

Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS
CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

CTC Meeting: August 17-18, 2016

Reference No.: 2.2c.(3)
Action Item

From: NORMA ORTEGA
Chief Financial Officer

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Division of
Environmental Analysis

Subject: **APPROVAL OF PROJECT FOR A ROUTE ADOPTION**
05-SBt-25, PM 51.5/60.1, 04-SCI-25, PM 0.0/2.6
RESOLUTION E-16-60

RECOMMENDATION:

The California Department of Transportation recommends that the California Transportation Commission (Commission), as a responsible agency, approve the attached Resolution E-16-60.

ISSUE:

The attached resolution proposes to approve for future consideration of funding the following project for which a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) has been completed:

- State Route 25 (SR 25) in San Benito and Santa Clara Counties.
Select a corridor for SR 25 near the cities of Hollister and Gilroy.
(EA 4854)

This project in San Benito and Santa Clara counties is for route adoption only, for portions of State Route 25 near the cities of Hollister and Gilroy. The project is locally funded for the Project Approval and Environmental Document phase only for approximately \$7,000,000.

A copy of the FEIR has been provided to Commission staff. Resources that may be impacted by the project include: aesthetics/visual, biological resources, community impacts, farmland, hazardous waste, and paleontology.

Potential impacts associated with the project can all be mitigated to below significance. As a result, an FEIR was prepared for the project.

Attachments

CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Resolution for a Route Adoption 05-SBt-25, PM 51.5/60.1, 04-SC1-25, PM 0.0/2.6 Resolution E-16-60

- 1.1** **WHEREAS**, the California Department of Transportation (Department) has completed a Final Environmental Impact Report pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines for the following project:

 - State Route 25 (SR 25) in San Benito and Santa Clara Counties. Select a corridor for SR 25 near the cities of Hollister and Gilroy. (EA 4854)
- 1.2** **WHEREAS**, the Department has certified that a Final Environmental Impact Report has been completed pursuant to CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines for its implementation; and
- 1.3** **WHEREAS**, the California Transportation Commission, as a responsible agency, has considered the information contained in the Final Environmental Impact Report.
- 1.4** **WHEREAS**, the project will have a significant effect on the environment.
- 1.5** **WHEREAS**, Findings were made pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines.
- 2.1** **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the California Transportation Commission does hereby support approval of the above referenced project to allow for a Route Adoption.

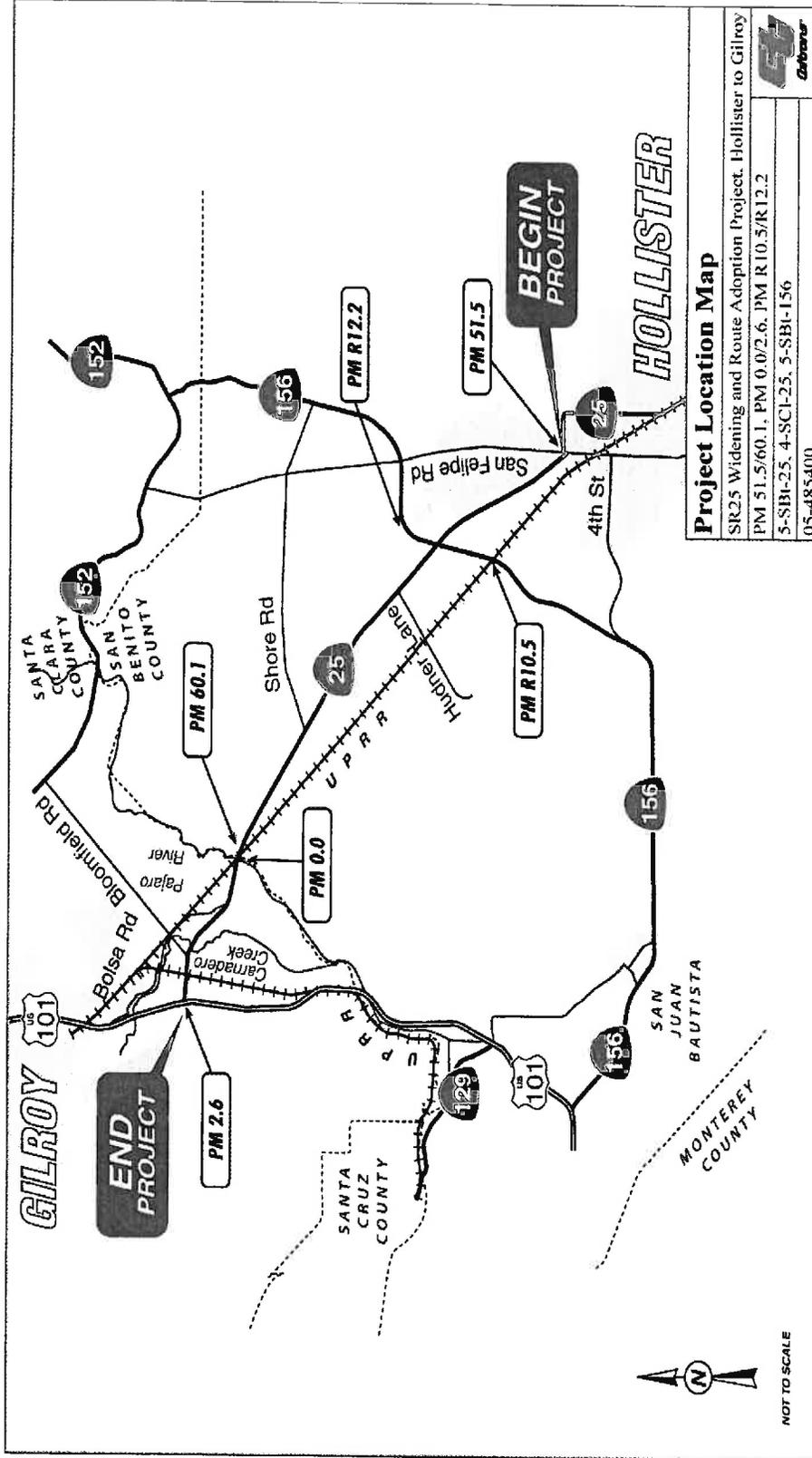


Figure 1-2 Project Location Map

Hollister to Gilroy State Route 25 Widening and Route Adoption • 3

FINDINGS

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FINDINGS FOR A ROUTE ADOPTION FOR AN 11.2 MILE FOUR-LANE EXPRESSWAY BETWEEN THE CITIES OF HOLLISTER AND GILROY ON STATE ROUTE 25 IN SAN BENITO & SANTA CLARA COUNTIES

The following information is presented to comply with State CEQA Guidelines (Title 14 California Code of Regulations, Chapter 3, Section 15091) and the Department of Transportation and California Transportation Commission Environmental Regulations (Title 21, California Code of Regulations, Chapter 11, Section 1501). Reference is made to the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the project, which is the basic source for the information.

The following effects have been identified in the EIR as resulting from the project. Effects found not to be significant have not been included.

Farmlands

Adverse Environmental Effects:

The National Environmental Policy Act and the Farmland Protection Policy Act (7 U.S., C. 4201-4209; and its regulations, 7 Code of Federal Regulations Part 658) require federal agencies, such as the Federal Highway Administration, and Caltrans as assigned, to coordinate with the Natural Resources Conservation Service if their activities may irreversibly convert farmland (directly or indirectly) to nonagricultural use.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires the review of projects that would convert Williamson Act contract land to non-agricultural uses.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service determines the relative value of farmland to be converted by using a formula that weighs farmland classification, soil characteristics, irrigation, acreage, creation of non-farmable land, availability of farm services, and other factors. The Natural Resources Conservation Service determined that the proposed project would convert farmland having a relative value between 92 and 100 out of 100 possible points under these criteria. Because acreage converted is only one of several factors, alternatives may be allotted similar points even with dissimilar acreage conversion. An additional 89 to 98 points were factored in on the Natural Resources Conservation Service form using other criteria for a total impact rating ranging from a low of 184 points for farmland in Santa Clara County to a high of 198 points for both route adoption alternatives (Alternatives 1 and 2). The Farmland Protection Policy Act requires consideration of impacts from those alternatives exceeding 160 points on the Natural Resources Conservation Service Farmland Conversion Impact Rating. Measures to minimize impacts include selecting the

alternative with the fewest potential impacts that still meets the purpose and need of the Project.

Alternative 2 was selected as the preferred alternative. Although Alternative 2 would result in slightly more Williamson Act parcels being converted (129.4 vs. 121.3 acres), it would result in fewer total acres of farmland conversion (497 acres), whereas Alternative 1 would result in 525 acres of farmland conversion. Additionally, neither of the alternatives would result in cancellation of any Williamson Act Contracts associated with Williamson Act parcels.

Findings:

Caltrans has determined that a conservation easement or deed restriction is a feasible form of mitigation for the farmland impacts resulting from the project. Deed restrictions would limit future use of the land to agriculture in perpetuity, and the property owner is responsible for ensuring that the terms of the easement are upheld because the property owner retains ownership.

Statement of Facts:

Caltrans will defer any mitigation proposals for the route adoption alternative to the future. As portions of Alternative 2 are funded and proposed for construction, Tier II environmental documents would be prepared for each project. A Tier II document would provide an analysis of the environmental impacts at that time, and specific minimization and/or mitigation measures would be presented.