as described in BIO-11. Measure BIO-11 is proposed by the project to provide compensatory mitigation requirements for permanent impacts to jurisdictional resources. Consultation efforts with the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife through Section 404, Section 401, and Section 1602 permitting processes would determine final mitigation ratios for permanent impacts to Waters of the United States, Waters of the State, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife waters. As impacts to aquatic resources would occur under Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2, regulatory permits and avoidance and minimization measures for waters are applicable for both build alternatives.

Permits Required for Project Impacts to Sensitive Natural Communities

Both build alternatives would result in impacts to jurisdictional aquatic resources, which are considered sensitive natural communities. Consequently, the project would be required to obtain the following federal and state regulatory approvals prior to construction of either build alternative:

Section 404 Permit

For permanent impacts to Waters of the United States, the project proposes to obtain coverage from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for discharges of dredged or fill material into Waters of the United States, pursuant to Clean Water Act Section 404 (33 U.S.C. 1344). All applicable measures of the 404 permit would be implemented by the project proponent.

Section 401 Water Quality Certification

For permanent impacts to Waters of the State, the project would apply for a Section 401 Water Quality Certification from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, pursuant to Clean Water Act Section 401 and

the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act. The project would comply with the guidelines and application procedures provided in the State Wetland Definition and Procedures for Discharges of Dredged or Fill Materials to Waters of the State (2019), issued by the State Water Resources Control Board.

Section 1602 Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement

Prior to construction, the project proponent shall secure a Section 1602 Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. All avoidance, minimization, and conservation measures for protection of wildlife habitat shall be implemented by the project proponent.

c) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

No Impact. The biological study area does not include any marshes, vernal pools, or coastal zones, or other state or federally protected wetlands, as determined by the aquatic resource delineation completed as part of the Natural Environment Study – Minimal Impact surveys. Therefore, no impact to wetlands would occur, and no mitigation is required.

d) Would the project 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. According to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Biogeographic Information and Observation System, the biological study area lies within a Terrestrial Connectivity, Area of Conservation Emphasis Level 3, designated as an area of “Connections with Implementation Flexibility” (California Department of Fish and Wildlife Biogeographic 2026a). Although the project would occur within a Level 3 hexagon, the project would occur in a fully developed area. The proposed project would not include any permanent impoundments or barriers to native wildlife migration and is not anticipated to impact riparian habitats outside of the project impact area. Further, the project would not alter traffic flows in a manner that would substantially alter wildlife movement or wildlife mortality. Therefore, no impact would occur related to this threshold and no mitigation is required.

e) Would the project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

No Impact. The project is anticipated to require the removal of vegetation and native oak trees. The City of Sonora does not have a defined tree preservation policy or ordinance, and the hillside preservation ordinance that manages heritage trees applies only to residential development and minor

land divisions. Therefore, no impact would occur relating to this threshold and no mitigation is required.

f) Would the project 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. Tuolumne County has not adopted a Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other plan protecting biological resources. Therefore, the project would not conflict with any regional conservation plan and no impact would occur.

Standard Measures/Project Features

The following standard measures and best management practices would be incorporated into the project features to reduce and control impacts to biological resources during construction:

BIO-1: Prior to the start of construction activities, the project limits in proximity to jurisdictional resources shall be marked with high visibility Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing or staking to ensure construction would not further encroach into waters. The Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing would be periodically inspected to ensure sensitive locations remain undisturbed.

BIO-2:The project would Implement all applicable measures outlined in Caltrans Construction Site BMP Manual to reduce erosion and protect water quality where necessary during construction.

BIO-3:Implement Caltrans Standard Specification Section 14-6.03 “Species Protection” (14-6.03A “General” and 14-6.03B “Bird Protection”) where applicable to avoid impacts to regulated species and nesting birds within Caltrans right of way.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The following avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures for biological resources outlined in the Natural Environment Study – Minimal Impacts would be incorporated into the project.

Avoidance and Minimization Measures

BIO-4:No more than twenty-four (24) hours prior to the date of initial ground disturbance, a preconstruction survey for northwestern pond turtle would be conducted by a qualified biologist. The survey would consist of walking the areas adjacent to Woods Creek to ascertain the suitability of habitat and possible presence of the species. The qualified biologist would investigate all potential areas that could be used by northwestern pond turtle for feeding, breeding, sheltering, movement, and other essential behaviors. This includes an adequate examination of upland areas to look for evidence of nests as well as individual turtles. If any adults, juveniles, or eggs are found, the qualified

biologist would contact the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife to determine if moving any of the individuals is appropriate. In making this determination the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife would consider if an appropriate relocation site exists. If the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife approve moving animals, the qualified biologist would be given sufficient time to move the animals from the work site before ground disturbance is initiated. Only United States Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife -approved biologists would capture or handle northwestern pond turtle.

BIO-5: Prior to arrival at the project site and prior to leaving the project site, construction equipment that may contain invasive plants and/or seeds must be cleaned to reduce the spreading of noxious weeds.

BIO-6: All hydro seed and plant mixes must consist of a biologist approved native seed mix.

BIO-7: The contractor must not use herbicides to control invasive, exotic plants or apply rodenticides during construction.

BIO-8: To allow subterranean wildlife enough time to escape initial clearing and grubbing activities, equipment used during initial clearing and grubbing must be operated at speeds no greater than three miles per hour.

BIO-9: The contractor must dispose of all food-related trash in closed containers and must remove it from the project area each day during construction. Construction personnel must not feed or attract wildlife to the project area.

BIO-10: If vegetation removal or ground disturbance is required during the nesting season (February 1st – August 31st), a pre-construction nesting bird survey must be conducted within seven days prior to vegetation removal. Within two weeks of the nesting bird survey, all vegetation cleared by the biologist would be removed by the contractor.

A minimum 100-foot no-disturbance buffer would be established around any active nest of migratory birds and a minimum 300-foot no-disturbance buffer would be established around any nesting raptor species. The contractor must immediately stop work in the buffer area until the appropriate buffer is established and is prohibited from conducting work that could disturb the birds (as determined by the project biologist and in consultation with wildlife agencies) in the buffer area until a qualified biologist determines the young have fledged. A reduced buffer can be established if determined appropriate by the project biologist and approved by California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Mitigation Measures

BIO-11: Compensatory mitigation would be provided for any riverine habitats that would be permanently impacted by the project, resulting in no net loss of aquatic resources or habitat. Mitigation would be provided using an agency-approved mitigation ratio via one of the following compensatory mitigation options:

- Payment of an in-lieu fee or mitigation credits to an agency-approved mitigation site.
- Compensatory off-site mitigation at an agency-approved mitigation site.
- Compensatory on-site mitigation.
- A combination of the above compensatory mitigation options.

Consultation efforts with the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Water Quality Control Board, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife through Section 404, Section 401, and Section 1602 permitting processes would determine final mitigation ratios for permanent impacts to Waters of the United States, Waters of the State and California Department of Fish and Wildlife waters.

2.1.5 Cultural Resources

Considering information in the project's Historic Properties Survey Report, Archaeological Survey Report, and Historic Resources Evaluation Report, dated June 12, 2026, 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

An Archaeological Survey Report was prepared for the project by HELIX Environmental Planning (HELIX 2025). Additionally, a Historic Property Survey Report and Historic Resources Evaluation Report were prepared for the project by PanGIS, Inc. (PanGIS 2025a; 2025b). The following is a summary of the methodology and results of these cultural studies.

Survey Methods

HELIX staff conducted a cultural and historic records search through the Central California Information Center at California State University Stanislaus on March 13, 2025. The records search covered a 0.25-mile radius around the project area. The records search focused on the identification of previously recorded cultural resources and previously conducted investigations. In addition to the official records and maps for archaeological sites and studies, historical literature, aerial photographs, and maps were reviewed.

Intensive archaeological pedestrian surveys of the accessible portions of the Area of Potential Effect were completed on May 1, 2025, and portions of the Area of Potential Effect were re-surveyed on May 28, 2026. Along State Route 49 and the adjoining roadway corridors, the surveyor walked systematic transects parallel to the paved roadways. In locations where the Area of Potential Effect extended more than 15 meters from the road edge or from the centerline of Woods Creek, additional perpendicular transects spaced at 15-meter intervals were employed to ensure consistent coverage of wider segments. Portions of the Area of Potential Effect were inaccessible due to a combination of steep terrain, dense vegetation along Woods Creek, commercial development, and gated private property. These areas required reconnaissance-level survey from the nearest feasible vantage points.

An intensive-level pedestrian survey of the Area of Potential Effect was conducted by PanGIS staff from July 1-4, 2025. The survey was performed by walking the entire APE. The exteriors of structures were examined and photographed; an interior examination was not conducted. Field notes included information on architectural style and character-defining features, construction methods, modifications, and property condition. Additional built environment research conducted by PanGIS included the Caltrans Statewide Historic Bridge Inventory and historic maps and aerials. The Tuolumne County Assessor, Tuolumne County Building Development Department, Tuolumne County Museum, and California State 29th District Agricultural Association were visited in person and provided information on built environment resources within the Area of Potential Effect.

An Extended Phase 1.5 Testing was conducted at locations in the Area of Potential Effect where project construction may require deeper than 12 inches of excavation or ground disturbance. Testing was conducted through

monitoring the soils that were brought up through geotechnical testing at these specific locations on May 28 and 29, 2026, and June 3, 2026. Cores were extracted from five geotechnical borings and six hand augers. The borings ranged in depth from 7.5 to 30.0 feet, while the hand auger holes were 10 to 36 inches deep. Cores were periodically dry screened through a 1/4-inch mesh screen at a sampling rate determined by the on-site archaeologist based on the rate of excavation and observed subsurface conditions. Artifacts recovered during the testing were limited to one 0.5-inch fragment of unworked aqua glass found within 2.5 feet of the ground surface. This single historic-era artifact was insufficient to suggest a buried, intact cultural deposit.

Results

The records search results identified 31 previous cultural resource studies within the record search limits, 13 of which overlap with the project area. Of those studies overlapping the project area, two consist of literature review or records search summaries only with no pedestrian survey conducted, two consist of historic resources studies with built environment focus, and nine are archaeological survey reports. Several studies documented cultural resources within proximity to the current project area, including archaeological sites with precontact components, historic-era structures, and elements of the Sonora Historic District.

The CCIC has a record of 77 previously recorded cultural resources within a 0.25-mile radius of the project. Of these, two resources have been documented within the project Area of Potential Effect; these include one archaeological resource and one reinforced concrete slab historic-era bridge (P-55-005548; Bridge #32-6) (ca. 1902-1951).

In general, the sites recorded within the 0.25-mile search radius consist of two historic-era bridges; four historic archaeological sites; one precontact site; one multicomponent site, and 68 historic era built environment buildings, including single and multi-family properties, commercial buildings, and other public and ancillary buildings. The historic archaeological sites consist of refuse scatters and linear features, including rock walls, a mining ditch, and a trail segment. The multi-component resource consists of the remnants of a large rancheria, including beads, arrowheads, spearheads, and wood from hearths, as well as a storage shed, structural pad, barn and pen complex, placer mining tailings, a stone enclosure, a small foundation with a rock border, and a refuse scatter. The precontact site was recorded as the mapped location of an ethnographic Miwok village but at the time of recordation no artifacts or features were observed. Additionally, review of the Built Environment Resource Directory identified no built-environment resources within or adjacent to the Area of Potential Effect.

Review of the Caltrans bridge inventory identified three additional bridges within the APE. All three have been previously determined ineligible for

National Register listing without being individually surveyed and evaluated (Category 5):

- Bridge No. 32-0006Z (ca. 1974)
- Bridge No. 32-0007 (ca. 1947)
- Bridge No. 32C0075 (ca. 1940)

78 W Stockton Road (APN 001-280-006)

This resource is a wood frame shed and carport constructed in 1961 and currently operating as Steve's Auto Sales. It is surrounded by an asphalt parking lot supported by a rock retaining wall. The property was evaluated for the current study and was found to be not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

100-108 W Stockton Road (APN 001-280-005)

This resource is a two-story commercial building constructed in 1966 and currently operating as Gold Fever Jewelry. The bottom floor, with stone veneer, a false chimney, and large commercial windows, houses retail space. Upstairs, under a flat roof, is office space. The property was evaluated for the current study and was found to be not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Archaeological Resource

This resource is an archaeological resource initially recorded in 1982 based on information from oral informants. The resource could not be relocated during pedestrian surveys. The resource has not been evaluated for eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Two new cultural resources were located in the Area of Potential Effect and documented in the confidential Historic Property Survey Report and Archaeological Survey Report.

Environmental Consequences

Project effects related to cultural resources for both Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2 are similar based on the proposed project footprints. The following initial study discussions of potential effects are combined and applicable for both build alternatives. The No-Build Alternative would have no impact related to cultural resources. An analysis of project effects pursuant to the CEQA Appendix G Checklist is provided below.

a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in §15064.5?

No Impact. All historic resources identified within the Area of Potential Effect during record searches and pedestrian surveys were determined to be

ineligible for listing under the NRHP or CRHR. Therefore, no historic resources defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5 would be affected by the project, and no impact would occur. No mitigation is required for historic resources.

b) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?

Less Than Significant Impact. Review of soil series, landforms, and literature indicates that the Carboniferous-aged bedrock units (Calaveras Formation; Logtown Ridge) provide low potential for buried archaeological deposits within undisturbed sediments because these formations predate human occupation. Buried precontact cultural deposits are more likely to occur in Holocene-aged (<10,000 years BP) alluvial or colluvial sediments and in proximity to perennial freshwater sources. The position of Woods Creek within the Area of Potential Effect indicates a high potential for buried precontact resources in alluvial or colluvial deposits adjacent to the creek channel. Ethnographic and archaeological precedent supports intensified settlement and activity near freshwater sources.

The Archaeological Survey Report conducted for the project identified a previously documented archaeological resource in the project vicinity. Extended Phase I testing was conducted within the Area of Potential Effects, which consisted of a series of borings and hand augers to determine the presence or absence of subsurface cultural materials. No evidence of cultural materials was identified during geotechnical testing efforts. Additionally, the project would predominantly consist of shallow excavation; therefore, this resource is considered to be outside of the vertical Area of Potential Effects. Cultural resources occurring above the soil surface would be protected with Environmental Sensitive Area fencing to ensure no adverse impacts occur as a result of construction equipment or personnel.

To avoid potential impacts to previously unidentified archaeological resources that may be determined significant per CEQA, standard measure CR-1 would be implemented, which would require procedures to be taken in the event of inadvertent discovery of resources consistent with appropriate laws and requirements. Furthermore, avoidance and minimization measure CR-3 would require the preparation of an Environmental Sensitive Area Action Plan to protect cultural resources above the soil surface. With the incorporation of these measures, the project would have a less than significant impact on archaeological resources.

c) Would the project disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?

Less Than Significant Impact. California law recognizes the need to protect historic-era and Native American human burials, skeletal remains, and items associated with Native American interments from vandalism and inadvertent

destruction. No historic-era or Native American burial sites are known to occur within the project's Area of Potential Effect.

Damage to or destruction of human remains during project construction or other project-related activities would be considered a significant impact. Standard Measure CR-2 would reduce the impact by addressing discovery of unanticipated remains, associated grave goods, or items of cultural patrimony consistent with appropriate laws and requirements. Following construction, no ground disturbing activities are anticipated to occur other than those related to routine maintenance of the project, such as landscaping or irrigation repair. Therefore, it is unlikely any human remains would be encountered during operation. With the inclusion of this standard measure, impacts related to this threshold would be less than significant

Standard Measures/Project Features

The following standard measures and best management practices would be incorporated into the project features to reduce and control impacts to cultural resources during construction:

CR-1: If an inadvertent discovery of cultural materials (e.g., unusual amounts of shell, animal bone, bottle glass, ceramics, structure/building remains) is made during project-related construction activities, ground disturbances in the area of the find would be halted, and a qualified professional archaeologist would be notified regarding the discovery. The archaeologist would determine whether the resource is potentially significant per the California Register of Historical Resources and develop appropriate mitigation, such as avoidance or data recovery. If the find is determined to be an important cultural resource, the City would make available contingency funding and a time allotment sufficient to allow recovery of an archaeological sample or to implement avoidance measures. Construction work can continue on other parts of the project while archaeological mitigation takes place.

CR-2: Section 5097.94 of the Public Resources Code and Section 7050.5 of the California Health and Safety Code protect Native American burials, skeletal remains and grave goods, regardless of age and provide method and means for the appropriate handling of such remains. According to Section 7050.5 of the California Health and Safety Code, in the event human remains are discovered during excavation, work must stop immediately within 100 feet (30 meters), and the county coroner must be contacted immediately. At the same time, a professional archaeologist shall be contacted to evaluate the discovery. If the human remains are identified as Native American origin, the coroner shall notify the Native American Heritage Commission within twenty-four hours of such identification. CEQA details steps to be taken if human burials are of Native American origin.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

To avoid and minimize impacts to cultural resources, the following project-specific avoidance and minimization measure would be implemented during construction. No mitigation would be required.

CR-3: A qualified archaeologist shall designate Environmentally Sensitive Areas for the protection of cultural resources within or near the project's area of potential effect. These boundaries would be recorded in and implemented through the June 2026 Environmentally Sensitive Area Action Plan and shown on project plans. These Environmentally Sensitive Area boundaries would be established as a first order of work and remain in place until all construction activities are complete. Contractor encroachment into Environmentally Sensitive Areas would be prohibited. If the Environmentally Sensitive Area boundaries are breached, all work within 60 feet of the boundary would be stopped, the area would be secured, and the Caltrans resident engineer must be notified. If the Environmentally Sensitive Area is damaged, Caltrans would determine the necessary remediation and the party to perform this work.

CR-4: An Archaeological Monitoring Area has been established for a portion of the project area. This monitoring area requires a qualified archaeological monitor and/or Native American monitor to observe all ground disturbing activities within the monitoring area boundary. The monitoring area boundary would be included on the Design Layouts and called out in the order of work prior to the start of construction.

2.1.6 Energy

Considering information in the project's Energy Technical Memorandum, dated May 7, 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?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	**Less Than Significant Impact**

Affected Environment

An Energy Technical Memorandum (Wood Rodgers 2026c) was prepared for the project to analyze short-term (construction) and long-term (operational) energy usage anticipated under the project. The following is a summary of the findings of the Energy Technical Memorandum.

The project area is located within a relatively urbanized environment, and the surrounding landscape includes mixed residential, parks/open space, public land, and commercial development. State Route 49 is a major thoroughfare that connects several downtown areas and communities in Tuolumne County. As the purpose of the project is to enhance non-motorized circulation within the community and encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation, a substantial change in vehicle mix along State Route 49 is not expected. In addition, this project would not change the motorized pavement surface.

There are various roadside advisory, warning, and regulatory signs along State Route 49 within the project limits, none of which require energy or a power source to function. Minimal street lighting is present along the State Route 49 corridor within the project area as singular wood pole mounted lights illuminating adjacent sidewalk, where present (approximately 11 lights on State Route 49).

Activities that consume energy also contribute to other related impacts. Greenhouse gas emissions, for example, are linked to energy consumption. In transportation, carbon dioxide, is the primary greenhouse gas pollutant due to its abundance when compared with other vehicle emitted greenhouse gases, including methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbon, and black carbon.

Therefore, direct energy consumption can be quantified by using an approved version of the emissions modeling tool CT-EMFAC or EMFAC and construction energy consumption can be estimated using the Caltrans Construction Emission Tool, or the California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod). If energy consumption is not quantified in the emissions modeling tool used, gasoline and diesel consumption can be estimated from carbon dioxide using U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s greenhouse gas equivalencies formulas for diesel and gasoline (https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gases-equivalencies-calculator-calculations-and-references). The Caltrans Construction Emission Tool was used to estimate diesel and gasoline fuel consumption (gallons) of workers' vehicles and equipment throughout construction. See Section 2.8 for detailed analysis of project-related greenhouse gas emissions generated by the Caltrans Construction Emission Tool.

Environmental Consequences

Project effects related to energy for both Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2 are similar based on the proposed project footprints. The

following initial study discussions of potential effects are combined and applicable for both build alternatives. The No-Build Alternative would have no impact related to energy. An analysis of project effects pursuant to the CEQA Appendix G Checklist is provided below.

a) Would the project result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?

Less than Significant Impact. The project would result in both short- and long-term energy consumption:

Short-Term (Construction) Analysis

Short-term energy use during construction would be primarily comprised of electricity usage and fuel consumption by diesel- and gasoline-powered vehicles. Table 7 quantifies the projected fuel and electricity consumption for the project estimated by the Caltrans Construction Emissions Tool.

Table 6: Construction Equipment/Vehicles Fuel Consumption

All Build Alternatives	Fuel Consumption Diesel (Gallons)	Fuel Consumption Gasoline (Gallons)	Electricity Consumption (Kwh)
Project Total	11,485	3,366	1,317

For the Build Alternatives, there would be different phases in construction and energy usage depending on construction equipment being used per activity. The average annual consumption would be approximately the same throughout project construction. From Table 7, the estimated total diesel consumption is 11,485 gallons, total gasoline consumption is 3,366 gallons, and total electricity consumption is 1,317 kWh.

Construction activities are short-term so the increase in consumption within the project area would also be short-term. Use of construction best management practices would minimize energy consumption from construction activities, including but not limited to:

- Limit idling of vehicles and equipment to the greatest extent feasible.
- Using solar-powered equipment, if feasible (e.g., signal boards).
- Use of tier 4 equipment.
- Regular vehicle and equipment maintenance.

- If feasible, recycle non-hazardous waste and excess materials to reduce disposal offsite.

In addition, with innovations such as longer pavement lives, improvement in traffic management, and changes in construction materials, energy consumption can be offset to some degree by longer intervals between maintenance and rehabilitation activities.

Long-Term (Operational) Analysis

The project proposes to rehabilitate the roadway and would not increase capacity nor relieve congestion. As such, this project would not result in changes in traffic volumes, vehicle mix, or any other factor that would cause an increase in energy consumption of the project from that of the No-Build Alternative.

In total, the project would install 15 streetlights along the project corridor, 6 of which would replace existing streetlights. Additionally, the project would install four rapid flashing pedestrian beacons at the State Route 49/Woods Creek Drive/Southgate Drive intersection and the State Route 49/Motherlode Fairgrounds trail intersection. Energy efficient light-emitting diode lighting would be used for any new or replaced streetlights and signals, which consumes up to 85 percent less energy compared to incandescent bulbs. The use of light-emitting diode lighting would reduce the project's overall energy consumption, and the reuse of existing light poles, where feasible, would also reduce wastefulness.

Both build alternatives have project features that can further reduce energy consumption, namely:

- Sidewalks, crosswalks, accessible pedestrian signals (accessible pedestrian signals) and timers would be installed. These features would promote pedestrian access.

- Class I path construction with landscape buffer would promote bicyclist access.

- Modern bicyclist and pedestrian facilities would lengthen intervals between maintenance activities. Energy used for maintenance of these facilities for both build alternatives would be lesser than the no-build alternative.

b) Would the project conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project includes the installation of 15 streetlights within the project area, six of which would replace existing streetlights. The project would also install 4 rapid flashing beacons at various intersections within the project area. All new and replacement streetlights and signals would contain light-emitting diode bulbs, which consume 85 percent

less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs. This would reduce the project's overall energy consumption and improve the energy efficiency of the operational multi-use trail. As such, the project would not conflict with or obstruct any state or local plans for renewable energy or energy efficiency as none are directly applicable to the project. Therefore, no impact would occur and no mitigation is required.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures relating to energy are required.

2.1.7 Geology and Soils

Considering information published by the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, United States Geological Survey, California Geological Survey, California Department of Conservation, the Tuolumne County General Plan (2018), and the City of Sonora General Plan (2017), the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils
a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving: i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.	**No Impact**
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	**No Impact**
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	**No Impact**
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?	**No Impact**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?	**No Impact**
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	**No Impact**
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	**No Impact**

Affected Environment

The project is located in the western portion of the Sierra Nevada Geomorphic Province, consisting of a tilted fault block approximately 400 miles long with gentle western slope and a steep eastern slope. The Sierra Nevada Geomorphic Province is characterized by metamorphic (granite) deposits shaped by glacial activity and rivers to form steep canyons. Gold-bearing veins are present in the metamorphic bedrock underlying the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, where the City of Sonora is located (California Geological Survey 2002). The terrain surrounding the proposed project area consists of rolling foothills with elevations ranging from 1,700 to 1,850 feet above mean sea level.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service Custom Soil Resource Report for the project (Natural Resource Conservation Service 2026) identifies soils within the project area as:

- Millvilla-Luckymine complex, 15 to 30 percent slopes
- Wardsferry-Millvilla complex, 30 to 60 percent slopes
- Nedsgulch-Wallyhill-Arpatutu complex, 15 to 30 percent slopes
- Nedsgulch-Wallyhill-Arpatutu complex, 30 to 60 percent slopes
- Urban land-Millvilla complex, 1 to 25 percent slopes
- Urban land-Nedsgulch-Wallyhill complex, 15 to 30 percent slopes

Expansive soils, defined as having a high clay content resulting in a high shrink-swell potential, are classified under the soil order Vertisols. All soils

mapped within the project area are classified as Alfisols and Entisols (University of California, Davis 2026).

According to the California Department of Conservation Landslide Inventory (California Department of Conservation 2015b), the project site is located within Landslide Susceptibility Classes III, VI, VII, and VIII, indicating moderate to high susceptibility to landslides. Additionally, Caltrans has reported two recent incidents in the immediate vicinity of the project: a 2023 mudslide on SR 49 directly south of the project corridor, and a 2025 rockslide on SR 108, approximately 1 mile south of the project corridor.

Environmental Consequences

Project effects related to geology and soils for both Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2 are similar based on the proposed project footprints. The following initial study discussions of potential effects are combined and applicable for both build alternatives. The No-Build Alternative would have no impact related to geology and soils. An analysis of project effects pursuant to the CEQA Appendix G Checklist is provided below.

a) Would the project expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:

i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42?

No Impact. According to the California Department of Conservation Fault Activity Map of California (California Department of Conservation 2015a), there are no known active faults within the project site or directly adjacent to the project site. The project would have no impact related to this threshold and no mitigation is required.

ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?

No Impact. Based on the scope of work and project description, the project would not cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death due to strong seismic ground shaking. Therefore, no impact would occur related to this threshold and no mitigation is required.

iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

No Impact. The Tuolumne County General Plan Update Environmental Impact Report (2018) indicates that liquefaction in the county is most likely to occur during or following an earthquake, and severe earthquake risk within the county is considered low. Therefore, the risk of liquefaction or subsidence within Tuolumne County is considered minimal. The project would not expose people or structures to an increased risk of liquefaction, and no impact would occur. No mitigation is required.

iv) Landslides?

Less Than Significant Impact. As stated above, the project region has an elevated potential for landslides. However, the construction of the multi-use trail would not result in increased landslide risk. The project would be constructed in accordance with the California Building Code, which would require a geotechnical investigation to evaluate the potential for landslides and other geologic hazards. With compliance with the California Building Code, the project would have a less than significant impact relating to landslides. No mitigation is required.

b) Would the project result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

Less Than Significant Impact. Earth-moving activities have the potential to cause soil erosion and loss of topsoil. However, most construction activities would occur within previously disturbed ground, and the loss of topsoil would be nominal. Construction site best management practices would be implemented as necessary to reduce the erosion and topsoil loss in compliance with City of Sonora erosion control requirements as listed in the City Municipal Code Section 17.34.120. These requirements include the preparation of an erosion control plan and compliance with all applicable best management practices and provisions. In addition, the project would be required to comply with Caltrans erosion and sediment control standards. With compliance with Caltrans guidelines and construction site best management practices pertaining to soil erosion, impacts related to soil erosion or loss of topsoil would be less than significant and no mitigation is required.

c) Would the project be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?

No Impact. The project site is not located on a geologic unit or soil that is known for unstable conditions. During construction, soils may become unstable during de-grading activities; however, the area of ground disturbance and construction activities necessary for the construction of the project would not occur on unstable soils and would not result or potentially result in on- or off-site landslides, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse. Therefore, no impact would occur related to this threshold and no mitigation is required.

d) Would the project be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?

No Impact. No soils within the project area were identified as containing over 30 percent clay, which is considered the minimum clay content for high

shrink-swell potential Vertisols. Therefore, no impacts relating to expansive soil would occur and no mitigation is required.

e) Would the project 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. The project would not utilize septic tanks or an alternative wastewater disposal system on site; therefore, the project would have no impact due to soils incapable of adequately supporting septic systems.

f) Would the project directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

No Impact. Several sections of the California Public Resources Code protect paleontological resources, including Sections 5097.5 and 30244. The California Geology Survey notes that the geology in the project site consists of pre-Cenozoic metavolcanic rock (latite, dacite, tuff, greenstone, schistose greenstone) and Paleozoic marine sedimentary and metasedimentary rock (slate, sandstone, shale, chert, conglomerate, limestone, dolomite, marble, phyllite, schist, hornfels, and quartzite) (California Geological Survey 2010). Metamorphic deposits are not associated with paleontological resources due to the intense heat and pressure required for formation. Although sedimentary rocks are heavily associated with paleontological resources, all previously identified specimens in Tuolumne County were found within Miocene and Pleistocene deposits, which are substantially younger than deposits within the project corridor (University of California Museum of Paleontology 2026). Furthermore, the project corridor is located in an urban area that has been previously disturbed; therefore, no unique paleontological resource or geologic features would be anticipated near the project site. No impact would occur and no mitigation is required.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures relating to geology and soils are required.

2.1.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Considering information in the project's Climate Change Technical Memorandum, dated May 27, 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?	**Less Than Significant Impact**

Affected Environment

A Climate Change Technical Memorandum (Wood Rodgers 2026d) was prepared for the project to quantify greenhouse gas emissions anticipated to result from project implementation, identify greenhouse gas reduction strategies, and analyze project-specific climate-related vulnerabilities that require adaptation.

The project area is not within the jurisdiction of a Metropolitan Planning Organization and therefore not subject to California Air Resources Board Greenhouse Gas reduction targets. However, the Tuolumne County Transportation Council is the regional transportation planning agency for the project area. The 2024 Regional Transportation Plan identifies several proposed non-motorized infrastructure improvements and associated reduction estimates in greenhouse gas and vehicle miles traveled. In addition, Tuolumne County Transportation Council outlines goals and objectives for greenhouse gas reductions, including enhancing environmental health by reducing negative transportation impacts and incorporating transportation improvements that contribute to climate resilience (Tuolumne County Transportation Council 2025).

In the City of Sonora, greenhouse gas reduction efforts are primarily addressed by the City of Sonora General Plan (2017), City of Sonora Energy Action Plan (2018), and the Tuolumne County Transportation Council Regional Transportation Plan (2025).The City of Sonora General Plan Air Quality Element addresses criteria pollutants but does not contain explicit greenhouse gas reduction policies.

The project area is also situated in the Mountain Counties Air Basin and is subject to Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District requirements and regulations.

Environmental Consequences

Project effects related to greenhouse gas emissions for both Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2 are similar based on the proposed project footprints. The following initial study discussions of potential effects are combined and

applicable for both build alternatives. The No-Build Alternative would have no impact related to greenhouse gas emissions. An analysis of project effects pursuant to the CEQA Appendix G Checklist is provided below.

a) Would the project generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

Less Than Significant Impact.

Operational Emissions

The purpose of the proposed project is to enhance non-motorized circulation within the community and encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation. The project would not increase the vehicle capacity of the roadway and would generally cause minimal or no increase in operational greenhouse gas emissions. As the project would not increase the number of travel lanes on State Route 49 in the City of Sonora, no increase in vehicle miles traveled would occur.

While some greenhouse gas emissions during the construction period would be unavoidable, no increase in operational greenhouse gas emissions is expected. As a non-motorized infrastructure improvement project, the project would have the potential to reduce operational greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging pedestrian and bicycle travel. Per the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report prepared for the 2024-2029 Regional Transportation Plan, the Tuolumne County Transportation Council estimates a daily vehicle miles traveled reduction and an annual metric ton of carbon dioxide equivalent reduction in 2050 for the Gold Rush Shared Use Path – Phases 1-3 project (Table 8; Tuolumne County Transportation Council 2025)

Table 7. Summary of Greenhouse Gas and Vehicle Miles Traveled Reductions per Infrastructure Project – 2040 Constrained Scenario (Tier 1)

Project ID	Project Name	Proposed Non-Motorized Improvements	Improvement Length (miles)	Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled Reduction in 2050	Annual Metric Tons of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent Reduction in 2050
178	Gold Rush Shared Use Path – Phases 1-3	Shared Use Path and Bike Share Program	14.19	-9,008	-906

(Source: Tuolumne County Transportation Council 2025)

Construction Emissions

Construction greenhouse gas emissions would result from material processing and transportation, on-site construction equipment, and traffic delays due to construction. To estimate greenhouse gas emissions during the construction phase, the Caltrans Construction Emissions Tool was used. Quantities of the following pollutants were calculated: total organic gases, reactive organic gases, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, inhalable particulate matter (particulate matter 10 and particulate matter 2.5), carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, black carbon, hydrofluorocarbons, carbon dioxide equivalents. As previously stated, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, black carbon, and hydrofluorocarbons are classified as greenhouse gases. Table 9 below provides a summary of projected greenhouse gas emissions by construction phase.

Table 9. California Construction Emissions Tool Greenhouse Gas Emissions Summary by Construction Phase

Work Type	Carbon Dioxide (Metric Tons)	Methane (Tons)	Nitrous Oxide (Tons)	Hydrofluorocarbons (Tons)	Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (Metric Tons)
Land Clearing and Grubbing	3	0.000	0.000	0.000	3
Roadway Excavation and Removal	38	0.001	0.002	0.001	39
Structural Excavation and Removal	8	0.000	0.000	0.000	8
Base/ Subbase/ Imported Borrow	29	0.001	0.001	0.001	30
Structure Concrete	16	0.000	0.001	0.000	16
Paving	34	0.001	0.002	0.001	36
Drainage/ Environment/ Landscaping	14	0.000	0.001	0.000	15
Traffic Signalization/ Signage/	21	0.000	0.001	0.001	21

Work Type	Carbon Dioxide (Metric Tons)	Methane (Tons)	Nitrous Oxide (Tons)	Hydrofluorocarbons (Tons)	Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (Metric Tons)
Striping/ Painting					
Other Operation	0	0.000	0.000	0.000	0
Total	163	0.004	0.008	0.004	168

These emissions would be produced at different levels throughout the construction phase; their frequency and occurrence can be reduced through innovations in plans and specifications and by implementing traffic management programs during construction phases. While construction greenhouse gas emissions are only produced for a short time, they have long-term effects in the atmosphere, so cannot be considered “temporary” in the same way as criteria pollutants that subside after construction is completed.

Use of long-life pavement, improved traffic management plans, and changes in materials can also help offset greenhouse gas emissions produced during construction by allowing longer intervals between maintenance and rehabilitation activities.

Greenhouse gas emissions generated from temporary construction activities would not exceed Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District CEQA thresholds of significance for criteria pollutants, as demonstrated by the results of the Caltrans Construction Emissions Tool prepared for the project. The Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District has established the following project-generated emissions thresholds:

- Reactive Organic Gases – 1,000 lbs/day or 100 tons per year.
- Oxides of Nitrogen – 1,000 lbs/day or 100 tons per year.
- Particulate Matter – 1,000 lbs/day or 100 tons per year.
- Carbon Monoxide – 1,000 lbs/day or 100 tons per year.

Therefore, the project is not expected to generate greenhouse gas emissions in quantities that would individually or cumulatively contribute to a significant impact on the environment. Project impacts would be less than significant.

b) Would the project conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project would generate short-term greenhouse gas emissions during construction due to the operation of construction equipment and construction worker vehicle trips. As indicated under section (a) above, short term greenhouse gas emissions generated during construction would not exceed the District's greenhouse gas emissions thresholds. In addition, the project is listed in the 2024-2029 Tuolumne County Transportation Council Regional Transportation Plan with potential to reduce daily vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 (see Table 8). Therefore, the project would not conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Standard Measures/Project Features

The following standard measures and best management practices would be incorporated into the project features to reduce and control greenhouse gas emissions during construction.

GHG-1: All construction contracts include Caltrans Standard Specifications related to air quality. Section 7-1.02A and 7-1.02C, Emissions Reduction, requires contractors to comply with all laws applicable to the project and to certify they are aware of and would comply with all California Air Resources Board emission reduction regulations. Section 14-9.02, Air Pollution Control, requires contractors to comply with all air pollution control rules, regulations, ordinances, and statutes. Certain common regulations, such as equipment idling restrictions, that reduce construction vehicle emissions also help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

GHG-2: The project would implement the following Project-Level Measures to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions Related to Construction Activities, as outlined in Greenhouse Gas Reduction Measures Toolbox for Internal Use in Caltrans Project Development (2021):

- The contractor would limit idling to five minutes for delivery and dump trucks and other diesel-powered equipment (with some exceptions).
- The contractor would schedule truck trips outside of peak morning and evening commute hours
- For improved fuel efficiency from construction equipment, the contractor would:
- Maintain equipment in proper tune and working condition
- Use right sized equipment for the job

- Use equipment with new technologies, when feasible
- The contractor would use alternative fuels such as renewable diesel for construction equipment, when feasible.
- The contractor would use solar-powered construction equipment, when feasible.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures relating to greenhouse gas emissions are required for the proposed project.

2.1.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Considering information in the project's Phase I Initial Site Assessment, dated August 26, 2025, 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**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?	**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?	**No Impact**

Affected Environment

A Phase I Initial Site Assessment (Initial Site Assessment; Crawford 2025) was prepared for the project. Crawford reviewed public records, historical aerial photographs, historical topographic maps, and city directories, and performed a project alignment reconnaissance on March 14, 2025. Based on these efforts, the following findings were determined:

No Recognized Environmental Conditions or Controlled Recognized Environmental Conditions were identified within the alignment or on adjacent parcels. Eleven (11) Historical Recognized Environmental Condition were identified within, adjacent to, or within 500 feet of the project alignment. The reconnaissance did not identify any conditions within the project alignment, within adjacent properties, or within 500 feet of the project alignment that might potentially impact the project site.

The Environmental Risk Information Services Database report did not identify any records for suspect sites/facilities associated with the project alignment. Thirteen (13) additional facilities were identified adjacent to or within 500 feet of the project alignment, the nearest of which is Sooters Auto Service, located approximately four feet southwest of the project area at 578 West Stockton Street. This site reported a leak in January of 1999, and the case was closed in July of 2014. The Initial Site Assessment (Crawford 2025) indicates the likelihood that the additional 13 sites would impact the project alignment is low.

Reconnaissance of the project site and surrounding vicinity identified the following concerns:

- Potential for asbestos to be present in concrete used for transportation structures (sidewalks, curbing, pipe, bridge piers, footings, abutments, etc.).

- Potential for aerially deposited lead on roads which have historically experienced significant traffic volume, particularly where vehicles would be stopping and idling (i.e., at a stop sign or a high congestion area).

- Transportation structures are often painted, and this paint has the potential to contain lead at concentrations that may require abatement or special handling.

- Chemically treated wood is present within the project area.

- Thermoplastic traffic striping may contain heavy metals, including lead and chromium, at concentrations that exceed the hazardous waste thresholds established by 22 CCR §66261.24, and may produce toxic fumes when heated.

Environmental Consequences

Project effects related to hazards and hazardous materials for both Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2 are similar based on the proposed project footprints. The following initial study discussions of potential effects are combined and applicable for both build alternatives. The No-Build Alternative would have no impact related to hazards and hazardous materials. An analysis of project effects pursuant to the CEQA Appendix G Checklist is provided below.

a) Would the project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project would involve the use of heavy equipment for the grading, filling, and hauling of materials. Such equipment may require the use of common materials that have hazardous properties, e.g., petroleum-based fuels. These materials would be used in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations and, if used properly, would not pose a significant hazard to the public or the environment. Additionally, compliance with the Construction General Permit and the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan would require the use of standard conservation measures and best management practices to avoid or minimize the potential for accidental release of hazardous materials from spills or fuel leaks during project construction. With the incorporation of construction best management practices and compliance with the Construction General Permit, impacts related to this threshold would be less than significant and no mitigation is required.

b) Would the project 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. The results of the Initial Site Assessment (Crawford 2025) indicate the following concerns for hazards and hazardous waste at the project site:

- Potential for asbestos to be present in concrete used for transportation structures (sidewalks, curbing, pipe, bridge piers, footings, abutments, etc.).
- Potential for aerially deposited lead on roads which have historically experienced significant traffic volume, particularly where vehicles would be stopping and idling (i.e., at a stop sign or a high congestion area).
- Transportation structures are often painted, and this paint has the potential to contain lead at concentrations that may require abatement or special handling.
- Chemically treated wood is present within the project area.
- Thermoplastic traffic striping may contain heavy metals, including lead and chromium, at concentrations that exceed the hazardous waste thresholds established by 22 CCR §66261.24, and may produce toxic fumes when heated.

In addition, the project would involve ground disturbance and excavation within the project site. With any project conducting ground disturbance, there is a potential for unknown contaminants or accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment, as well as upset or accident related to machinery. A review of the Department of Toxic Substances Control's EnviroStor database (Department of Toxic Substances Control 2025) found two "Active" and two "Inactive – Needs Evaluation" hazardous materials cleanup sites within one mile of the project site. In addition, a review of the State Water Resources Control Board GeoTracker database (State Water Resources Control Board 2025) identified 27 "Completed – Case Closed" Leaking Underground Storage Tank Cleanup Sites, two "Completed – Case Closed" Cleanup Program Sites, and two "Open – Site Assessment" Cleanup Program Sites within one mile of the project site. According to the Initial Site Assessment (Crawford 2026), "nine closed leaking underground storage tank sites were identified within 500 feet of the project alignment. However, given their closed status and distance from the project alignment, it appears unlikely these sites have impacted the project alignment". Furthermore, no open or active cleanup sites identified by EnviroStor or GeoTracker are located within the project impact area. Therefore, it is unlikely for the project to have the potential of unknown contaminants or accidents due to excavation. Furthermore, the use, storage,

and transport of hazardous materials is required to be compliant with local, state, and federal regulations during both project construction and operation. The project would incorporate standard remediation measures HAZ-1 through HAZ-5, which would reduce the potential for significant impacts relating to hazards or hazardous materials to a less than significant level. With the inclusion of these measures, construction best management practices, and compliance with all applicable regulations, project impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

c) Would the project 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. The northern terminus of the project corridor is located approximately 700 feet south of Sonora High School. Project construction would require the handling of hazardous materials such as fuel and solvents. As described above, when such hazardous materials are in use, they would be used in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations, and when not in use they would be stored appropriately. With proper use and storage of potentially hazardous materials, the project is not anticipated to result in a significant impact related to hazardous emissions, or the handling of hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of Sonora High School. Project impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

d) Would the project 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. According to the Hazardous Waste and Substances Site List (Cortese List), one listed site is located within one mile of the project area. Sierra Launderers and Cleaners, a Department of Toxic Substances Control State Response Site and former Environmental Protection Agency Superfund Site, is located at 407 North Washington Street, approximately 0.3 miles northeast of the project site near Sonora High School. Despite the proximity of the site, the project would not require soil disturbance or excavation on this property. Therefore, the project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment as a result of construction on this site and no impact would occur. No mitigation is required.

c) 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. The project is not located within an airport land use plan or within two miles of a public airport or public use airport. Therefore, the project would not result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing near or working in the project site. As such, no impact would occur related to this threshold and no mitigation is required.

e) Would the project impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

Less Than Significant Impact. The Tuolumne County Office of Emergency Services has pre-planned evacuation routes within the City of Sonora to help the evacuation process in case of emergency. The project corridor does not contain any designated Class A Exit Routes or Class B Branch Roads; however, State Route 49 may be used as an exit route in an evacuation scenario.

Temporary lane closures along State Route 49 may be required during construction of the multi-use path. Traffic control measures would be implemented to maintain and control traffic throughout construction zones and ensure that at least one lane traveling in each direction remains open in affected roadways. With the implementation of the traffic management plan, the project would not significantly impair implementation of or physically interfere with any emergency plan. Therefore, project impacts would be less than significant and no mitigation is required.

f) Would the project expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?

No Impact. According to the CAL FIRE Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map (CAL FIRE 2026), the project is located in High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones within the Local Responsibility Area of the City of Sonora. The project corridor is not a designated wildland area; however, the site contains forested areas interspersed with urban development. Although the project is located in a high-risk zone for wildfires, the construction of the multi-use path would not expose people or structures to an increased risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires. As such, no impact would occur and no mitigation is required.

Standard Measures/Project Features

The following standard measures and best management practices would be incorporated into the project features to reduce and control the potential for environmental impacts relating to hazards and hazardous materials during construction.

HAZ-1: If planned demolition and/or construction activities involve impacting concrete structures, concrete should be evaluated for asbestos.

HAZ-2: Soil adjacent to the roadways within the project alignment where excavation is planned should be evaluated for lead concentrations that exceed hazardous waste limits.

HAZ-3: If work is to be done to move painted hydrants or work in soil surrounding painted hydrants, the paint should be tested for the presence of lead.

HAZ-4: If chemically treated wood is to be removed from the project alignment, it must be handled and disposed of as treated wood waste (TWW).

HAZ-5: If traffic striping material is to be removed by planing, grinding, or sandblasting, the traffic striping material must be tested to determine whether hazardous concentrations of heavy metals are present.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

With the inclusion of the standard measures and best management practices for remediation listed above, no project-specific avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures relating to hazards and hazardous materials are required.

2.1.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

Considering information in the project's Water Quality Assessment Report, dated June 2026, and the project's Location Hydraulic Study, dated June 2026, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hydrology and Water Quality
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface water or groundwater quality?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	**Less Than Significant 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;	**Less Than Significant Impact**
(ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding onsite or offsite;	**Less Than Significant Impact**
(iii) create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or	**Less Than Significant Impact**
(iv) impede or redirect flood flows?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	**No Impact**

Affected Environment

A Water Quality Technical Memorandum (Wood Rodgers 2026e) was prepared for the project to provide data on surface water and groundwater resources within the project site and the water quality of these waters, describe water quality impairments and beneficial uses, identify potential water quality impacts/benefits associated with the proposed project, and recommend avoidance and/or minimization measures for potentially adverse impacts. Additionally, a Location Hydraulic Study (Wood Rodgers 2026f) was prepared or the project to analyze impacts related to Federal Emergency Management Agency floodplains. The following is a summary of the findings of these reports.

Hydrology

The proposed project is within the Woods Creek sub watershed of the larger Tuolumne River watershed, which is within the San Joaquin River hydrologic unit, Upper Tuolumne hydrologic area, Hydrologic Unit Code 180400090202.

Precipitation and Climate

The project occurs in the Sierra Nevada Foothills ecological region and the Sierra Nevada Mixed Conifer ecological subsection (M261Eg) of California (United States Department of Agriculture 2007). The region receives an average of approximately 35 inches of precipitation annually, primarily in the form of rain, with occasional snowfall at higher elevations. The average annual high temperature is 72 degrees Fahrenheit, and the average annual low temperature is 43 degrees Fahrenheit (U.S. Climate Data 2026).

Surface Water Features

The proposed project contains Woods Creek, a perennial stream that flows from the Sierra Nevada foothills through Sonora before joining with Sullivan Creek at the northwest finger of the Don Pedro Reservoir, ultimately contributing to the Tuolumne River. The project area additionally contains Sonora Creek, a perennial tributary of Woods Creek running south of State Route 49. Woods Creek and Sonora Creek provide aquatic habitat, stormwater conveyance, and hydrologic connectivity within the region.

The nearest receiving water body is Woods Creek, which runs through the project area from east to west. Woods Creek is listed as an impaired waterbody under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act due to pathogens. As tributaries of the Tuolumne River, Woods Creek and Sonora Creek are considered Waters of the United States and are subject to regulation under the Clean Water Act. These surface water features would also be classified as Waters of the State as defined under the Porter-Cologne Act.

Groundwater

The project is located within the San Joaquin River Hydrologic Region, which spans 15,200 square miles in Central California. Named after the San Joaquin River—one of the state's longest at over 350 miles—the region has historically supported anadromous fish species, with ongoing restoration efforts to protect them. Annual precipitation varies widely, from up to 40 inches in the foothills to 12-18 inches on the valley floor near Stockton and Merced. Home to approximately 2.3 million people, the region also includes the globally recognized Yosemite National Park.

Groundwater plays a critical role in the San Joaquin River Hydrologic Region, accounting for nearly half of the region's total water supply and over 20% of all groundwater use in California—averaging nearly 4 million acre-feet annually. Surface water deliveries from the federal Central Valley Project supplement supply, but groundwater levels have been declining. Between

1998 and 2018, 77% of monitoring wells showed a downward trend, and land subsidence has been documented for decades. Since 2010, continuous Global Positioning System monitoring has detected two to three feet of subsidence in parts of the region.

Water quality remains a concern, with manganese being the most commonly detected chemical above regulatory limits between 2009 and 2018, appearing in 22.6% of sampled stations. Iron exceeded its secondary maximum contaminant level in 20.9% of wells, while the carcinogenic compound 1,2,3-Trichloropropane surpassed its maximum contaminant level in 14.7% of wells.

These trends highlight the region's ongoing challenges with water supply, land stability, and groundwater quality, emphasizing the need for continued management and mitigation efforts (Department of Water Resources 2020).

Floodplains

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Rate Map, portions of the project area are within a designated Zone A Special Flood Hazard Area (Federal Emergency Management Agency 2026). Zone A represents areas with a high risk of flooding, where the base flood elevation is not determined. These areas have a 1% or greater annual chance of flooding. The project is not located within a Central Valley Flood Protection Board Designated Floodway nor is it within 30 feet of a Regulated Stream (Central Valley Flood Protection Board 2025). Therefore, a Central Valley Flood Protection Board Encroachment Permit would not be required.

Environmental Consequences

An analysis of project effects pursuant to the CEQA Appendix G Checklist is provided below.

a) Would the project violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project would comply with the Caltrans Statewide National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit (Order 2022-0033-DWQ) as amended by subsequent orders, which became effective June 22, 2022, for projects that result in a land disturbance of one acre or more, and the Construction General Permit (Order 2022-0057-DWQ). Before any ground-disturbing activities, the contractor would prepare a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (per the Construction General Permit (Order 2022-0057-DWQ) that includes erosion control measures and construction waste containment measures to protect waters during project construction.

The Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan would: identify the sources of pollutants that may affect the quality of stormwater; include construction site

best management practices to control sedimentation, erosion, and potential chemical pollutants; provide for construction materials management; include non-stormwater best management practices; and include routine inspections and a monitoring and reporting plan. All construction site best management practices would follow the latest edition of the Caltrans Stormwater Quality Handbooks: “Construction Site Best Management Practices Manual” to control and reduce the impacts of construction-related activities, materials, and pollutants on the watershed. The project Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan would be continuously updated to adapt to changing site conditions during the construction phase.

The project would incorporate pollution prevention and design measures consistent with the 2016 Caltrans Storm Water Management Plan. This plan complies with Caltrans’ MS4 Permit, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System No. CAS000003, State Water Resources Control Board Order No. 2022-0033-DWQ (adopted on June 22, 2022, and effective on January 1, 2023).

With implementation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan, construction best management practices, and compliance with Construction General Permit requirements, the project would not substantially degrade surface or ground water quality and would not violate any water quality standards established by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board in its Basin Plan for the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basins. Therefore, impacts related to this threshold would be less than significant and no mitigation is required.

b) Would the project substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

Less than Significant Impact. The project would not directly or indirectly result in the construction of uses that would utilize groundwater supplies. The proposed project alternatives would increase impervious surface area within the project corridor by approximately 52,076 square feet or 1.19 acres. The increase of impervious surface area would include the new bicycle/pedestrian trail, the bridge structure over Woods Creek and, if Build Alternative 2 is selected, the fill and retaining wall along the eastern bank of Woods Creek adjacent to the Woods Creek Rotary Park baseball field. This addition is not anticipated to alter the drainage patterns in such a way that would interfere with groundwater recharge. Additionally, the project would not be constructed immediately above a pre-existing well, nor would areas known to contain wells be disturbed by construction of the proposed project. Therefore, impacts related to this threshold would be less than significant and no mitigation is required.

c) Would the project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:

(i) result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;

(ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site;

(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

(iv) impede or redirect flood flows?

Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation. Portions of the project area are within a designated Federal Emergency Management Agency Zone A Special Flood Hazard Area, representing areas with a high risk of flooding, where the base flood elevation is not determined. The Location Hydraulic Study prepared for the project analyzed the effects of project features on the Federal Emergency Management Agency floodplain, the results of which are summarized below:

- Proposed trail improvements adjacent to the Woods Creek Rotary Park (Woods Creek Drive to Snell Street project section) would be within the Federal Emergency Management Agency mapped Zone A floodplain. Work at this location would be a transverse encroachment into the floodplain (proposed infrastructure is perpendicular to natural flood flows). For the current scope of the project, the proposed improvements would not result in a significant change in floodplain storage. Therefore, it is anticipated that this encroachment would not be a significant encroachment and there would be no negative impacts to the Federal Emergency Management Agency mapped floodplain.

- Proposed trail improvements between State Route 49 post mile 17.51 and PM 17.14 (Woods Creek Drive to Motherlode Fairground project section) would be within the Federal Emergency Management Agency mapped Zone A floodplain. Work at this location would be a transverse encroachment into the floodplain (proposed infrastructure is perpendicular to natural flood flows). For the current scope of the project, no changes to the profile of State Route 49 are proposed and the proposed multi-use trail would be an at-grade feature that would maintain existing drainage patterns. Therefore, it is anticipated that these encroachments would not be a significant encroachment and there would be no negative impacts to the Federal Emergency Management Agency mapped floodplain in this area.

The project would construct a new multi-use trail, contributing to new impervious surfaces within the project site. However, the increases in impervious surface would be considered nominal in the current landscape

within the project site, as much of the site consists of previously paved surfaces. Therefore, the implementation of the multi-use path is not anticipated to substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in on- or off-site flooding or exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems. Additionally, erosion due to surface runoff is not anticipated in paved and/or proper sloped areas with controlled surface drainage facilities. Construction activity would adhere to federal, state, and local regulations, as well as the project's Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan, and County Improvement Standards.

d) Would the project, in flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

Less than Significant Impact. The project would not occur in a tsunami or seiche zone. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Rate Map, portions of the project area are within a designated Zone A Special Flood Hazard Area (Federal Emergency Management Agency 2026). Zone A represents areas with a high risk of flooding, where the base flood elevation is not determined. These areas have a 1% or greater annual chance of flooding. During construction, project activities in this area would be short-term and limited to intersection improvements, trail paving, and minor grading. With implementation of Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan, construction best management practices, and compliance with the Construction General Permit requirements, project construction is not anticipated to increase or include additional risks for release of pollutants. Operation of the completed project would not present additional risks for release of pollutants due to project inundation. Therefore, project impacts would be considered less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

e) Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

No Impact. As described within discussion a) above, the project would conform to and comply with all local and state laws and regulations regarding water quality. Therefore, the project would not conflict with or obstruct the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board Basin Plan or the Department of Water Resources Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. No impact would occur related to this threshold and no mitigation is required.

Standard Measures/Project Features

The following standard measures and best management practices would be incorporated into the project features to reduce and control impacts to water quality during construction.

WQ-1: The project would comply with the Caltrans Statewide National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit (Order 2022-0033-DWG) as amended by subsequent orders, which became effective June 22, 2022.

WQ-2: The project would comply with the provisions of the NPDES Construction General Permit for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Construction and Land Disturbance Activities (Construction General Permit) Order No. 2022-0057-DWQ, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System No. CAS000002 and any subsequent permits in effect at the time of construction.

WQ-3: The project would comply with the Construction General Permit by preparing and implementing a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan to address all construction-related activities, equipment, and materials that have the potential impact water quality for the appropriate Risk Level. The Stormwater Pollution Prevention would identify the sources of pollutants that may affect the quality of stormwater and include best management practices to control the pollutants, such as sediment control, catch basin inlet protection, construction materials management and non-stormwater best management practices. All work must conform to the Construction Site Best Management Practices requirements specified in the latest edition of the Stormwater Quality Handbooks: Construction Site Best Management Practices Manual to control and minimize the impacts of construction and construction related activities, material and pollutants on the watershed.

Construction may require one or more of the following temporary construction site Best Management Practices:

- Any spills or leaks from construction equipment (i.e., fuel, oil, hydraulic fluid, and grease) would be cleaned up under applicable local, state, and/or federal regulations.

- Accumulated stormwater, groundwater, or surface water from excavations or temporary containment facilities would be removed by dewatering.

- Water generated from the dewatering operations would be discharged on-site for dust control and/or to an infiltration basin or disposed of off-site.

- Temporary sediment control and soil stabilization devices would be installed.

- Existing vegetated areas would be maintained to the maximum extent practicable.

- Clearing, grubbing, and excavation would be limited to specific locations, as delineated on the plans, to maximize the preservation of existing vegetation.

- Vegetation reestablishment or other stabilization measures would be implemented on disturbed soil areas, per the Erosion Control Plan.

- Soil disturbing work would be limited during the rainy season.

WQ-4: Design Pollution Prevention Best Management Practices would be implemented, such as preservation of existing vegetation, slope/surface protection systems (permanent soil stabilization), concentrated flow conveyance systems such as ditches, berms, dikes, and swales, overside drains, flared end sections, and outlet protection/velocity dissipation devices. Best Management Practices would be consistent with the 2024 Caltrans Stormwater Management Plan, which complies with Caltrans' Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Permit, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System No. CAS000003, State Water Resources Control Board Order No. 2022-0033-DWQ (adopted on June 22, 2022, and effective on January 1, 2023).

Specifically, the project design may include one or more of the following:

- Vegetated surfaces would feature native plants, and revegetation would use the seed mixture, mulch, tackifier, and fertilizer recommended in the Erosion Control Plan prepared for the project.

- Where possible, stormwater would be directed in such a way as to sheet flow over Biofiltration Strips, or vegetated slopes adjacent to impervious areas, thus filtering any potential pollutants.

- The project's Storm Water Data Report would provide a detailed analysis and calculations pertaining to new impervious areas and treatment area conclusions and compliance strategies for the project.

WQ-5: For permanent impacts to Woods Creek (Waters of the United States, Waters of the State, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife jurisdictional waters), the project would obtain regulatory permits from United States Army Corps of Engineers, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife under Clean Water Act Section 404 and 401, and Section 1602 of the California Fish and Game Code. All applicable measures of the 404, 401, and 1602 permit would be implemented by the project proponent.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

With the inclusion of standard measures and project features listed above, avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures would not be required for impacts to hydrology and water quality.

2.1.11 Land Use and Planning

Consistency with regional land use and planning regulations was analyzed in the project's Community Impact Assessment, approved May 2026. This study found that the project would be consistent with the City General Plan and

applicable City codes, and would not divide the community. Considering this information, the following significance determinations have been made:

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

2.1.12 Mineral Resources

Considering information published within the City of Sonora General Plan (2017), the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Mineral Resources
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	**Less Than Significant 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?	**Less Than Significant Impact**

Affected Environment

According to the City of Sonora General Plan (2017), the project corridor is partially located within the Mineral Resource Zone 3b (cr-27) “Southwestern County Area Carbonate Rock”, indicating that the area contains “inferred mineral occurrences of undetermined mineral resource significance.” These areas are in “geologic settings that appear to be favorable environments for the occurrence of specific mineral deposits. Further exploration could result in reclassification” (City 2017). Regionally, carbonate rock ranges from high-quality limestone through intermediate magnesium content to dolomite. Higher-quality rock in this area has been mined for production of lime, manufacture of glass, magnesium chemicals, animal feed, dimension stone, and decorative rock.

Additionally, the project corridor is partially located within state-designated Mineral Resource Zone 2b (pm-3) “Bald Mountain District Precious Metals

(Lode Gold and Silver)". Mineral Resource Zone 2b represents "areas underlain by mineral deposits where geologic information indicates that significant inferred resources are present. Area containing discovered mineral deposits either inferred reserves as determined by limited sample analysis, exposure, and past mining history or are deposits that are presently sub-economic. Further exploration and/or changes in technology or economics could result in upgrading these areas" (City 2017). This Mineral Resource Zone is a component of the Bald Mountain (aka Brown's Flat) Gold Mining District, recognized for its mineral resource value based on the history of gold extraction in the area.

Environmental Consequences

Project effects related to mineral resources for both Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2 are similar based on the proposed project footprints. The following initial study discussions of potential effects are combined and applicable for both build alternatives. The No-Build Alternative would have no impact related to mineral resources. An analysis of project effects pursuant to the CEQA Appendix G Checklist is provided below.

a) Would the project 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?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project corridor partially overlaps known mineral resource zones. However, the project is primarily located in a previously developed area where the potential for disturbing mineral resources is relatively low. Project implementation would not require deep excavation that would result in the loss of availability or degradation of these mineral resources. Furthermore, the construction of the proposed trail would not impede the future extraction of precious metals or carbonate rock. Therefore, project impacts would be considered less than significant and no mitigation would be required.

b) Would the project 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?

Less Than Significant Impact. As stated above, the project area is partially located within Mineral Resource Zone 3b (cr-27) and Mineral Resource Zone 2b (pm-3), documented as containing carbonate rock and precious metals, respectively. The project would be confined to previously disturbed areas and would not require deep excavation that may result in degradation of any locally important mineral resources. Additionally, the construction of the proposed trail would not impede the future extraction of precious metals or carbonate rock. Therefore, project impacts would be considered less than significant and no mitigation would be required.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures relating to mineral resources are required.

2.1.13 Noise

Considering information in the project's Construction Noise Technical Memorandum, dated February 17, 2026, 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?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	**No Impact**

Affected Environment

A Construction Noise Technical Memorandum (Wood Rodgers 2026h) was prepared for the project to identify noise sensitive receptors in the vicinity and assess the potential for construction-related noise impacts.

Noise-sensitive land uses generally include those uses where exposure to noise would result in adverse effects, as well as uses where quiet is an essential element of their intended purpose. The Noise Element of the City's General Plan (2017) defines noise sensitive land uses as residential areas, schools, hospitals, nursing homes, churches, libraries, or similar uses.

The project area occurs within land use designated by the City as Commercial, Public/Quasi-Public, Single-Family Residential, High-Density Residential, and Park/Recreation/Resource/Open Space. Surrounding land uses are predominantly Single-Family Residential, Commercial, and Special

Planning Mixed Use. The State Route 49 corridor is zoned by the City as Commercial with areas zoned as Single-Family Residential and Multi Family Residential surrounding the roadway. The northern portion of the project area near Woods Creek Rotary Park is zoned as Tourist and Administrative, Multi-Family Residential, and Single-Family Residential.

Several residential homes are located adjacent to the project corridor, primarily along Bonanza Road in the northern portion of the project area. The project is additionally located within 0.25 miles of Sonora High School, Kiddie Kollege Pre-School, Discover Life Seventh-Day Adventist Church, and Hilltop Church.

Noise sources that contribute to ambient noise levels in and adjacent to the project corridor include consistent vehicle traffic along State Route 49, as well as consistent ambient noise originating east of the project area along North Washington Street in downtown Sonora.

Environmental Consequences

Project effects related to noise for both Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2 are similar based on the proposed project footprints. The following initial study discussions of potential effects are combined and applicable for both build alternatives. The No-Build Alternative would have no impact related to noise. An analysis of project effects pursuant to the CEQA Appendix G Checklist is provided below.

a) Would the project result in 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. A Construction Noise Technical Memorandum was developed for the proposed project (Wood Rodgers 2026d) to identify potential construction-related sources of noise and provides methods to ensure the project would not result in excessive construction-period noise effects. The following is a discussion of the findings of the memorandum.

The project would include the installation of a Class I multi-use path along State Route 49 and Woods Creek, along with restriping of portions of State Route 49. The project would not increase the number of through traffic lanes; therefore, no permanent increase in ambient noise levels associated with project operations is anticipated. However, construction activities are expected to temporarily increase ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project area during the standard construction times of 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., per City Municipal Code guidelines. Noise levels are expected to vary throughout the project duration, depending on the type of activity and equipment involved, and the distance between the source of the noise and the receptors. The loudest construction-related activities may include engine

noise from construction vehicles and jackhammering. For this project, the lowest construction equipment-related noise levels would be 55 dBA at a distance of 50 feet for sound from a pick-up truck. The highest construction-related noise levels would be for jackhammering (88 dBA at a distance of 50 feet) involved in general pavement breaking activities.

The nearest noise sensitive receptors to the location of proposed jackhammer operations are located approximately 75 feet from where jackhammering activities would occur. Therefore, based on general noise attenuation calculation per 50-foot increments, jackhammering operations at the nearest sensitive receptors would be approximately 84 dBA. However, the Federal Highway Administration mandates that all jackhammers and pavement breakers shall be fitted with manufacturer's approved exhaust mufflers, and that the use of pneumatic impact equipment (i.e. pavement breakers, jackhammers) shall be prohibited within 200 feet of a noise sensitive location during nighttime hours. With the use of jackhammers fitted with muffler tools, noise levels can be reduced to 74 dBA at distance of 50 feet (Federal Highway Administration 2017). General noise attenuation calculations place noise levels near surrounding sensitive receptors at 70 dBA.

Construction would be limited to the permissible daytime hours set forth in the City of Sonora Noise Ordinance. Additionally, all construction equipment would be fitted with mufflers as appropriate to reduce excessive noise. With the use of muffled jackhammers and pavement breaking equipment, in addition to standard construction best management practices outlined in NOI-1, noise resulting from project construction would comply with Caltrans construction noise guidelines and City and County noise regulations. Therefore, the project would not generate a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in relation to noise-sensitive receptors. Project impacts would be less than significant.

b) Would the project result in generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

Less Than Significant Impact. Project construction includes activities, such as operation of large pieces of equipment (e.g., heavy trucks) and pavement breaking equipment, which may result in the periodic, temporary generation of ground-borne vibration. The project does not introduce new sources of permanent ground-borne vibration. Due to the temporary and intermittent nature of any ground-borne vibration generated during construction, potential impacts would be considered less than significant.

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. The project is not within the vicinity of a private or public airport land use plan that would expose people working in the project site to excessive noise levels. Therefore, no impact would occur.

Standard Measures/Project Features

The following standard measures and best management practices would be incorporated into the project features to reduce and control noise generated during construction.

NOI-1:To avoid and minimize potential construction-related noise effects, the project would comply with Caltrans Standard Specification and Construction best management practices for Noise. The following best management practices would be implemented during project construction:

- Project-related noise-generating activities at, or adjacent to, the construction site shall comply with the Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-8.02. "Control and monitor noise resulting from work activities. Do not exceed 86 dBA at 50 feet from the job site from 9:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m."

- Generation of construction-related noise shall not be allowed between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, nor between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on Sunday.

- All internal combustion engine driven equipment shall be equipped with the appropriate intake and exhaust mufflers, which are in good condition.

- Unnecessary idling of internal combustion engines shall be strictly prohibited.

- Avoid staging construction equipment within 200 feet of residences and locate all stationary noise generating construction equipment as far as practical from existing noise receptors. Construct temporary barriers to screen noise generating equipment when located in areas adjoining noise sensitive land uses.

- Quiet air compressors and other stationary noise sources shall be used when applicable.

- All construction traffic shall be routed to and from the project site via designated truck routes. Construction-related heavy truck traffic shall be prohibited in residential areas where feasible. Construction truck traffic shall be prohibited in the project vicinity during non-allowed hours.

- The businesses and residents in the project area shall be notified in writing by the County of the construction schedule.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Noise Abatement Measures

No avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures relating to noise are required.

2.1.14 Population and Housing

Project effects to population and housing was analyzed in the project's Community Impact Assessment, approved May 2026. This study found that the project would not result in unplanned growth in excess of current growth projections analyzed within the City's General Plan Environmental Impact Report, nor would it extend or add capacity to existing roadways. Considering this information, the following significance determinations have been made:

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

2.1.15 Public Services

Considering information in the project's Community Impact Assessment, dated May 21, 2026, 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?	**No Impact**
Parks?	**No Impact**
Other public facilities?	**No Impact**

Affected Environment

A Community Impact Assessment (Wood Rodgers, 2026g) was prepared for the project to address the potential for project related impacts to the surrounding community. This report analyzed community demographics, growth potential, economic conditions, traffic, and other parameters. A summary of the analysis of public services within the community is provided below.

Fire Services

Fire protection and emergency services in the City are provided by the Sonora Fire Department. The department is staffed by two full-time personnel and two volunteer intern firefighters. In the event of a large-scale emergency or fire, the Sonora Fire Department relies on the participation of volunteers, off-duty full-time personnel, and resources from the County. The department's fire station is located at 201 South Shepherd Street.

Police Protection

Law enforcement services are primarily provided by the City of Sonora Police Department; however, the department is assisted by the Tuolumne County Sheriff's Department, which provides specialized services and support for service calls. The Sonora Police Department operates out of the 100 South Green Street station, which also houses a 24-hour Dispatch Center.

Schools

Sonora High School and Cassina High School are the only high schools within the project vicinity. There are no middle schools in the City; however, Sonora Elementary School provides education for students through 8th grade. Preschools in the area include Kiddie Kollege Preschool and Kountry Kids Preschool.

Parks

The City contains numerous historic and neighborhood parks, including:

- Courthouse Square – Located along North Washington Street and consists of a large lawn and benches.
- Woods Creek Rotary Park – Located off State Route 49 on Woods Creek Drive. This park contains a picnic area, a small playground, barbecue pits, and a baseball diamond.
- Coffill Park – Located below street level and contains a tree-lined picnic area and perennial creek.
- Grigsby Park – Located behind Coffill Park across Green Street and consists of a small tot lot for young children.
- Prospector Park – Located off Bradford Street and contains historic mining equipment.
- Heaven for Kids Playground – Located off Greenley Road and includes a wooden play structure, skate park, and picnic tables.

Environmental Consequences

Project effects related to public services for both Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2 are similar based on the proposed project footprints. The following initial study discussions of potential effects are combined and applicable for both build alternatives. The No-Build Alternative would have no impact related to public services. An analysis of project effects pursuant to the CEQA Appendix G Checklist is provided below.

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, police protection, schools, parks, and/or other public facilities?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project would construct a new multi-use path along the project corridor. Construction and operation of the project would not result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with provision of the new bicycle and pedestrian facilities; nor would it result in the need for new or altered government facilities, construction of which would cause environmental effects in order to maintain acceptable service ratios. During construction, response times of police and fire protection services may be temporarily altered. A traffic management plan would be implemented prior to construction to ensure that one lane traveling in each direction would be maintained in affected roadways (see Section 2.17 Transportation/Traffic). Access to adjacent properties by emergency personnel would be maintained throughout construction. Therefore, impacts related to this threshold would be considered less than significant and no mitigation is required.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures relating to public services are required.

2.1.16 Recreation

Considering information in the project's Community Impact Assessment, dated May 21, 2026, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Recreation
a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	**Less Than Significant 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?	**Less Than Significant Impact**

Affected Environment

A Community Impact Assessment (Wood Rodgers, 2026g) was prepared for the project to address the potential for project related impacts to the surrounding community. This report analyzed community demographics, growth potential, economic conditions, traffic, and other parameters. A

summary of the analysis of recreational resources within the community is provided below.

The City of Sonora contains six public parks throughout the community, consisting of:

- Courthouse Square – Located along North Washington Street and consists of a large lawn and benches.
- Woods Creek Rotary Park – Located off State Route 49 on Woods Creek Drive. This park contains a picnic area, a small playground, barbecue pits, and a baseball diamond.
- Coffill Park – Located below street level and contains a tree-lined picnic area and perennial creek.
- Grigsby Park – Located behind Coffill Park across Green Street and consists of a small tot lot for young children.
- Prospector Park – Located off Bradford Street and contains historic mining equipment.
- Heaven for Kids Playground – Located off Greenley Road and includes a wooden play structure, skate park, and picnic tables.

In addition to these park facilities, the Dragoon Gulch Trail provides a 3.1-mile public trail system through the City's oak woodlands. The trails travel along a natural creek up to a vista that provides a panoramic view of the City and its surrounding mountain ranges. The Dragoon Gulch Trail is operated and Maintained by the City of Sonora.

The project area overlaps with Woods Creek Rotary Park and the North Forest Trail segment of the Dragoon Gulch Trail. All public parks operated by a public agency, including these facilities, would be protected under the Park Preservation Act (Public Resources Code Sections 5400-5409) and Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act.

Environmental Consequences

An analysis of project effects pursuant to the CEQA Appendix G Checklist is provided below.

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?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project is not anticipated to result in substantial growth within the community. The project does have the potential to increase public visitation of Woods Creek Rotary Park by providing a

continuous bicycle and pedestrian route through the park between State Route 49 and Bonanza Road. However, any increase in park use resulting from the project is expected to be less than significant and would not result in a substantial physical deterioration of facilities.

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?

Less Than Significant Impact. The proposed multi-use path runs through Woods Creek Rotary Park and would require the pavement of an approximately 14-foot-wide trail adjacent to Woods Creek and the existing baseball diamond. The installation of this trail is a component of both Build Alternatives; however, the build alternatives differ in terms of trail alignment behind the park's baseball field. Additionally, both build alternatives would be constructed adjacent to the North Forest Road Trailhead of the Dragoon Gulch Trail, located immediately north of Woods Creek Rotary Park. No right of way acquisitions would occur within the public alignment of recreational resources and no portions of these resources would be acquired for non-recreational use under the build alternatives. All right of way acquisitions described in Table 1 (Section 1.4) would occur within private property and would not affect properties protected under the Parks Preservation Act. See Appendix A for a full analysis of anticipated use of Section 4(f) properties.

As a recreational infrastructure project, the project does include recreational facilities that may have physical effects on the environment during construction, which are analyzed throughout Chapter 2 of this study. Potential environmental effects would be managed through the implementation of Caltrans Standard Measures and project-specific avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures. With the inclusion of these measures, all environmental impacts resulting from the construction of the multi-use trail would be less than significant.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

To minimize impacts to parks and recreational facilities, the project would comply with the avoidance and minimization measures listed below. Implementation of these measures would ensure that impacts to parks in the project area are minimized to the greatest extent practicable. No mitigation is required for impacts to recreational resources.

PRF-1: The construction contractor would install temporary fencing at Woods Creek Rotary Park to provide a safety barrier between construction activities and recreational activities and to prevent construction equipment from encroaching on park facilities.

PRF-2: Trail construction surrounding the Woods Creek Rotary Park baseball field would be phased to avoid the Woods Creek Little League season, which

occurs from March through June. The City would coordinate directly with Woods Creek Little League to ensure construction is implemented in a manner that best avoids the disruption of recreational activities in Woods Creek Rotary Park.

PRF-3: The contractor would install temporary signage during paving activity adjacent to the Dragoon Gulch Trail indicating to the public that the North Forest Trailhead is temporarily inaccessible. The signage would also direct trail users to the Alpine Trailhead for parking and Dragoon Gulch Trail access.

Potential environmental effects resulting from the construction of recreational facilities would be avoided and minimized through the following avoidance and minimization measures. Please note, BIO-11 is used as a minimization measure for recreational resources and is not considered mitigation for this determination.

AES-3: Limit Area of Vegetation Clearing

AES-4: Revegetation and Recontouring of Temporary Impact Areas

AES-5: Limit Construction Lighting

AES-6: Good Housekeeping of Construction Site

BIO-4:Preconstruction Surveys for Northwestern Pond Turtle

BIO-5:Noxious Weed Control

BIO-6:Hydroseed Mix

BIO-7:Prohibit use of Herbicides and Rodenticides

BIO-8:Allow Subterranean Wildlife to Escape During Clearing and Grubbing

BIO-9:Dispose of Food Related Trash

BIO-10: Preconstruction Nesting Bird Surveys

BIO-11: Compensatory Mitigation for Riverine Habitats

CR-3: Environmentally Sensitive Area Designation

CR-4: Archaeological Monitoring Area Designation

2.1.17 Transportation

Considering information in the project's Community Impact Assessment, dated May 21, 2026, and the Tuolumne County Transportation Council

Regional Transportation Plan, dated March 2025, 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?	**Less Than Significant 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

A Community Impact Assessment (Wood Rodgers 2026g) was prepared for the project to address the potential for project related impacts to the surrounding community. This report analyzed community demographics, growth potential, economic conditions, traffic, and other parameters. A summary of the analysis of transportation systems within the community is provided below.

The principal east-west roadway within Tuolumne County is State Route 108, which spans the width of the County from its border with Stanislaus County to its border with Mono County. The principal north-south roadway in Tuolumne County is State Route 49, which spans from the border with Calaveras County to the border with Mariposa County. Both State Route 108 and State Route 49 are partially located within the City of Sonora, with State Route 108 forming the City's southern boundary.

State Route 49 within the project area generally lacks adequate pedestrian facilities. Sidewalks are present in several areas, primarily in the easter portion of the project area adjacent to downtown Sonora. However, sidewalk segments are often disconnected from each other, forcing pedestrians to walk on the shoulder of the highway.

Public transportation within the City is provided by Tuolumne County Transit. Tuolumne County Transit predominantly serves the communities of Columbia,

Sonora, and Jamestown through four separate routes: Route 1 – Sonora Loop, Route 2 – Sierra Village-Sonora, Route 3 – Jamestown-Sonora, and Saturday Route – Columbia/Sonora. Daily service begins at approximately 6:30 a.m. and concludes at approximately 7:30 p.m. Access to Sonora and State Route 49 is provided through all routes.

Environmental Consequences

Project effects related to transportation/traffic for both Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2 are similar based on the proposed project footprints. The following initial study discussions of potential effects are combined and applicable for both build alternatives. The No-Build Alternative would have no impact related to transportation/traffic. An analysis of project effects pursuant to the CEQA Appendix G Checklist is provided below.

a) Would the project conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?

Less Than Significant Impact. On March 12, 2025, the Tuolumne County Transportation Council adopted the 2024-2029 Tuolumne County Regional Transportation Plan, which was developed to be a guide for the systematic development of a balanced, comprehensive, multimodal transportation system throughout the County. Regional Transportation Plans are intended to be a long-range (minimum of 20 years) planning document addressing federal, state, regional, and local transportation goals. Specifically, Regional Transportation Plan development requires an analysis of strategies for operating, managing, maintaining, funding, and financing the region's transportation system. California state law mandates that Regional Transportation Plans be updated every four to five years.

The Gold Rush Multi-Use Path Project is programmed within the Tuolumne County Transportation Council 2024-2029 Regional Transportation Plan as a "significant addition for safer walking, biking, and other non-motorized travel and recreation" (Tuolumne County Transportation Council, 2025). Additionally, as a bicycle and pedestrian facility improvement project, the multi-use path would further the transportation goals of the City of Sonora and Tuolumne County general plans. No conflict with state, regional, or local plans would result from the project.

Construction of the proposed project could temporarily affect traffic circulation within the project site and its adjoining roads. However, traffic control measures would be implemented to maintain and control traffic throughout construction zones and/or detour routes and would conform to the City temporary traffic control guidelines. Project impacts would be considered less than significant and no mitigation would be required.

b) Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?

No Impact. The project is not a transportation project that would increase or alter vehicle miles traveled within the circulation system, as there would be no added lanes or widening of roadways for vehicle travel. Pursuant to the Caltrans Transportation Analysis under CEQA Section 5.1.1(ii), the project would be considered a project type not likely to lead to a measurable and substantial increase in vehicle travel, as it consists of the "addition of Class I bike paths, trails, multi-use paths, or other off-road facilities that serve non-motorized travel" (Caltrans 2025). Therefore, no impact would occur related to this threshold and no mitigation is required.

c) Would the project 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. Project improvements would be implemented along the existing roadway alignment. Construction of the project would not introduce any new hazards due to geometric design features or incompatible uses. Therefore, no impact would occur related to this threshold and no mitigation is required.

d) Would the project result in inadequate emergency access?

Less Than Significant Impact. The completed project would not result in permanent adverse impacts to emergency service response times or emergency access. Temporary lane closures along State Route 49 may be required during construction; however, traffic control measures would be implemented to maintain and control traffic throughout construction zones and ensure that at least one lane traveling in each direction remains open in affected roadways. With the inclusion of traffic control measures and a traffic management plan, temporary lane closures are not anticipated to substantially delay emergency response times or result in inadequate emergency access. Therefore, project impacts would be considered less than significant, and no mitigation would be required.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The following construction best management practice shall be incorporated into the project:

- Prior to construction, the City or construction contractor would prepare a Traffic Management Plan which would include the proposed detour route and locations of sign placement. The Traffic Management Plan would be submitted for review and approval by the Project Engineer.

2.1.18 Tribal Cultural Resources

Considering information in the project's Historic Properties Survey Report, Archaeological Survey Report, and Historic Resources Evaluation Report, dated June 12, 2026, 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

The Area of Potential Effect is located within the historic territory of the Central Sierra Miwok. Central Sierra Miwok is a Miwokan language most closely related to the Northern Sierra Miwok and the Southern Sierra Miwok; however, other Miwokan speakers include the Coast Miwok, Lake Miwok, Plains Miwok, and Saclan (California Language Archive 2026). Numerous historic Miwok villages were located in the vicinity of the City of Sonora, the most notable of which were Kuluti and Akankau-nchi. Tribal Cultural Resources could include, but are not limited to, Native American human remains, funerary objects, items or artifacts, sites, features, places, landscapes, or objects with cultural values to the tribe. Tribes culturally affiliated with the Miwok include the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians, Jackson Band of Miwok Indians, Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians, Federated Indians of Gratin Rancheria, California Valley Miwok Tribe,

Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians, Ione Band of Miwok Indians, and the Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians.

An Archaeological Survey Report was prepared for the project by HELIX Environmental Planning (HELIX 2026). Additionally, a Historic Property Survey Report and Historic Resources Evaluation Report were prepared for the project by PanGIS, Inc. (PanGIS 2026a; 2026b). The studies assessed the potential for surficial and/or buried archaeological and historical resources in the proposed improvement area through the completion of the following:

- Records and literature search at the Central California Information Center at California State University Stanislaus.
- Further literature review of publications, files, and maps for ethnographic, historic-era, and prehistoric resources and background information.
- Communication with the Native American Heritage Commission to request a review of the Sacred Lands File and contact information for the appropriate tribal communities.
- Contact with the appropriate local Native American Tribes, Groups, and Individuals.
- Pedestrian archaeological survey of the project site.

Study results were used as a technical basis for evaluating potential impacts to historic and cultural resources under CEQA. Findings of these studies are discussed in Section 2.5, Cultural Resources.

Native American Consultation

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, formal outreach letters were sent by the Caltrans District 10 Native American Coordinator on December 14, 2025, to representatives from the following tribes:

- Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians
- Calaveras Band of Mi-Wuk Indians
- Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians
- Ione Band of Miwok Indians
- Jackson Rancheria Band of Miwuk Indians
- Nashville Enterprise Miwok-Maidu-Nishinam Tribe
- Pakan’yani Maidu of Strawberry Valley Rancheria

- Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation
- Tule River Indian Tribe
- Wuksache Indian Tribe/Eshom Valley Band

All of the above listed tribes did not respond or deferred consultation to another tribe. The Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians requested consultation and an initial meeting with the tribe was scheduled for February 11, 2026. The Tribe's Cultural Manager described the cultural sensitivity of the project vicinity and requested an Extended Phase I Study of the Area of Potential Effects. Tribal monitoring during construction was also requested. A subsequent meeting with the Tribe was scheduled for May 22, 2026, which focused on the specifics of the Extended Phase I testing, including the placement of hand augers that would supplement the geotechnical borings. Tribal monitoring during Extended Phase I testing was requested. No further meetings with the Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians have been scheduled to date.

Environmental Consequences

Project effects related to tribal cultural resources for both Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2 are similar based on the proposed project footprints. The following initial study discussions of potential effects are combined and applicable for both build alternatives. The No-Build Alternative would have no impact related to tribal cultural resources. An analysis of project effects pursuant to the CEQA Appendix G Checklist is provided below.

If a lead agency determines that a project may cause a substantial adverse change to a Tribal Cultural Resource, the lead agency must consider measures to mitigate that impact. Consultation concludes when either: 1) the parties agree to measures to mitigate or avoid a significant effect, if a significant effect exists, on a Tribal Cultural Resource; or 2) a party, acting in good faith, and after reasonable effort, concludes that mutual agreement cannot be reached (PRC § 21080.3.2). Under existing law, environmental documents must not include information about the locations of an archaeological site or sacred lands or any other information that is exempt from public disclosure pursuant to the Public Records act.

a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, 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)

Less Than Significant Impact. Review of soil series, landforms, and literature indicates that the Carboniferous-aged bedrock units (Calaveras Formation; Logtown Ridge) provide low potential for buried archaeological deposits within undisturbed sediments because these formations predate human occupation.

Buried precontact cultural deposits are more likely to occur in Holocene-aged (<10,000 years BP) alluvial or colluvial sediments and in proximity to perennial freshwater sources. The position of Woods Creek within the Area of Potential Effects indicates a high potential for buried precontact resources in alluvial or colluvial deposits adjacent to the creek channel. Ethnographic and archaeological precedent supports intensified settlement and activity near freshwater sources.

The Archaeological Survey Report conducted for the project identified a previously documented archaeological resource in the project vicinity. Extended Phase I testing was conducted within the Area of Potential Effect, which consisted of a series of borings and hand augers to determine the presence or absence of subsurface cultural materials. No evidence of cultural materials was identified during geotechnical testing efforts. Additionally, the project would predominantly consist of shallow excavation; therefore, this resource is considered to be outside of the vertical Area of Potential Effect. Cultural resources occurring above the soil surface would be protected with Environmental Sensitive Area fencing to ensure no adverse impacts occur as a result of construction equipment or personnel.

To avoid potential impacts to previously unidentified archaeological resources that may be determined significant per CEQA, standard measure CR-1 would be implemented, which would require procedures to be taken in the event of inadvertent discovery of resources consistent with appropriate laws and requirements. Two avoidance and minimization measures are included in the project that would apply to tribal cultural resources. CR-3 would require the implementation of an Environmental Sensitive Area Action Plan to protect cultural resources in the Area of Potential Effect. CR-4 would require archaeological and/or tribal monitoring of all ground disturbing construction activities within a designated Archaeological Monitoring Area. With the incorporation of these measures, the project would have a less than significant impact related to this threshold.

b) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

Less Than Significant Impact. As described above, Caltrans provided formal outreach letters to representatives of Native American tribes with historic and cultural ties to the Area of Potential Effect. The Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians requested consultation which would remain ongoing throughout the duration of the project. Tribal representatives requested

Extended Phase I testing within the Area of Potential Effect and the presence of a tribal monitor onsite during geotechnical efforts and project construction. Any additional measures requested by the Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians in the future would be incorporated into the project.

Extended Phase I geotechnical testing in the Area of Potential Effect requested during tribal consultation did not identify any subsurface cultural materials. However, in the event of an inadvertent discovery of resources during construction, the project would implement standard measures CR-1 and CR-2 (see Section 2.5, Cultural Resources) to ensure the appropriate procedures are taken. With the inclusion of these measures, impacts related to this threshold would be less than significant.

Standard Measures/Project Features

The project would include standard measures **CR-1** and **CR-2**, discussed in Section 2.5, Cultural Resources, to reduce and control impacts to tribal cultural resources during construction.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

To avoid and minimize impacts to cultural resources, the project would implement avoidance and minimization measure **CR-3** and **CR-4** during construction. This measure is discussed in detail in Section 2.5, Cultural Resources. No mitigation would be required.

2.1.19 Utilities and Service Systems

Considering information in the project's Community Impact Assessment, dated May 21, 2026, 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**
b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	**Less Than Significant Impact**

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Utilities and Service Systems
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?	**Less Than Significant Impact**
e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	**Less Than Significant Impact**

Affected Environment

A Community Impact Assessment (Wood Rodgers 2026g) was prepared for the project to address the potential for project related impacts to the surrounding community. This report analyzed community demographics, growth potential, economic conditions, traffic, and other parameters, A summary of the analysis of utility services within the community is provided below.

Natural gas and electric power within the City are provided by Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E). Water and sewer utilities within the City are provided by the Tuolumne Utilities District. Facilities operated by Tuolumne Utilities District (e.g., treatment plants, pumps, storage tanks, wells) are primarily located in rural areas; therefore, no Tuolumne Utilities District facilities or infrastructure are located in the project area.

Environmental Consequences

Project effects related to utilities and service systems for both Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2 are similar based on the proposed project footprints. The following initial study discussions of potential effects are combined and applicable for both build alternatives. The No-Build Alternative would have no impact related to utilities and service systems. An analysis of project effects pursuant to the CEQA Appendix G Checklist is provided below.

a) Would the project 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. The proposed multi-use path has the potential to require relocation of underground or overhead utilities, including PG&E gas lines, City water lines, and AT&T underground phone and fiber lines. However, the project would not result in a permanent reduction in utility service, nor would it facilitate substantial community growth that would increase utility usage. Utility service would be restored upon completion of construction; therefore, the relocation of utilities would not result in substantial environmental effects. Project impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

b) Would the project have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project would temporarily utilize water for dust suppression and other activities during construction. Construction-related water demands would be short-term and minimal in volume. Project operation would not require a permanent water supply. No impact related to future water supply during normal, dry, or multiple dry years would occur. Due to the temporary and intermittent nature of projected water usage during construction, project impacts would be considered less than significant and no mitigation is required.

c) Would the project 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. The project would not include the construction of any wastewater-generating uses. The project would not induce the growth of the regional or local population. Therefore, no impact would occur and no mitigation is required.

d) Would the project 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?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project would not generate substantial solid waste during operation. Solid waste may be generated during construction; however, the quantity would not exceed local landfill capacities. Additionally, any generation of solid waste would be temporary and would only occur during the construction period. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant and no mitigation is required.

e) Would the project comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project would comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant and no mitigation is required.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures relating to utilities and service systems are required.

2.1.20 Wildfire

Considering information published by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and the City of Sonora Emergency Operations Plan, 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?	**Less Than Significant 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

According to the CAL FIRE Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map (CAL FIRE 2026), the project is located in High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones within the Local Responsibility Area of the City of Sonora.

Environmental Consequences

Project effects related to wildfire for both Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2 are similar based on the proposed project footprints. The following initial study discussions of potential effects are combined and applicable for both build alternatives. The No-Build Alternative would have no impact related to wildfire. An analysis of project effects pursuant to the CEQA Appendix G Checklist is provided below.

a) Would the project substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

Less Than Significant Impact. The City of Sonora Emergency Operations Plan was adopted in February 2014. The purpose of the Emergency Operations Plan is to clearly delineate the City's procedures and policies when responding to a significant disaster, defined as any emergency which could impact the health, safety, and property of the public within the operational area's limits. The operation of the multi-use trail would not impair the adopted Emergency Operations Plans or implementation of fire suppression services within the project corridor or project vicinity. Emergency response times may be temporarily delayed during project construction due to lane closures on State Route 49. However, the project would implement traffic control measures and a traffic management plan to minimize potential delays in the event of an emergency or evacuation. Emergency access would be returned to pre-project conditions following the completion of construction. With the inclusion of traffic control measures and a traffic management plan, project construction is not anticipated to result in impairment of the Emergency Operations Plan and impacts would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

b) Would the project, 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. As stated above, the project area is located in High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. However, the project does not contain elements that would affect slope, prevailing winds, or other factors in a manner that would exacerbate fire risks within these zones. No impact would occur and no mitigation would be required.

c) Would the project 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?

Less Than Significant Impact. As described in Section 2.19, Utilities and Service Systems, the project would require the relocation of underground and overhead utilities that may be in conflict with the proposed alignment of the multi-use path. Any overhead power lines requiring relocation would be temporarily powered off to minimize the potential for inadvertent fire ignition. Therefore, the project would not exacerbate fire risk and impacts would be considered less than significant. No mitigation is required.

d) Would the project 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. The construction and operation of the proposed multi-use path would not expose people or structures to significant risks, as a result of runoff, post-fire instability or drainage changes. Therefore, no impact would occur and no mitigation is required.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

No avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures relating to wildfire are required.

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**

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Mandatory Findings of Significance
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 Impact**
c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	**Less Than Significant Impact**

Affected Environment

The proposed project would construct a 1.5-mile multi-use trail, beginning in the city of Sonora at State Route 49 and South Green Street, extending south down State Route 49 to an existing trail located near the Motherlode Fairgrounds. In addition, a trail junction would be constructed at the State Route 49/Woods Creek Drive intersection, forming a T in the trail. From this intersection, the trail will extend north through Woods Creek Rotary Park toward Bonanza Road and Snell Street.

Proposed improvements would include the Class I multi-use trail, bicycle and pedestrian crossings and rapid flashing beacons at several intersections along the project corridor, a 50-foot by 14-foot full-span bridge over Woods Creek south of Bonanza Road, landscaped buffers between travel lanes and the multi-use path, and intersection reconfiguration.

Environmental Consequences

a) Does the project have the potential to 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 with Mitigation. Based upon the review and analysis of potential adverse effects to the environment provided in this Initial Study (including the project-specific mitigation measures) the proposed project would not substantially degrade the overall quality of the environment within the project site. The analysis provided in Section 2.4 Biological Resources

determined potentially significant impacts must be mitigated to a less-than-significant level with incorporation of project-specific mitigation measures.

With the incorporation of standard measures, avoidance and minimization, and mitigation measure BIO-11 for potential impacts to biological resources, the potential for project-related activities to degrade the quality of the environment would be reduced to less than significant levels. Therefore, the project impacts related to this threshold would be considered less than significant 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 Impact. Implementation of the project, in conjunction with other approved or pending projects within the County, would not have adverse environmental impacts at a significant level or result in cumulatively considerable impacts to the environment. According to the City of Sonora 2024-2029 Capital Improvement Plan, several planned projects occur within the 0.5 miles of the proposed multi-use trail. The Snell Street Road Reconstruction and Drainage Improvement Project partially overlaps with the proposed project at the intersection of Bonanza Road and Snell Street. Additionally, the Linoberg Road Retaining Wall Project, North Stewart Street Retaining Wall Replacement Project, Parking Lot Improvement Projects, and Vision Sonora/Blue Zone Pedestrian Projects are located adjacent to the project corridor in downtown Sonora. Although these projects are in proximity to the proposed project, each project would include individual environmental analysis outlining avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures to reduce the potential for adverse environmental impacts. Therefore, the project is not anticipated to result in cumulatively considerable impacts when viewed in connection with past, current, or planned projects within the County.

c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

Less Than Significant Impact. Based upon the review and analysis of potential adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly, provided in this Initial Study, the project would not have environmental effects which would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings.

With the incorporation of standard measures and avoidance and minimization measures, the potential for project-related activities to cause substantial adverse effects on human beings would be reduced to a less than significant level. Therefore, the project impacts related to this threshold would be considered less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Avoidance and Minimization Measures

AES-3: Vegetation clearing would only occur within the delineated project boundaries in an effort to minimize impacts. Trees located in areas along the edge of the construction zone would be trimmed whenever possible and only those trees that lie within the active construction areas would be removed.

AES-4: All disturbed areas including staging of vehicles and equipment would be restored to pre-construction contours and revegetated, either through hydroseeding or other means, with native species.

AES-5: Where feasible, construction lighting would be limited to within the area of work.

AES-6: The contractor would be required to maintain good housekeeping in and around construction sites, staging areas, and equipment storage areas.

BIO-4:No more than twenty-four (24) hours prior to the date of initial ground disturbance, a preconstruction survey for northwestern pond turtle would be conducted by a qualified biologist. The survey would consist of walking the areas adjacent to Woods Creek to ascertain the suitability of habitat and possible presence of the species. The qualified biologist would investigate all potential areas that could be used by northwestern pond turtle for feeding, breeding, sheltering, movement, and other essential behaviors. This includes an adequate examination of upland areas to look for evidence of nests as well as individual turtles. If any adults, juveniles, or eggs are found, the qualified biologist would contact the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife to determine if moving any of the individuals is appropriate. In making this determination the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife would consider if an appropriate relocation site exists. If the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife approve moving animals, the qualified biologist would be given sufficient time to move the animals from the work site before ground disturbance is initiated. Only United States Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife -approved biologists would capture or handle northwestern pond turtle.

BIO-5:Prior to arrival at the project site and prior to leaving the project site, construction equipment that may contain invasive plants and/or seeds must be cleaned to reduce the spreading of noxious weeds.

BIO-6:All hydro seed and plant mixes must consist of a biologist approved native seed mix.

BIO-7:The contractor must not use herbicides to control invasive, exotic plants or apply rodenticides during construction.

BIO-8:To allow subterranean wildlife enough time to escape initial clearing and grubbing activities, equipment used during initial clearing and grubbing must be operated at speeds no greater than three miles per hour.

BIO-9:The contractor must dispose of all food-related trash in closed containers and must remove it from the project area each day during construction. Construction personnel must not feed or attract wildlife to the project area.

BIO-10: If vegetation removal or ground disturbance is required during the nesting season (February 1st – August 31st), a pre-construction nesting bird survey must be conducted within seven days prior to vegetation removal. Within two weeks of the nesting bird survey, all vegetation cleared by the biologist would be removed by the contractor.

A minimum 100-foot no-disturbance buffer would be established around any active nest of migratory birds and a minimum 300-foot no-disturbance buffer would be established around any nesting raptor species. The contractor must immediately stop work in the buffer area until the appropriate buffer is established and is prohibited from conducting work that could disturb the birds (as determined by the project biologist and in consultation with wildlife agencies) in the buffer area until a qualified biologist determines the young have fledged. A reduced buffer can be established if determined appropriate by the project biologist and approved by California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

CR-3: A qualified archaeologist shall designate Environmentally Sensitive Areas for the protection of cultural resources within or near the project's area of potential effect. These boundaries would be recorded in and implemented through the June 2026 Environmentally Sensitive Area Action Plan and shown on project plans. These Environmentally Sensitive Area boundaries would be established as a first order of work and remain in place until all construction activities are complete. Contractor encroachment into Environmentally Sensitive Areas would be prohibited. If the Environmentally Sensitive Area boundaries are breached, all work within 60 feet of the boundary would be stopped, the area would be secured, and the Caltrans resident engineer must be notified. If the Environmentally Sensitive Area is damaged, Caltrans would determine the necessary remediation and the party to perform this work.

CR-4: An Archaeological Monitoring Area has been established for a portion of the project area. This monitoring area requires a qualified archaeological monitor and/or Native American monitor to observe all ground disturbing activities within the monitoring area boundary. The monitoring area boundary

would be included on the Design Layouts and called out in the order of work prior to the start of construction.

PRF-1: The construction contractor would install temporary fencing at Woods Creek Rotary Park to provide a safety barrier between construction activities and recreational activities and to prevent construction equipment from encroaching on park facilities.

PRF-2: Trail construction surrounding the Woods Creek Rotary Park baseball field would be phased to avoid the Woods Creek Little League season, which occurs from March through June. The City would coordinate directly with Woods Creek Little League to ensure construction is implemented in a manner that best avoids the disruption of recreational activities in Woods Creek Rotary Park.

PRF-3: The contractor would install temporary signage during paving activity adjacent to the Dragoon Gulch Trail indicating to the public that the North Forest Trailhead is temporarily inaccessible. The signage would also direct trail users to the Alpine Trailhead for parking and Dragoon Gulch Trail access.

Mitigation Measures

BIO-11: Compensatory mitigation would be provided for any riverine habitats that would be permanently impacted by the project, resulting in no net loss of aquatic resources or habitat. Mitigation would be provided using an agency-approved mitigation ratio via one of the following compensatory mitigation options:

- Payment of an in-lieu fee or mitigation credits to an agency-approved mitigation site.
- Compensatory off-site mitigation at an agency-approved mitigation site.
- Compensatory on-site mitigation.
- A combination of the above compensatory mitigation options.

Consultation efforts with the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Water Quality Control Board, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife through Section 404, Section 401, and Section 1602 permitting processes would determine final mitigation ratios for permanent impacts to Waters of the United States, Waters of the State and California Department of Fish and Wildlife waters.

Chapter 3 Coordination

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

3.1 Consultation and Coordination with Public Agencies

Consultation and/or coordination with the following agencies was, or would be initiated for the project. A summary of consultation efforts has been included where applicable:

- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
    - Official species lists obtained from California Department of Fish and Wildlife California Natural Diversity Database. As direct effects to special-status plants and animals would be avoided, further consultation with California Department of Fish and Wildlife is not required.
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
    - Official species lists obtained from United States Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation. As direct effects to federally listed plants and animals would be avoided, further consultation with United States Fish and Wildlife Service is not currently required. Consultation with United States Fish and Wildlife Service would be conducted for impacts to northwestern pond turtle aquatic habitat upon listing of the species on the federal Endangered Species Act.
- Central Valley – Regional Water Quality Control Board
    - Consultation to be initiated prior to construction for permitting under Clean Water Act Section 401.
- United States Army Corps of Engineers
    - Consultation to be initiated prior to construction for permitting under Clean Water Act Section 404.
- Tribal Consultation
    - Caltrans provided formal outreach letters to representatives of Native American tribes with historic and cultural ties to the Area of Potential Effect. The Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk

Indians requested consultation which would remain ongoing throughout the duration of the project. Tribal representatives requested Extended Phase I testing within the Area of Potential Effect and the presence of a tribal monitor onsite during geotechnical efforts and project construction.

- State Historic Preservation Office:
    - The Historic Property Survey Report, Archaeological Survey Report, and Historic Resource Evaluation Report were submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office for review and concurrence on June 19, 2026.

3.2 Public Participation

The public comment period for the project will occur from July 15, 2026, to August 14, 2026. All written comments received by the Caltrans would be incorporated into the Final Initial Study with Mitigated Negative Declaration and added in an appendix. Any additions or corrections to the Initial Study with Mitigated Negative Declaration and subsequent to public comments will be addressed within the final document.

Chapter 4 References

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

Jonathan Coley
District 10 Environmental Division
California Department of Transportation
1976 East Doctor Martin Luther King Junior Boulevard, Stockton, CA 95207

Or send your request via email to: Jonathan.Coley@dot.ca.gov Or call: 209-479-4083

Please provide the following information in your request:

Project title: Gold Rush Multi-Use Path Phase I

General location information: Tuolumne County, in the City of Sonora, along State Route 49

District number-county code-route-post mile: 10-TUO-49-17.2/17.9

Project number/EA: 1024000070/10-1S350

Appendix A Section 4(f)

Introduction

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, codified in federal law at 49 U.S. Code 303, declares that “it is the policy of the United States Government that special effort should be made to preserve the natural beauty of the countryside and public park and recreation lands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites.”

This section of the document discusses de minimis impact determinations under Section 4(f). The Section 4(f) statute and regulations allow for a simplified approval process for projects that have only de minimis impacts on lands protected by Section 4(f). Once it is determined that a transportation use of Section 4(f) property, after consideration of any impact avoidance, minimization, and mitigation or enhancement measures, results in a de minimis impact on that property, an analysis of avoidance alternatives is not required and the Section 4(f) evaluation process is complete. Federal Highway Administration’s final rule on Section 4(f) de minimis findings is codified in 23 CFR 774.3 and CFR 774.17.

Responsibility for compliance with Section 4(f) has been assigned to Caltrans pursuant to 23 USC 326 and 327, including de minimis impact determinations, as well as coordination with those agencies that have jurisdiction over a Section 4(f) resource that may be affected by a project action.

Description of the Proposed Project

The California Department of Transportation, in cooperation with the City of Sonora, proposes to construct a multi-use trail, beginning in the city of Sonora at State Route 49 and South Green Street, extending south down State Route 49 to an existing trail located near the Motherlode Fairgrounds. In addition, a trail junction would be constructed at the State Route 49 and Woods Creek Drive intersection, forming a T in the trail. The project can be broken into three sections: South Green Street to Woods Creek Drive, Woods Creek Drive to Motherlode Fairgrounds, and Woods Creek Drive to Snell Street. Project-wide improvements would consist of construction of a Class I pedestrian and bicycle path, Americans with Disabilities Act improvements, and restriping portions of State Route 49 to narrow and shift the existing lanes.

The project proposes two build alternatives and a no build alternative. Under the no build alternative, no changes would be made to the project area. The common and unique design features of the build alternatives are listed below.

Common Design Features of the Build Alternatives

South Green Street to Woods Creek Drive

This section of the trail would be constructed on the southbound side of State Route 49. Project improvements for this section include the following:

- Implementation of a typical landscape buffer between vehicle travel lanes and the new Class I path, from the First Sonora Shopping Center western entrance to State Route 49/Jackson Street.
- Reconfiguration of the parking lot of the First Sonora Shopping Center.
- Designated pedestrian/bicycle crossings at the intersections of State Route 49/Bradford Street and State Route 49/W Jackson Street.
- Reconfiguration of State Route 49/Bradford Street and State Route 49/W Jackson Street intersections to standard single point intersections.
- Installation of a retaining wall west of W Jackson Street.
- Installation of a rapid flashing beacon crosswalk at the State Route 49/Woods Creek Drive/Southgate Drive intersection.

Woods Creek Drive to Motherlode Fairgrounds

This section of the trail would continue down the southbound side of State Route 49, where it would connect with an existing trail near the Motherlode Fairgrounds. Project improvements for this section include the following:

- Designated pedestrian/bicycle crossings at the intersections of State Route 49/Fairview Lane and State Route 49/Ponderosa Lane.
- Installation of a rapid flashing beacon crosswalk at the State Route 49/Motherlode Fairgrounds trail intersection, approximately 900 feet southbound of the State Route 49/Ponderosa Lane intersection.

Woods Creek Drive to Snell Street

This section of the trail would extend through the western edge of Woods Creek Rotary Park, converging with the Dragoon Gulch Trailhead. The trail would then continue northbound, where it would connect with West Bonanza Road, and end at the West Bonanza Road and Snell Street intersection. Project improvements for this section include:

- Construction of a 50’ by 14’ full-span bridge over Woods Creek, just south of West Bonanza Road.

- Installation of a retaining wall for the switchback portion of the trail, between the new bridge and West Bonanza Road.

- Designated pedestrian/bicyclist crossings (2) at the West Bonanza Road/Snell Street intersection.

Existing utilities may be in conflict with the proposed project. If conflicts are identified, existing utilities would be relocated. Specifically, PG&E gas lines, City of Sonora water lines, and AT&T underground phone and fiber lines may require relocation. The proposed method of relocation would be open trenching with excavators or other similar excavation equipment.

Temporary construction easements may be needed at specific locations within the project area. Construction staging is expected to occur within Caltrans and City of Sonora right-of-way and adjacent privately owned parcels, where necessary. Permanent right-of-way acquisitions are anticipated. Table 1 below provides a summary of anticipated right of way acquisitions for the project. As the build alternatives only differ in the alignment of the trail behind the baseball field, which is within City right of way, proposed right of way acquisitions are the same for both build alternatives.

Unique Features of the Build Alternatives

Build Alternative 1

This alternative would consist of constructing the trail through the edge of the existing baseball field in Woods Creek Rotary Park. This would include shifting the existing baseball field fencing into the field, to allow enough room for the Class I path to be constructed adjacent to Woods Creek. All other project components would be identical to Alternative 2. See Figure 3A, Alternative 1 Project Features.

Build Alternative 2

This alternative would consist of reconstruction of the edge of Woods Creek to allow access to the trail through the park without impacting the existing baseball field. A combination of earthen fill and a retaining wall would be constructed to maintain proper trail width. All other project components would be identical to Alternative 1. See Figure 3B. Alternative 2 Project Features.

Section 4(f) De Minimis Determination(s)

This section of the document discusses de minimis impact determinations under Section 4(f). The Section 4(f) statue and regulations allow for a simplified approval process for projects that have only de minimis impacts on lands protected by Section 4(f). Once it is determined that a transportation use of Section 4(f) property, after consideration of any impact avoidance, minimization, and mitigation or enhancement measures, results in a de minimis impact on that property, an analysis of avoidance alternatives is not required and the Section 4(f) evaluation process is complete. FHWA's final rule on Section 4(f) de minimis findings is codified in 23 CFR 774.3 and CFR 774.17.

Responsibility for compliance with Section 4(f) has been assigned to Caltrans pursuant to 23 USC 326 and 327, including de minimis impact determinations, as well as coordination with those agencies that have jurisdiction over a Section 4(f) resource that may be affected by a project action.

The project footprint has been analyzed for the presence of Section 4(f) resources, including publicly owned parks, recreation areas, and wildlife and waterfowl refuges, as well as archaeological and historic sites. This project would occur adjacent to Woods Creek Rotary Park and the Dragoon Gulch Trail, both publicly owned recreation lands subject to the provisions of Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act. No adverse impacts to Section 4(f) resources are anticipated to occur. The project is expected to result in a *de minimis* impact to both recreational resources under Section 4(f) due to the minority of proposed impacts. Two historic resources are present in the project area and they have not been formally evaluated for eligibility under the National Register of Historic Placers (NRHP). These resources are assumed eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for the purposes of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and they are therefore considered Section 4(f) resources. These resources would be fully avoided with the implementation of an Environmentally Sensitive Area Action Plan. Therefore, a de minimis impact to these Section 4(f) resources would occur and a finding of No Adverse Effect with Secretary of Interior Standard Conditions (Environmentally Sensitive Area Action Plan) under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Table 2. Section 4(f) Properties within the Project Footprint

Property	Section 4(f) Features	Official with Jurisdiction	Proposed Right of Way Needs	Anticipated Use
Woods Creek Rotary Park	Baseball diamond, playground facilities, public barbecues, picnic tables, shade structure, restrooms	City of Sonora, Community Development Department	No right of way acquisitions - Park is within City Right of Way. Approximately 0.2 acres of the park would be converted to recreational trail.	*De minimis:* Paving of a Class I trail along Woods Creek in the park. Baseball field fenceline would be shifted east by 5 feet. Seven (7) parking spaces would be removed to accommodate trail construction.
Dragoon Gulch Trail	3.1-mile trail system	City of Sonora, Community Development Department	1,048-square-foot trail easement on APN 001-230-026 (private property).	*De minimis:* Short-term closure of trailhead.
P-55-002319	Pre-historic archaeological site	State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)	No right of way needs	*No Use*

Parks and Recreational Resources

Woods Creek Rotary Park

Activities, Features, and Attributes

Woods Creek Rotary Park is located off State Route 49/Stockton Road on Woods Creek Drive, and is bound by Woods Creek, State Route 49/W Stockton Street, and Woods Creek Drive. Woods Creek Rotary Park encompasses approximately 4.10 acres. Recreational facilities found in the park include:

- seating and picnic tables

- playground facilities
- public barbecues
- shade structure
- public restrooms
- baseball diamond

Woods Creek Rotary Park is owned and operated by the City of Sonora Community Development Department. The baseball diamond is used by the Woods Creek Little League, which is based in the City of Sonora. As a recreational resource that is open to the public, Woods Creek Rotary Park is considered a Section 4(f) resource.

Use

The proposed multi-use path runs through Woods Creek Rotary Park and would require the pavement of an approximately 14-foot-wide trail adjacent to Woods Creek and the existing baseball diamond. The installation of this trail is a component of both Build Alternatives; however, the build alternatives differ in terms of trail alignment behind the park's baseball field.

Under both build alternatives, portions of Woods Creek Rotary Park would be temporarily inaccessible during paving activities. However, full closure is not anticipated to be necessary, and access to the park would be restored following the completion of construction. The project would result in the loss of seven parking spaces within Woods Creek Rotary Park, located near State Route 49 (See Figure 1 below). No loss of parking would occur in the primary parking lot located behind the baseball field, which serves both the park and the Dragoon Gulch Trail.

The project would result in minor proximity impacts as temporary construction noise may impact park visitors; however, the project does not propose any sources of substantial construction noise or groundborne vibration in this area, such as pile driving or demolition. Furthermore, construction noise attributable to the project would be short-term, intermittent, and would only occur during permissible hours as defined in Section 8.20.040 of the Sonora Municipal Code. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project is not anticipated to result in noise that would disrupt public use of Woods Creek Rotary Park.



Figure 1. *Location of parking impacts.*

Build Alternative 1

Build Alternative 1 would install a new bicycle and pedestrian path through the park, adjacent to Woods Creek, slightly encroaching into the right corner of the baseball field. Under Build Alternative 1, the trail would be constructed through the edge of the existing baseball field and the fencing would be shifted to accommodate the width of the trail. The fenceline would be moved approximately five feet east, resulting in approximately 0.004 acres of permanent impacts; however, these impacts would occur at the furthest edge of the right outfield and are not expected to impair long-term little league use of the baseball field (see Figure 5). Modifications to the existing baseball field fencing proposed under Build Alternative 1 may result in the baseball field being temporarily inaccessible during trail construction. However, access to the baseball field would be restored following the completion of construction.

Build Alternative 2

Under Build Alternative 2, a new bicycle and pedestrian path through the park would also be constructed. However, this alternative would place fill along the east bank of Woods Creek adjacent to the baseball field and install a retaining wall to provide adequate space for the Class I path without modifying the existing field. Although impacts to the baseball field would be avoided under Build Alternative 2, this alternative would require more substantial adverse effects to other environmental factors, including biological resources and water quality associated with Woods Creek. The placement of fill within the creek bed may modify the existing hydraulics of Woods Creek and may result in flooding of the park without additional mitigation.

De Minimis Determination

The multi-use path within Woods Creek Rotary Park proposed under both build alternatives would be compatible with recreational uses of the park. The construction of the multi-use path would enhance public use of this recreational resource by routing bicycle and pedestrian trail users through the park on the way to Bonanza Road, resulting in an overall benefit for this Section 4(f) resource. The project would require temporary closures of portions of the park during trail construction. However, only areas in the immediate vicinity of paving activities would be closed to the public, and full closures of the park are not anticipated. The project would affect the baseball field within the park, but is not anticipated to adversely affect other recreational facilities within the park, including shade structures or restrooms. Seven parking spaces would require removal adjacent to State Route 49; however, no loss of parking would occur in the primary parking lot behind the baseball field.

Impacts to the baseball field, a key Section 4(f) attribute of Woods Creek Rotary Park, vary based on the different build alternatives. Therefore, the justifications of the de minimis finding are provided for each build alternative below.

Build Alternative 1

The baseball field is an attribute that contributes to the Section 4(f) resource qualification of Woods Creek Rotary Park. Although the western fenceline of the park's baseball field would be shifted five feet east into the field, this 0.004-acre impact would occur at the furthest edge of the right outfield (see Figure 2). The Little League Baseball Organization recommends a distance of 200 feet between the home plate and the nearest fenceline. The existing western fenceline is approximately 195 feet from the home plate and would be shifted to approximately 190 feet from the home plate following the completion of the project. During the regular season, Little League Baseball Organization does not require fields to meet the official field dimensions and

specifications; however, baseball fields are required to meet minimum facility standards published by Little League Baseball Organization to be eligible to host tournament games. As the western fenceline is currently less than 200 feet from the home plate, the existing Woods Creek Rotary Park baseball field is ineligible for hosting tournament games under Little League Baseball Organization standards. Therefore, shifting the fenceline five feet east would not adversely affect the baseball field's current uses. The baseball field would remain functional for the Woods Creek Little League's regular season and public use of this area would not be permanently inhibited.

Although the project would not result in permanent adverse effects to the baseball field, this area would require temporary closure (approximately 4-6 weeks) during construction. Full access to the baseball field would be restored following the completion of construction. Right of way acquisitions within Woods Creek Rotary Park would not be required under Build Alternative 1, as the park is owned and operated by the City. Approximately 0.2 acres of Woods Creek Rotary Park would be converted to the proposed multi-use path; however, this would still be a recreational use. To further minimize project impacts to this recreational resource under Build Alternative 1, the project would implement measures PRF-1 and PRF-2, which would require the use of fencing to reduce the potential for unnecessary encroachment into the park, as well as phase the project to avoid the playing season of the Woods Creek Little League. With the inclusion of these measures, no adverse impacts are anticipated to result from project implementation; therefore, impacts to Woods Creek Rotary Park under Build Alternative 1, as a Section 4(f) resource, would be *de minimis*.



Figure 2. *Build Alternative 1 Fence Relocation Concept*

Build Alternative 2

Build Alternative 2 would result in no permanent impacts to the Woods Creek Rotary Park baseball field. Although permanent modification of this resource would be avoided, temporary construction impacts would still occur in proximity to the baseball field during trail paving. Right of way acquisitions within Woods Creek Rotary Park would not be required under Build Alternative 2, as the park is owned and operated by the City. Approximately 0.2 acres of Woods Creek Rotary Park would be converted to the proposed multi-use path; however, this would still be a recreational use and would enhance the recreational use and access of Woods Creek Rotary Park. Build Alternative 2 would also implement measures PRF-1 and PRF-2 to minimize the potential for impacts to the public during construction. With the inclusion of these measures, no adverse impacts are anticipated to result from project implementation; therefore, impacts to Woods Creek Rotary Park under Build Alternative 2, as a Section 4(f) resource, would be *de minimis*.

Avoidance and Minimization Measures

To minimize harm to the Section 4(f) property, the project would comply with the measures listed below. Implementation of these measures would ensure that impacts to the Section 4(f) Resources in the project area are not substantial.

PRF-1: The construction contractor would install temporary fencing at Woods Creek Rotary Park to provide a safety barrier between construction activities and recreational activities and to prevent construction equipment from encroaching on park facilities.

PRF-2: Trail construction surrounding the Woods Creek Rotary Park baseball field would be phased to avoid the Woods Creek Little League season, which occurs from March through June. The City would coordinate directly with Woods Creek Little League to ensure construction is implemented in a manner that best avoids the disruption of recreational activities in Woods Creek Rotary Park.

Dragoon Gulch Trail

Activities, Features, and Attributes

The Dragoon Gulch Trail system is located north-northwest of Woods Creek Rotary Park, bounded by the Sonora Knolls neighborhood to the east, Racetrack Road to the north, the Gibbs Ranch neighborhood to the west, and Woods Creek Rotary Park/adjacent developments (north of Highway 49/W Stockton Street) to the south. Access to the trails system is via the Alpine Trailhead Parking and Americans with Disabilities Act Access, located at the western terminus of Alpine Lane, and North Forest Road Parking, located at the northern terminus of Woods Creek Drive/Woods Creek Rotary Park. The Dragoon Gulch Trail Project began in 2002 when the City received grant funds, with the first expansion completed in 2018. Dragoon Gulch Trail includes a variety of natural trails, made up of the following:

- Alpine Trail (0.1 miles)
- Creekside Trail (0.5 miles)
- Cutback Trail (0.3 miles)
- North Forest Trail (0.3 miles)
- Ridge Trail (0.6 miles)
- Summit Trail (0.9 miles)
- Vista Trail (0.4 miles)

Together, these trails make up over 3.1 miles of trails, owned and operated by the City of Sonora Community Development Department (See Figure 3).

As a recreational resource that is open to the public, Dragoon Gulch Trail is considered a Section 4(f) resource.

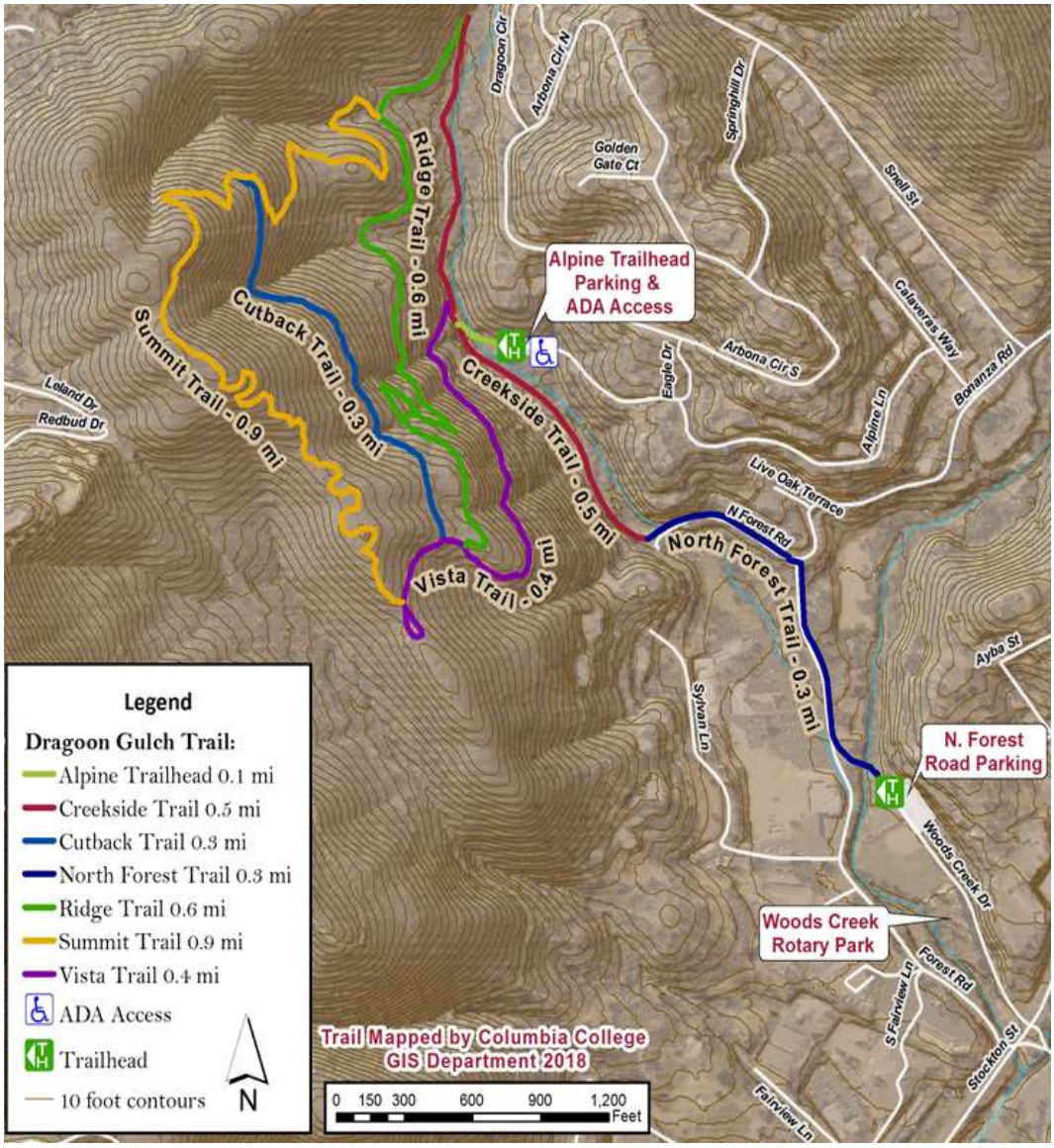


Figure 3. *Map of Dragoon Gulch Trail Complex.*

Use

The proposed project would be constructed adjacent to the North Forest Road Trailhead of the Dragoon Gulch Trail, located immediately north of Woods Creek Rotary Park (See Figure 4). Paving the proposed multi-use path in the area of the trailhead would temporarily block access between the parking area and trailhead; however, full access to the North Forest Road Trailhead would be restored following the completion of trail construction at this location. Closure of the area between the North Forest Road parking area and the North Forest Trailhead is anticipated to span approximately 3-4 months, as equipment would be required to traverse the area between the

trailhead and the parking lot to access northern portions of the proposed trail, including the proposed bridge location. Additionally, access to the Dragoon Gulch Trail would be maintained throughout construction via the Alpine Trailhead, located outside of the project area along Alpine Lane. This trailhead and parking area are more centrally located within the Dragoon Gulch Trail complex and would remain unaffected by the project.

In the project vicinity, the Dragoon Gulch Trail is primarily located within City right of way; however, the trail partially intersects APN 001-230-026 between the trailhead and parking area. This property is privately owned. The proposed project would obtain a 1,048-square-foot trail easement on APN 001-230-026 for the construction of the multi-use path. No right of way acquisitions would occur within the public alignment of the Dragoon Gulch Trail and no portions of this resource would be acquired for non-recreational use. The proposed multi-use path would be tied into the existing paved trail located in this area (see Figure 4), and the land would continue to be used for public recreation. All right of way actions needed for this project would occur on private property and would have no use of existing Section 4(f) resources.



Figure 4. *Conjunction between the Dragoon Gulch Trailhead and Proposed Multi-Use Path. The paved Dragoon Gulch Trail (N. Forest Trail Segment) turns left across the bridge, while the proposed project will pave the existing*

unpaved trail in the center of the image (not part of the Dragoon Gulch trail complex).

The project may would result in minor proximity impacts, as temporary construction noise may impact users of the 0.3-mile North Forest Trail segment of the Dragoon Gulch Trail. However, the project does not propose any sources of substantial construction noise or groundborne vibration in this area. Furthermore, construction noise attributable to the project would be short-term, intermittent, and would only occur during permissible hours as defined in Section 8.20.040 of the Sonora Municipal Code. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project is not anticipated to result in noise that would disrupt public use of the Dragoon Gulch Trail.

De Minimis Determination

Although the project would result in temporary access restrictions at the North Forest Road Trailhead of the Dragoon Gulch Trail, Section 4(f) use of this resource would be short-term and would qualify as *de minimis*. No permanent impacts to the Dragoon Gulch Trail would occur and any temporary impact areas would be returned to pre-project conditions. The project is not anticipated to result in a reduction in public use of this resource because the Alpine Trailhead would remain open during construction. The North Forest Trail segment would also remain accessible for the duration of construction and would only be inaccessible from the North Forest Road parking area. To minimize impacts to public use of the Dragoon Gulch Trail, the project would implement PRF-3, which would include signage to direct trail users to the Alpine trailhead. No adverse impacts are anticipated to result from project implementation; therefore, impacts to Dragoon Gulch Trail, as a Section 4(f) resource, would be *de minimis*.

Avoidance and Minimization Measures

PRF-3: The contractor would install temporary signage during paving activity adjacent to the Dragoon Gulch Trail indicating to the public that the North Forest Trailhead is temporarily inaccessible. The signage would also direct trail users to the Alpine Trailhead for parking and Dragoon Gulch Trail access.

Coordination and Public Noticing

As required by the Federal Highway Administration, a notice of the proposed *de minimis* finding will be provided to the public to allow the opportunity to review and comment on the effects of the proposed project. A NEPA Categorical Exclusion is anticipated for the project; therefore, the 30-day Section 4(f) public review period will be conducted separately from the formal NEPA process as no review period is required for a NEPA Categorical Exclusion. The public review period will be conducted concurrently with public review of the CEQA Initial Study with Proposed Mitigation Negative Declaration and will begin on Jully 15, 2026, and conclude on August 14, 2026. All comments and responses received during this period will be considered and documented in the final environmental document.

Recreational Resources

Coordination for Woods Creek Rotary Park and Dragoon Gulch Trail has been conducted through the City of Sonora Community Development Department as the official with jurisdiction over these Section 4(f) resources. Caltrans, on behalf of the Federal Highway Administration, is proposing a *de minimis* determination under Section 4(f) for impacts to Woods Creek Rotary Park and Dragoon Gulch Trail. Impacts to the protected activities, features, and attributes of the Section 4(f) resources would be *de minimis* with implementation of the minimization measures detailed above.

Consistent with Section 4(f) requirements, this Section 4(f) evaluation is under review by the City of Sonora Community Development Department. Following public review, concurrence with the *de minimis* determination would be requested from the City. Upon receipt, the concurrence letter would be documented in the final environmental document.

RESOURCES EVALUATED RELATIVE TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF SECTION 4(f): NO USE DETERMINATIONS

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, codified in federal law at 49 USC 303, declares that “it is the policy of the United States Government that special effort should be made to preserve the natural beauty of the countryside and public park and recreation lands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites.”

This section of the document discusses parks, recreational facilities, wildlife refuges, and historic properties found within or next to the project area that do not trigger Section 4(f) protection because: 1) they are not publicly owned, 2) they are not open to the public, 3) they are not eligible historic properties, or

4) the project does not permanently use the property and does not hinder the preservation of the property.

Historic Resources

An archaeological site initially recorded in 1982 was identified in the project vicinity based on information from oral informants. The resource has not been relocated or formally evaluated for eligibility for listing in the NRHP. A second archaeological resource was identified in the project area but was not formally evaluated for NRHP eligibility. For the purposes of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, both of these resources are assumed eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and would therefore also be Section 4(f) resources. As part of this project's Tribal Consultation under Section 106, an Environmental Sensitive Area Action Plan has been developed, which would avoid impacts to the archaeological sites through incorporation of avoidance and minimization measures. Caltrans has determined that the project would have No Adverse Effect on these resources with inclusion of Secretary of Interior Standard – Environmentally Sensitive Area Action Plan. As a result, there would be no use of these Section 4(f) resources.

Avoidance and Minimization Measures

CR-3: A qualified archaeologist shall designate Environmentally Sensitive Areas for the protection of cultural resources within or near the project's area of potential effect. These boundaries would be recorded in and implemented through the June 2026 Environmentally Sensitive Area Action Plan and shown on project plans. These Environmentally Sensitive Area boundaries would be established as a first order of work and remain in place until all construction activities are complete. Contractor encroachment into Environmentally Sensitive Areas would be prohibited. If the Environmentally Sensitive Area boundaries are breached, all work within 60 feet of the boundary would be stopped, the area would be secured, and the Caltrans resident engineer must be notified. If the Environmentally Sensitive Area is damaged, Caltrans would determine the necessary remediation and the party to perform this work.

CR-4: An Archaeological Monitoring Area has been established for a portion of the project area. This monitoring area requires a qualified archaeological monitor and/or Native American monitor to observe all ground disturbing activities within the monitoring area boundary. The monitoring area boundary would be included on the Design Layouts and called out in the order of work prior to the start of construction.

Built Environment

A Historic Resources Evaluation Report has been prepared for the project. It reviewed numerous built environment resources within the Area of Potential Effects. The majority of these structures were exempt from evaluation based on the Caltrans Programmatic Agreement with the State Historic Preservation Officer. Two built environment resources were evaluated to determine if they are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Caltrans determined these structures to be ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

SECTION 6(F)

The project would not impact Section 6(f) properties, defined as lands or facilities acquired by Land and Water Conservation Act funds. According to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the nearest Section 6(f) property is the Old Tuolumne Jail in Sonora, located approximately 500 feet north of State Route 49. No Section 6(f) evaluation is required for the project.

Appendix B Title VI Policy Statement

CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY GAVIN NEWSOM, GOVERNOR

California Department of Transportation

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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."