

Appendix A

Notice of Preparation and
Comment Letter

Notice of Preparation

Date: November 20, 2018

To: Responsible Agencies, Interested Parties, and Organizations

Subject: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Fresno Rendering Plant Relocation Project, Fresno, California

Lead Agency: City of Fresno

Contact: Mike Sanchez, AICP, MCRP, Assistant Director
Development and Resource Management
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Mike.Sanchez@fresno.gov

Comment Period: November 20, 2018 to December 19, 2018

PURPOSE OF NOTICE

The City of Fresno is the lead agency responsible for preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Fresno Rendering Plant Relocation Project (proposed project), located in the City of Fresno. Pursuant to provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the City has prepared this Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the proposed project. Once a decision is made to prepare an EIR, the lead agency must prepare a NOP to inform all responsible and trustee agencies that an EIR will be prepared (CEQA Guidelines Section 15082). The purpose of this NOP is to provide agencies, interested parties, and organizations with sufficient information describing the proposed project and the potential environmental effects to enable meaningful input related to the scope and content of information to be included in the EIR.

PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD

This Notice of Preparation is being circulated for public review and comment for a period of 30 days beginning November 20, 2018. The City will hold a public scoping meeting to inform interested parties about the proposed project and to provide agencies and the public with an opportunity to provide comments on the scope and content of the EIR. The meeting time and location is as follows:

Sunset Elementary (Cafeteria)
1755 South Crystal Avenue
Fresno, CA 93706
Day: Wednesday, November 28, 2018
Time: 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM

Copies of the full Notice of Preparation may be reviewed at the following locations:

- ▲ Fresno County Public Library during library hours;
- ▲ City of Fresno, 2600 Fresno St, Room 3065 between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.; or
- ▲ Online at: <https://www.fresno.gov/cityclerk/notices-publications/>

Your views and comments on how the project may affect the environment are welcomed. Please contact Mr. Sanchez if you have any questions about the environmental review process for the Fresno Rendering Plant Expansion and Relocation Project.

PROJECT LOCATION

The proposed Fresno Rendering Plant Expansion and Relocation Project would be located within the city limits, but not within the city proper; the site is located just east of the Fresno-Clovis Regional Wastewater Reclamation Facility (RWRf) within a large island of incorporated, City-owned property along West Jensen Avenue; see Exhibits 1 and 2.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The existing Darling Ingredients Inc. rendering facility is located on a 5.22-acre parcel on Belgravia Road between Church Avenue and E Street in the southwest area of the city. Over the last 60 years, non-industrial urban uses were developed in the surrounding area such that residential neighborhoods are now within one-quarter mile of the rendering plant with homes as close as 800 feet from the rendering plant structures. Therefore, the City is proposing to relocate this heavy industrial facility away from the residential neighborhoods that have been developed near the existing facility subsequent to its establishment.

The project would relocate the Darling facility from its current location to an approximately 40-acre parcel near the RWRf (Exhibits 1 and 2). Industrial activities related to the project would be similar to those of the existing Darling facility but would include an increase in processing capacity.

The new plant would continue to serve area businesses including packers, restaurants, food service establishments, butchers, and grocers in the production of animal and vegetable derived fats and proteins for use as ingredients in food, feed, fertilizer, and fuel. The primary industrial activities at the facility would include:

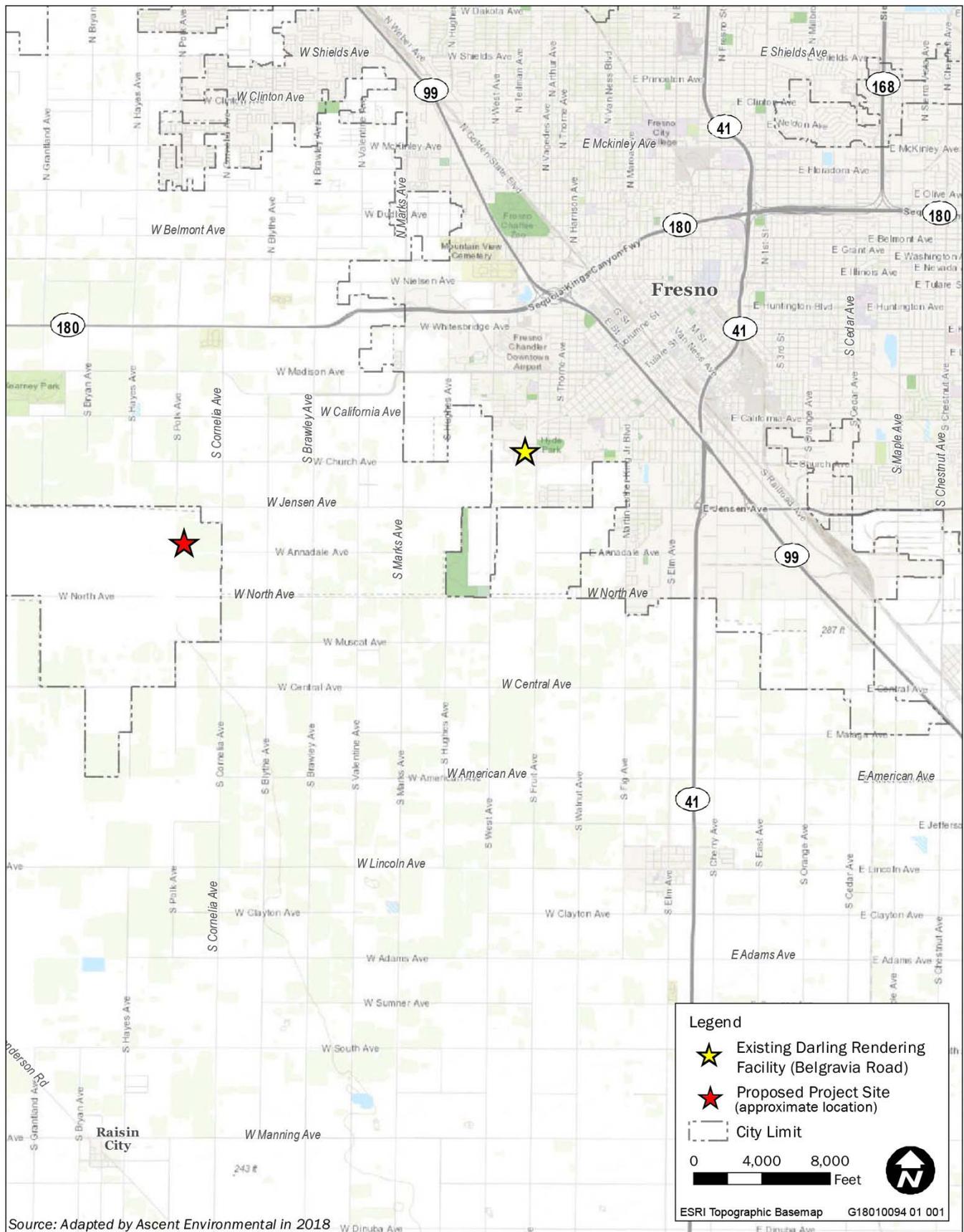
- ▲ raw material collection,
- ▲ conversion of raw materials,
- ▲ storage of finished products,
- ▲ shipment of finished products, and
- ▲ fleet-related activities.

Darling anticipates that the relocated operation would process up to 10 million pounds of food processing byproducts on a weekly basis. The anticipated daily production rate could reach 2 million pounds or more but would be limited on a weekly basis by the permitted maximum.

The collection routes and delivery schedules would be variable and would likely change day to day depending on the work schedules of the byproduct generators. The rendering process would be continuous and would typically operate 24 hours per day, 6 to 7 days per week. Delivery schedules would be relatively stable with only limited seasonal fluctuations. The types and numbers of vehicles would vary based on customer needs, type of service being provided, and economic conditions, but it is anticipated that project operation would use an average of 75 trucks per day, or 150 truck trips per day.

Approximately 60 to 70 full-time employees would work at the facility (23 new positions would be created as a result of the operational expansion). The facility would operate in three shifts with three production shifts and one maintenance shift. It is expected that there would be a maximum of 25 employees on site per shift.

The project would include a total of five buildings—the rendering plant (26,700 square feet [sf]), a meal area loadout (2,400 sf), a truck shop (8,000 sf), a maintenance shop (4,000 sf), and an office building (3,500 sf)—with a total floor area of approximately 44,600 sf, which is approximately 16,800 sf larger than the existing facility.



Source: Adapted by Ascent Environmental in 2018

Exhibit 1 Regional Location

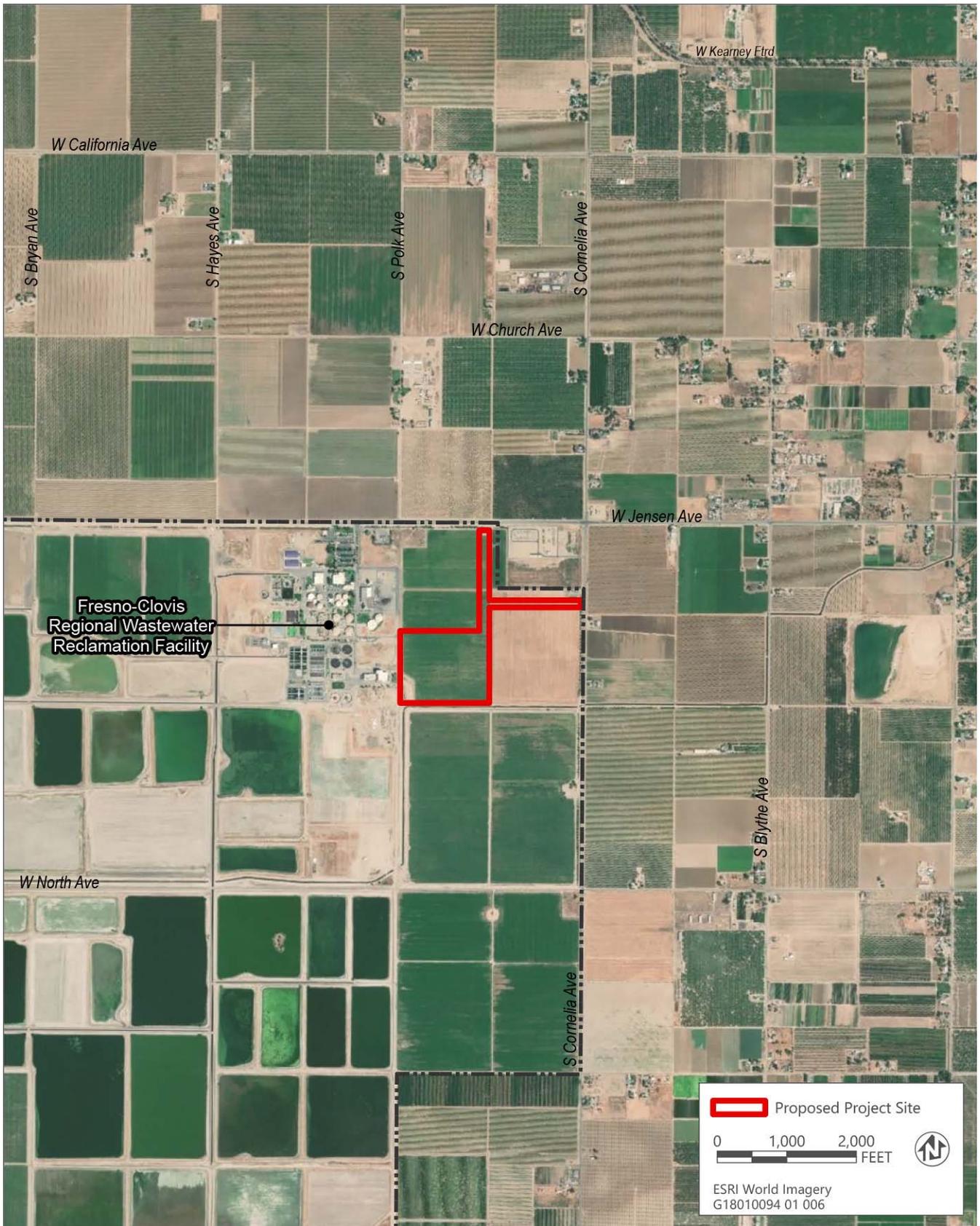


Exhibit 2 Project Location (Approximate)

Excluding equipment, typical building height would be approximately 28 feet with a maximum building height of 45 feet. The conversion facility would be a concrete pre-cast building, and the other three buildings would include metal, brick, or block veneer. The tallest equipment would include two new 60-foot protein storage silos.

Two dedicated access points would be provided for the site. Jensen Avenue would serve as the dedicated truck route, and all trucks would access the project site from Jensen Avenue. Employees and sales calls would access the site via Cornelia Avenue. The proposed parking lot would include up to 36 spaces for employees and visitors. This is exclusive of the truck parking needed for raw material trucks which must be segregated to avoid contaminating the raw material.

The project would require a General Plan Amendment to change the General Plan land use designation of land from Public Facility to Heavy Industrial, and a rezone of the same property from the PI/UGM (*Public and Institutional/Urban Growth Management*) zone district to the IH (*Heavy Industrial*). The proposed Darling facility would also require a conditional use permit (CUP) to operate within the IH zone.

The existing rendering plant on Belgravia Road would cease operations at its current location within six months after the new plant site is fully permitted and operational. The existing equipment would be dismantled and silos would be removed within one year after the new plant site is fully permitted and operational. No structure demolition is proposed. Deed restrictions would be recorded prohibiting the use of the existing rendering plant site for future use as a rendering plant with the City of Fresno as a third-party beneficiary to the restriction. Potential future land uses that could locate on the existing rendering plant site are unknown at this time (except that a rendering plant use would not be allowed). Because it is unknown, future use of the existing rendering plant site will not be evaluated in the EIR. Any future use proposed for the site would be subject to review under CEQA.

RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES

For the purposes of CEQA, the term “Responsible Agency” includes all public agencies other than the Lead Agency that have discretionary approval power over the project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15381). Discretionary approval power may include such actions as issuance of a permit, authorization, or easement needed to complete some aspect of the proposed project. Responsible agencies may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ▲ California Department of Transportation (Caltrans),
- ▲ California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB),
- ▲ California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW),
- ▲ San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD), and
- ▲ County of Fresno.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The EIR will describe the direct and indirect environmental impacts of construction and operation of Fresno Rendering Plant Project. It is anticipated that the EIR will address potential impacts associated with the proposed project in the following issue areas. In addition, the EIR will evaluate alternatives, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts.

Aesthetics

The new rendering plant would be constructed on land that is now agricultural land. The EIR will evaluate the project’s potential impacts to the visual character of the area and to potential sensitive viewers.

Agriculture

The project site contains Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance, as designated under the Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. The EIR will assess potential

impacts to agriculture, with consideration of the City's prior Master EIR analysis in support of its last General Plan update.

Air Quality

The project area is within the jurisdiction of the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin (SJVAB) and is under the jurisdiction of the SJVAPCD. Project construction would result in emissions of criteria air pollutants and precursors, including reactive organic gases (ROG), oxides of nitrogen (NO_x), sulfur dioxide (SO₂), carbon monoxide (CO), respirable particulate matter (PM₁₀), and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) from the use of heavy construction equipment, haul truck activity, and worker commute trips. Operational emissions would include vehicular exhaust from truck trips and employee vehicles, and emissions from plant operations. Odor emissions will also be assessed.

Biological Resources

The project site has been previously graded, cultivated, and is of limited value for wildlife. However, the site could serve as foraging and/or nesting habitat for three special-status bird species: Swainson's hawk, burrowing owl, and California horned lark. The EIR will assess the potential impacts of the project on biological resources.

Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources

Outreach to the Native American community and local historical groups will be conducted to solicit information on tribal cultural resources and any known cultural resources concerns or issues. There is the potential for buried prehistoric and historic-era resources within the project area and potential impacts to these resources during project construction will be considered in the EIR.

Energy

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126 and Appendix F of the CEQA guidelines require that EIRs include a discussion of the potential energy impacts of projects, with emphasis on considering if a project would result in inefficient, wasteful, and unnecessary consumption of energy. The EIR will evaluate energy impacts of the rendering plant relocation, including any net increase in fuel and energy use during project construction and operation.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The SJVAPCD has guidance on evaluating greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for stationary source projects using Best Performance Standards. In accordance with this guidance, GHG emissions will be quantified and disclosed in the EIR.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

The site was used historically for crop cultivation; therefore, residue from pesticides, fertilizers, and other agricultural chemicals may be present on the site. The use of hazardous materials in project operation and disposal of any hazardous wastes generated by the rendering plant would be subject to numerous laws and regulations at all levels of government. The EIR will identify any existing issues related to hazards and hazardous materials in the project area, identify impacts that could occur from construction and operation of the proposed rendering plant.

Hydrology and Water Quality

There are no surface waters on the site and the rendering plant would extract its water supply from a new well. The EIR will assess potential effects to groundwater quality and quantity.

Land Use and Planning

The project would require a General Plan Amendment to change the General Plan land use designation of land from Public Facility to Heavy Industrial, and a rezone of the same property from PI to IH. The proposed Darling facility would also require a CUP to operate within the IH zone. In addition, the previously considered

40-acre site adjacent to W. Jensen Avenue would be revised from Public Facility to Agriculture to accommodate orchard uses, specifically nut trees. The EIR will evaluate the potential consequences of the land use change.

Noise

Implementing the proposed project would result in short-term and long-term increases in ambient noise levels. The EIR will include a description of the existing noise environment, including noise sources and sensitive receptors in the project area. The EIR will then assess potential short-term (i.e., construction) and long-term (i.e., operational) noise impacts to sensitive receptors. Operational noise changes may be generated by proposed stationary sources such as operation of the plant and truck and vehicle traffic on local roadways.

Transportation

Local access to the project site would be via existing paved roads and in the vicinity, including Jensen and Cornelia Avenues, and regional access would be via State Route 99. The traffic analysis will address intersections and roadway segments in the project vicinity. The analysis will consider temporary construction traffic and identify necessary construction traffic management measures, and operational vehicle and truck traffic.

Cumulative Impacts

Implementation of the proposed project could potentially result in significant impacts to the above resource areas. When taken together with the effects of past projects, other current projects, and probable future projects, the project's contribution to the overall cumulative effect of all these activities could be considerable.

Alternatives

In accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines (14 CCR Section 15126.6), the EIR will describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project that are capable of meeting most of the projects' objectives, and that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project. The EIR will also identify any alternatives that were considered but rejected by the lead agency as infeasible and briefly explain the reasons why. The EIR will provide an analysis of the No-Project Alternative and will also identify the environmentally superior alternative.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**DISTRICT 6**

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*Making Conservation a
California way of life.*

December 11, 2018

FRE-180-52.597
SCH# 2018111043
Fresno Rendering Plant Relocation Project

Mr. Mike Sanchez, Assistant Director
Development and Resource Management
2600 Fresno Street, Room 3065
Fresno, CA 93721

Dear Mr. Sanchez:

Thank you for including Caltrans in the environmental review process for the project referenced above. The proposed project entails construction and operation of an approximately 44,600 sq. ft. facility for the production of animal and vegetable derived fats and proteins. The Project site is located in the City of Fresno, on approximately 40 acres of land, a short distance from State Routes (SR) 180, 41 and 99.

Caltrans focuses on the safe and efficient operation of the transportation systems under its care. It is our assessment that more information is needed in terms of site access, work schedules, and delivery timing to provide specific comments on the transportation element of the forthcoming Environmental Impact Report. Therefore, Caltrans requests to review the scope of work for the traffic study before that work is begun. Likewise, we are available to provide verbal comment at a scoping meeting should one be called. We look forward to working with you to build resiliency in our shared transportation network.

Please direct questions to me at (559) 488-7307 or Jamaica.Gentry@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jamaica Gentry".

JAMAICA GENTRY
Associate Transportation Planner
Transportation Planning - North