NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT A NEGATIVE DECLARATION
Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

Who: County of San Luis Obispo Department of Public Works

What: A Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) has been prepared and issued for the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Public Works Templeton to Atascadero Connector Project The County of San Luis Obispo Public Works Department (County) is proposing to construct a multi-use recreational trail, the Templeton to Atascadero Connector Project (project). The project is located on the east side of Highway 101 and west of the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) tracks between Templeton and Atascadero, in the San Luis Obispo North County planning area (Salinas River sub area). The purpose of the project is to provide a pedestrian/bicycle trail between the communities of Templeton and Atascadero. The project is included in the County Parks and Recreation Element, County Bikeway Plan, and the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) Regional Transportation Plan.

The trail would be approximately 1 mile long and would extend from South Main Street in Templeton to San Ramon Road in Atascadero. The proposed trail has three different configurations along the project alignment: (a) a marked bike lane in the existing road shoulder for the northern-most 350 feet of the east side of South Main Street; (b) a 12-foot-wide trail with two 4-foot-wide lanes, two 2-foot shoulders, and a 4-foot-wide landscaped buffer, extending along the east side of South Main Street from the end of shoulder improvement in (a) to roughly the existing California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) laydown area; and (c) a 14-foot-wide trail with two 5-foot-wide lanes and two 2-foot-wide shoulders extending south between the UPRR line and Highway 101 for the remainder of the project alignment to San Ramon Road in Atascadero. The existing sidewalk on San Ramon Road would be widened by approximately 5 feet from the connection with the trail to the intersection with El Camino Real. The trail would include two clear span bridges over Paso Robles Creek and Graves Creek.

Where: Copies of the proposed MND and all the associated documents referenced in the Mitigated Negative Declaration are available for review at the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Public Works, 976 Osos Street, County Government Center Room 206, San Luis Obispo, CA 93408. The MND is also accessible on the Public Work's website at https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/PW/Templeton-Atascadero-Connector-MND.

Comments: The 30-day review and comment period for the proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration begins on November 25, 2020, and ends on January 4, 2021. Written comments must be received by 5:00 p.m. on the last day of the review period and should be addressed to: Monica Stillman, Environmental Specialist, mjstillman@co.slo.ca.us, County Government Center, Room 206, San Luis Obispo, CA 93408.

Public Hearing: The County of San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing to consider the adoption of the Mitigated Negative Declaration. The hearing is tentatively scheduled for early 2021. Interested persons can access the Board of Supervisor's agenda at http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/bos/BOSagenda.htm to locate the date of the public hearing for this project.

COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

PLN-2039
04/2019

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

Project Title & No. Templeton to Atascadero Connector Project ED19-087 (405R990168)

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED: The proposed project could have a "Potentially Significant Impact" for environmental factors checked below. Please refer to the attached pages for discussion on mitigation measures or project revisions to either reduce these impacts to less than significant levels or require further study.

☒ Aesthetics	☐ Greenhouse Gas Emissions	☐ Public Services
☐ Agriculture & Forestry Resources	☒ Hazards & Hazardous Materials	☐ Recreation
☒ Air Quality	☒ Hydrology & Water Quality	☐ Transportation
☒ Biological Resources	☐ Land Use & Planning	☒ Tribal Cultural Resources
☒ Cultural Resources	☐ Mineral Resources	☐ Utilities & Service Systems
☐ Energy	☒ Noise	☐ Wildfire
☐ Geology & Soils	☐ Population & Housing	☐ Mandatory Findings of Significance

DETERMINATION:

On the basis of this initial evaluation, the Environmental Division finds that:

☐ The proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☒ Although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☐ The proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.

☐ The proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.

☐ Although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

Monica Stillman	Monica Stillman		11-20-2020
Prepared by (Print)	Signature		Date
Keith Miller		Keith Miller, Environmental Division Manager	11/20/20
Reviewed by (Print)	Signature		Date

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

Project Environmental Analysis

The County's environmental review process incorporates all of the requirements for completing the Initial Study as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines. The Initial Study includes staff's on-site inspection of the project site and surroundings and a detailed review of the information in the file for the project. In addition, available background information is reviewed for each project. Relevant information regarding soil types and characteristics, geologic information, significant vegetation and/or wildlife resources, water availability, wastewater disposal services, existing land uses and surrounding land use categories and other information relevant to the environmental review process are evaluated for each project. Exhibit A includes the references used, as well as the agencies or groups that were contacted as a part of the Initial Study. The County Public Works Department uses the checklist to summarize the results of the research accomplished during the initial environmental review of the project.

Persons, agencies or organizations interested in obtaining more information regarding the environmental review process for a project should contact the County of San Luis Obispo Public Works Department, 976 Osos Street, Rm. 206, San Luis Obispo, CA, 93408-2040 or call (805) 781-5252.

A. Project

DESCRIPTION: The County of San Luis Obispo Public Works Department (County) is proposing to construct a multi-use recreational trail, the Templeton to Atascadero Connector Project (project). The project is located on the east side of Highway 101 and west of the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) tracks between Templeton and the City of Atascadero, in the San Luis Obispo North County planning area (Salinas River sub area). The purpose of the project is to provide a pedestrian/bicycle trail between the communities of Templeton and Atascadero. The project is included in the County Parks and Recreation Element, County Bikeway Plan, and the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) Regional Transportation Plan.

The trail would be approximately 1 mile long and would extend from South Main Street in Templeton to San Ramon Road in Atascadero (Figure 1). The total disturbance area for the project would be approximately 3 acres, which includes the permanent trail footprint, construction disturbance and staging areas, and ingress/egress routes. The project area varies slightly in elevation, from approximately 750 to 800 feet above mean sea level.

The proposed trail has three different configurations along the project alignment: (a) a marked bike lane in the existing road shoulder for the northern-most 350 feet of the east side of South Main Street; (b) a 12-foot-wide trail with two 4-foot-wide lanes, two 2-foot shoulders, and a 4-foot-wide landscaped buffer, extending along the east side of South Main Street from the end of shoulder improvement in (a) to roughly the existing California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) laydown area; and (c) a 14-foot-wide trail with two 5-foot-wide lanes and two 2-foot-wide shoulders extending south between the UPRR line and Highway 101 for the remainder of the project alignment to San Ramon Road in Atascadero (Figures 2 and 3). The existing sidewalk on San Ramon Road would be widened by approximately 5 feet from the connection with the trail to the intersection with El Camino Real.

The trail would also include two clear span bridges, one approximately 230 feet long and 12 feet wide over Paso Robles Creek and one approximately 120 feet long and 12 feet wide over Graves Creek. The bridges are proposed to be pre-fabricated steel truss bridges supported by concrete end abutments on drilled piles, and bridge approaches supported on concrete column footings. The bridges would not include any support structures within the creek bed, and the bridge decks would be above the 100-year flood elevation.

The trail would be paved with an all-weather surface. The proposed bridges and trail would not have lighting beyond low level shielded lights if needed for security. The trail would be in the County of San Luis Obispo's right-of-way along Main Street. A short barrier/separator (maximum 4 feet high) may be included to separate the trail from Main Street. The project would eliminate roughly 36 parking spaces along the east side of South Main Street. Fences would be installed between the trail and the UPRR and Caltrans Highway 101 rights-of-way.

The project would incorporate Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-approved access throughout the project. Areas disturbed during construction would be stabilized with drought-tolerant, native plants that would not require irrigation.

The proposed bridge abutments would require borings up to 40 feet below ground surface for support piles. The concrete abutments would be approximately 16 feet by 16 feet and would require soil excavation to a depth of approximately 18 feet. For trail construction, the anticipated maximum depth of ground disturbance ranges from two to four feet below existing grade for grading, compacting existing soils, and installing an aggregate base and paved surface. Excavated material would be balanced onsite or disposed offsite.

Retaining walls may be necessary to configure the trail up an embankment on the south side of Graves Creek.

Based on the design of the project, no underground utilities would be required, although there are existing utilities in the vicinity that may need to be accommodated in the construction and final project designs.

Construction staging areas would be located in previously disturbed area between the UPRR tracks and Highway 101. All staging areas would be located outside the riparian corridor of Paso Robles Creek and Graves Creek.

Once constructed, periodic maintenance of the trail would include sweeping, cleaning, repair, graffiti clean-up, pavement and drainage maintenance, and vegetation maintenance.

The project has been reviewed for compatibility with a proposed Templeton community library anticipated to be constructed on the parcel bordering the northeast limit of the project. The conceptual library site plan includes an access drive off South Main Street within the portion of the project that is limited to a marked bike lane. Therefore, the project is not expected to interfere with, and final designs will be compatible with, the proposed community library plan.

ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER(S): South Main Street County right-of-way, 039-381-068 (UPRR), 039-381-069 (UPRR), 049-043-005 (UPRR), Highway 101 right-of-way, existing trail easement on 049-045-012, and 049-045-035, 049-045-033, 049-045-032.

Latitude: varies **Longitude:** varies **SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT #** 1

B. Existing Setting

Plan Area: North County **Sub:** Salinas River **Comm:** Templeton

Land Use Category: Agriculture Residential Suburban Public Facilities

Combining Designation: Flood Hazard

Parcel Size: 3 acres

Topography: Nearly level

Vegetation: Ruderal Scattered Oaks

Existing Uses: Residential railroad state highway

Surrounding Land Use Categories and Uses:

North:	Commercial Retail; residential	***East:***	Open Space; agricultural uses
South:	Commercial Service; residential	***West:***	Public Facilities; residential agricultural uses

C. Environmental Analysis

The Initital Study Checklist provides detailed information about the environmental impacts of the proposed project and mitigation measures to lessen the impacts.

Figure 1. Project Vicinity Map.

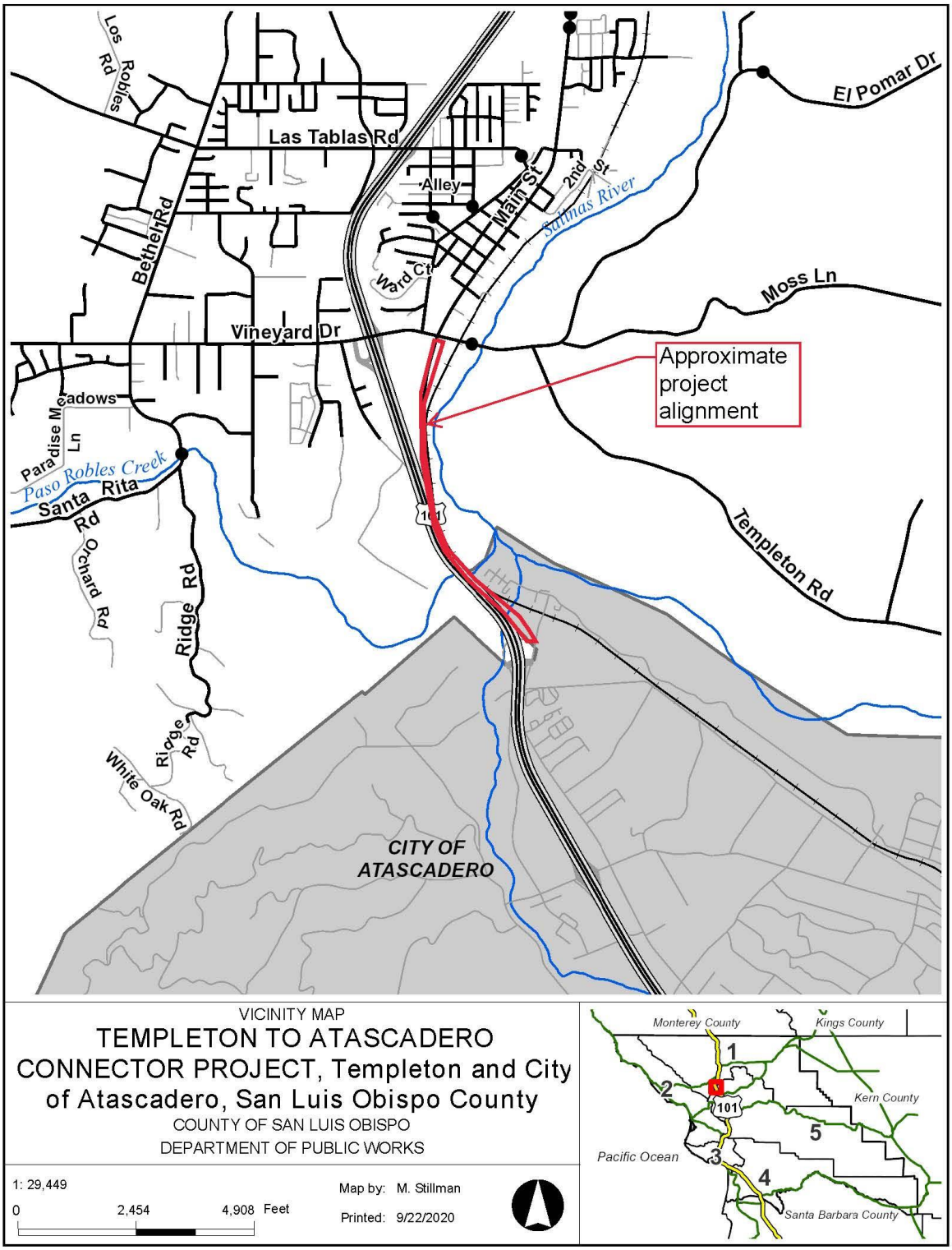


Figure 2. Project configuration, north end.

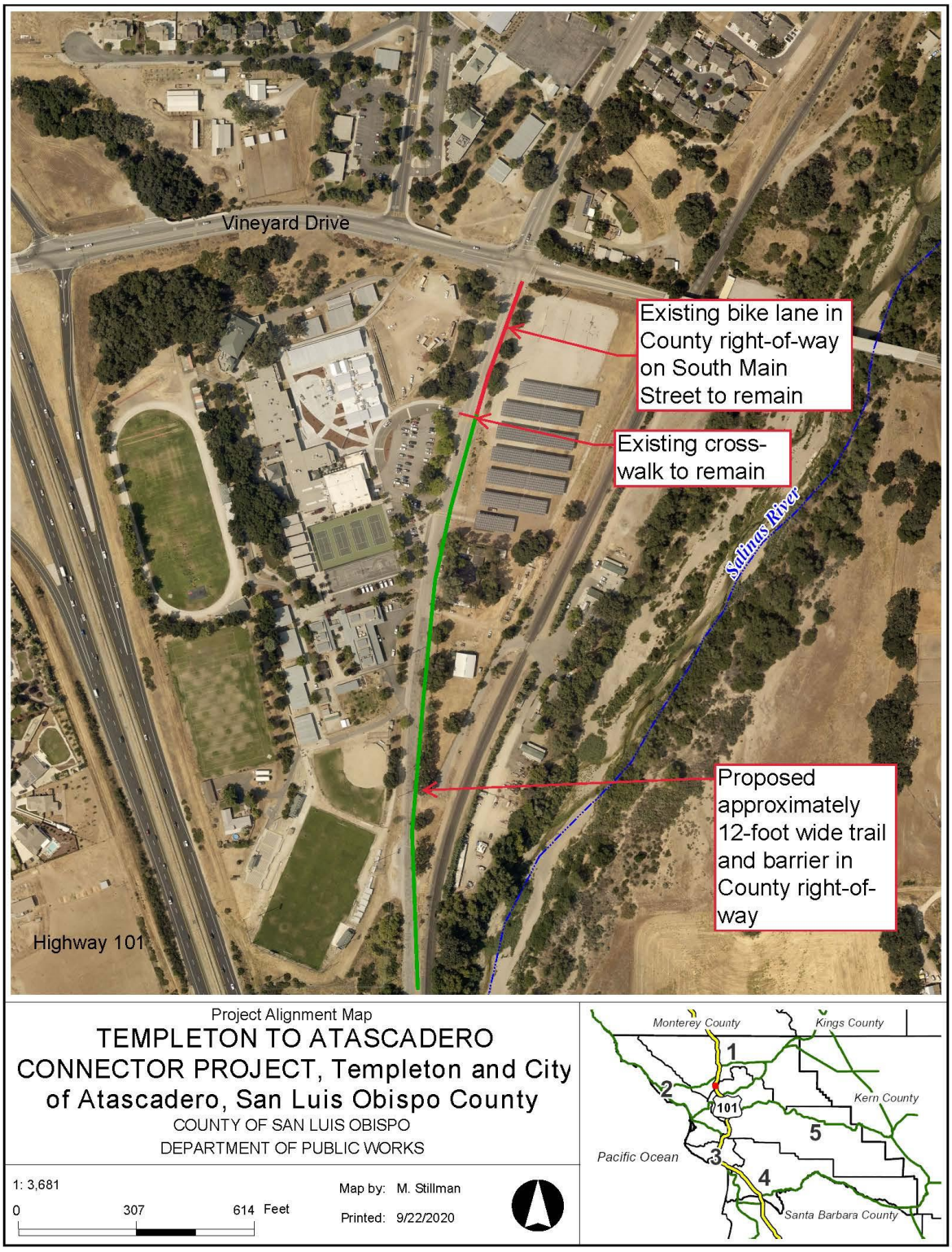
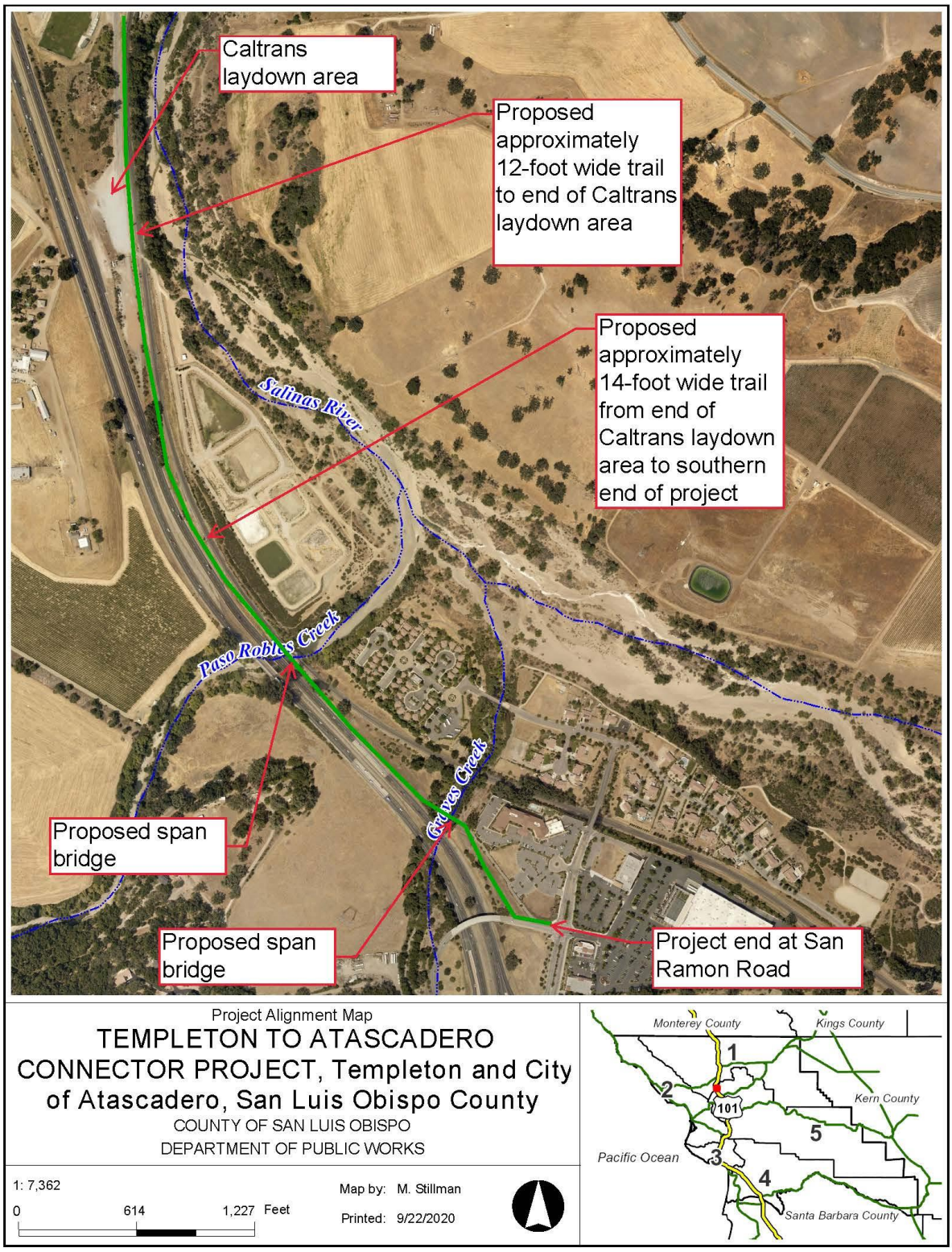


Figure 3. Project configuration, south end.



Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

I. AESTHETICS

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:					
(a)	Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(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 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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(d)	Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

The project is primarily located on disturbed lands between Templeton and the City of Atascadero. Existing developed lands in close proximity to the project include (from north to south): South Main Street and the Templeton High School campus, a Caltrans staging area adjacent to Highway 101, the Templeton Community Services District's wastewater treatment plant, the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), and residential and commercial developments between the Salinas River and Highway 101 at the San Ramon Road exit in Atascadero. The west side of Highway 101 for the project length is bordered by agricultural buildings and fields. The topography in the area is relatively flat with the exception of a steep embankment on the south side of Graves Creek.

The northern portion of the project borders Templeton High School and would be visible from South Main Street. The southern portion of the project, including the two bridges, would border Highway 101. The southern-most project limit would border San Ramon Road. The Paso Robles Creek crossing location is a narrow space between Highway 101 and a UPRR bridge that has been substantially disturbed. The Graves Creek crossing location includes an undisturbed riparian corridor approximately 200 feet wide; the proposed bridge location would be set back from Highway 101 approximately 30 to 60 feet, outside the Caltrans right-of-way. This would leave some of the existing vegetation as a buffer between the Highway and the bridge.

Discussion

(a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

There are no formalized scenic viewpoints or vista points on the project site. Topography of the area is generally flat with distant views of gently rolling hills. Visibility of the project would be limited to views from South Main Street, the Templeton High School, and Highway 101. The proposed multi-use trail, fencing where appropriate, bridges, and low retaining walls on the embankment south of Graves Creek would be low profile and would not affect scenic, distant views from Highway 101.

(b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

The project is not located in or near a designated state scenic highway and would not include impacts to historic buildings or rock outcroppings. While not within a designated state scenic highway, there are mature native oaks in the UPRR and Highway 101 rights-of-way that may require trimming or removal for the project. These trees provide scenic value along the otherwise developed areas along Highway 101 in the project vicinity.

There is a contiguous patch of eight mature oak trees ranging from eight inches to over six feet diameter at breast height (DBH) parallel to Highway 101 just south of the Templeton High School grounds and the Caltrans laydown area. The canopy extends approximately 350 feet along the edge of Highway 101. There are two additional isolated oaks in the Caltrans and UPRR ROWs.

The trail would be configured to avoid removal of mature native oak trees to the extent feasible. Because of the narrow space available between the UPRR and Highway 101, it may not be possible to avoid all the trees and/or disturb the root zones, which generally extend out approximately 1.5 times the canopy width. In the final design phase of the project, tree avoidance measures will be evaluated in light of the right-of-way permissions and a safe trail configuration. Trimming or removal of trees larger than 4 inches diameter at breast height (DBH) would be mitigated by planting trees as part of a tree replacement plan. Generally, a 4:1 replacement ratio is used for removal of trees this size. For trees larger than two feet DBH, a 10:1 replacement ratio is likely in most cases. An oak tree protection plan would be prepared for construction. With these measures, the project is not expected to result in substantial adverse impacts to scenic resources.

(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 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?

The project site would be visible from Highway 101 in areas that have been previously impacted by development of transportation, utility, and school facilities and commercial developments. The UPRR line, including a bridge over Paso Robles Creek, forms the dominant feature in the near-field view when looking east on this portion of Highway 101. As described in (a), project features would be low profile in comparison to the existing UPRR line, the Templeton High School facilities at the north end of the project, recently constructed commercial and residential developments at the south end of the project, and highway bridges and overpasses. As such, the project would not add new elements that would be out of character with the existing views.

The project would extend existing recreational trails that end in Atascadero, and would partially be located on an established as-yet-undeveloped trail easement, a Caltrans staging area, and adjacent to South Main Street adjacent to the Templeton High School. As such, the project would not conflict with applicable zoning or other regulations governing scenic quality.

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

The proposed trail and bridges may incorporate low profile, downward facing and shielded security lighting as needed for public safety. Construction of the project would be limited to daytime hours. The project would not use reflective materials that would cause glare. Therefore, the project would not create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Conclusion and Mitigation

The project would consist of low-profile features adjacent to existing institutional, residential, commercial, and industrial developments. Most of the project length is in previously disturbed areas close to Highway 101 and the UPRR line. The project would not disturb scenic features or alter existing scenic views. Tree removal and/or trimming may be required but would be limited to the extent feasible to configure a safe trail alignment. Trees bordering the Highway 101 right-of-way that are removed for the project would be replaced with appropriate native species in generally the same locations. Incorporation of a mitigation measure requiring avoidance and minimization of tree clearing, planting replacement trees, and a tree protection plan to be implemented during construction would ensure adverse effects to aesthetics are reduced to a less than significant level (Exhibit B, AE-1).

Removal of a small number of the trees in the riparian zones of Paso Robles Creek and Graves Creek is not considered an adverse aesthetic impact. However, tree avoidance and replacement in these project areas is discussed from a habitat perspective in the Biological Resources section, and similar tree construction protection and replacement measures would apply.

II. AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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 Dept. 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 forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:				
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b)	Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(c)	Conflict with existing zoning for, 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))?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(d)	Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

Agricultural land uses border the west side of Highway 101 for much of the project length. There are lands under Williamson Act contracts to the southeast of the project area; these are separated from the project site by the Salinas River, Templeton wastewater treatment plant, and residential developments. Soil types in the project area include the following: (a) South Main Street area - Hanford and Greenfield, farmland soil of state

importance, (b) Highway 101 ROW - Still clay loam, prime farmland if irrigated, and (c) south end of project, south of Graves Creek – Arbuckle, farmland soil of state importance. There are no lands in agricultural use immediately in or adjacent to the project area.

Discussion

(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?

The project site contains mapped soil types designated as farmland of statewide importance. However, the project site does not contain any land actively used or suitable for future use for farming. Therefore, the project would not result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use.

(b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?

The project is not located in any land mapped as agricultural land use. Adjacent lands to the east of the UPRR are mapped as agricultural land uses, but the nearest active agricultural land uses are east of the Salinas River. There are no Williamson Act contract sites in close proximity to the project. Therefore, the project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.

(c) Conflict with existing zoning for, 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))?

The project area is not in or near any managed forest land or timberlands. The northern portion of the project site is within a broad area mapped at scattered (less than ten percent) blue oak woodland that includes the Salinas River, Highway 101, and agricultural lands west of Highway 101. Therefore, the project would not conflict with zoning of forest land or timberlands as defined by the referenced codes.

(d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

As described in (c), the project would not be in or near any managed forest lands and would not result in the conversion of forest land to non-forest use. There are scattered mature oak trees located between Highway 101 and the UPRR line, and in the riparian zones associated with Paso Robles Creek and Graves Creek. While some vegetation may need to be removed or trimmed for the project, it would be of limited extent and in areas that would not currently be characterized as managed forest land.

(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?

The project is separated from the closest lands zoned for agriculture by existing roads and the railroad bed, and is not in or near any managed forest land or timberland. Therefore, the project would not result in conflict with, cause rezoning of, or result in conversion of such lands. While the mapped soil units in the project area are rated for farmland use, they are in areas that would not be considered suitable or available for agricultural use.

The County of San Luis Obispo Agriculture and Weights and Measurements Department reviewed the project's original alignment (e.g., the southern portion of the trail extending through the Salinas River floodplain east of the UPRR and wastewater treatment plant) for agricultural impacts (comments provided November 22, 2017). They determined the Salinas River and riparian vegetation provide an adequate buffer between the project area and agricultural lands to the east, and that additional buffering to protect agricultural resources would not be required. The project as currently proposed is located even further west, with additional land area, including the UPRR and wastewater treatment plant, serving as a buffer between the project and agricultural lands to the east.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project would have no effect on agricultural lands, managed forest land, or timberland, and no mitigation measures are required.

III. AIR QUALITY

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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. Would the project:					
(a)	Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(d)	Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

San Luis Obispo County is in non-attainment status for ozone and particulate matter (10 micrometers in size and smaller - PM_{10}) under the California standards.

The Air Pollution Control District (APCD) has developed and updated their CEQA Air Quality Handbook (2012) to evaluate project-specific impacts and help determine if air quality mitigation measures are needed, or if potentially significant impacts could result. The Handbook provides thresholds for significant air quality effects from short-term construction emissions and long-term operational emissions. Construction emissions are analyzed with regard to daily and quarterly significance thresholds, including reactive organic gases and oxides of nitrogen (ozone precursors), diesel particulate matter, fugitive dust (contributor to PM10), and greenhouse gas emissions (see Greenhouse Gas Emissions section, below).

The Handbook specifies standard idling restrictions for on-road and off-road construction vehicles and equipment (codified in State law), control measures for any grading activities that would disturb naturally occurring asbestos (NOA), and control measures for disturbance of hydrocarbon contaminated soils and demolition of asbestos containing buildings and structures.

In accordance with the APCD Handbook, operational emissions are evaluated under the APCD's Clean Air Plan, APCD emissions thresholds, state and federal health standards if applicable, and special conditions applicable to certain projects (including, for example, projects with potential emissions of toxic or hazardous air pollutants or nuisance odors).

The County APCD was provided a project referral on April 13, 2020, and provided comments on April 14, and April 21, 2020. Their comments are included in the discussion below.

Discussion

(a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

The Clean Air Plan's demand management approaches for controlling transportation-related air emissions include increasing convenience for bicycling and walking (SLOAPCD, 2001, Section 6-2). The Plan also includes bicycling and bikeway enhancements as an adopted transportation measure (App. D, T-3). The project would enhance bicycling and pedestrian alternatives to vehicle transit and is therefore consistent with the Plan. As such, the APCD supports the project. Therefore, the project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the Clean Air Plan.

(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?

The project does not involve new land uses that would result in long-term emissions of criteria air pollutants. Increased reliance on non-vehicle modes of transportation between Templeton and Atascadero has the potential to reduce vehicle emissions.

Construction of the project could generate temporary increases in local air pollution and that have the potential to increase ozone precursor and PM_{10} emissions. However, based on the scope of the project, construction emissions are expected to be below the thresholds in the APCD Handbook.

Diesel engine idling is regulated by State law intended to reduce emissions that could contribute to ozone levels, including Section 2485 of Title 13 of the California Code of Regulations for on-road vehicles, and Section 2449(d)(2) of the CARB's In-Use Off-Road Diesel regulation for off-road equipment.

(c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

Construction activities have the potential to adversely affect residential dwellings and other sensitive receptors, such as schools, parks, day care centers, nursing homes, and hospitals. Sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the project include residential developments near the northern and southern ends of the project, and students and employees of the Templeton High School.

The project is not in the APCD mapped NOA buffer area, and no building or bridge demolition activities are required. Results of soil investigations resulted in a determination that hydrocarbon-contaminated soils are unlikely to be encountered during construction.

Standard dust control measures to be implemented during construction would minimize nuisance impacts to nearby sensitive receptors from fugitive dust emissions. Standard dust control measures would include, for example, measures to limit exposed ground disturbance areas and to use of watering and/or containment measures for exposed soils to prevent generation of airborne dust from construction activities and equipment.

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

The project does not include development of any uses that would generate objectionable odors. Therefore, the project would not create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project would not generate operational air emissions, the estimated construction emissions are below local air pollutant emissions thresholds, and the project would be required to implement standard dust control measures during construction. Accordingly, project construction would not violate any air quality standard, contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation, or result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment, with incorporation of the dust control mitigation measures described generally above and listed in Exhibit B (AQ-1).

IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(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 Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(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 Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(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?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(e)	Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

Biological resources in the project area were evaluated using database review and field surveys. A detailed Natural Environment Study (NES) and an Addendum to the NES were prepared for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and in support of Section 7 consultation under the Federal Endangered Species Act. The following discussion was informed by the NES.

Much of the project area consists of developed or previously disturbed land, including the County ROW along South Main Street, the Caltrans laydown area, a narrow corridor between the Highway 101 and UPRR ROWs, and the disturbed lands bordering extensive commercial development at San Ramon Road. Where there is vegetation in these areas, it is dominated by ruderal species, such as non-native grasses and invasive weeds, and scattered coyote brush. Valley oak and coast live oak occur in a cluster of about eight mature trees located between the UPRR bed and Highway 101, two isolated oak trees and an elderberry tree further south, and numerous oaks and other trees in the Graves Creek riparian zone. Many of the oak trees are substantial in size (more than 2.5-foot diameter at breast height [DBH]).

Paso Robles Creek in the project area is limited to a narrow stretch (less than 50 feet wide) between the UPRR and Highway 101 that has been disturbed by construction of these linear projects and transient use of the area. More natural habitat conditions exist downstream of the UPRR bridge.

Graves Creek in the project area crosses a wider expanse between Highway 101 and the UPRR ROW, and has more natural conditions, with a narrow, gravel-bottomed channel (5 to 6 feet wide) and steep banks with relatively undisturbed riparian vegetation. Vegetation consists of mature trees and a dense understory with a mix of native and non-native herbaceous species.

Special Status Species

Paso Robles Creek provides potential habitat for federally threatened and/or state species of special concern California red-legged frog (CRLF; *Rana draytonii*), South-Central California Coast Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of steelhead (steelhead; *Oncorhynchus mykiss*), southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*), least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*), two-striped garter snake *(Thamnophis hammondii*), and western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*). Only the western pond turtle was observed on site. Additionally, the adjacent Highway 101 bridge supports a colony of nesting swallows.

Graves Creek provides potential habitat for CRLF, steelhead, southwestern willow flycatcher, least Bell's vireo, coast range newt (*Taricha torosa*), lesser slender salamander (*Batrachoseps minor*), two-striped garter snake, and Monterey big-eared woodrat (*Neotoma macrotis luciana*). None of these species were observed on site during site surveys. Additionally, the adjacent Highway 101 bridge supported an active black phoebe nest.

Paso Robles Creek and Graves Creek do not contain suitable habitat for CRLF breeding (calm deep pools with emergent vegetation) at the proposed bridge crossing locations. Paso Robles Creek may contain potentially suitable breeding conditions immediately downstream of the project site, where there is a broad, deep pool with vegetated banks. Individuals may occur in the project area on a transient basis.

Both creek channels have highly variable flow condition that limit when steelhead are likely to be present.

The riparian vegetation communities associated with Paso Robles Creek and Graves Creek in the revised southern alignment lack the specific conditions that would be suitable for southwestern willow flycatcher and least Bell's vireo nesting, although they could potentially occur as transients.

Woodrat nests were observed in the Graves Creek riparian zone. The project site is generally outside the known range for Monterey big-eared woodrat, although the mapped distribution ranges are not definitive.

Several species - western spadefoot, American badger, California legless lizard, and western red bat - have marginal potential to occur throughout the revised southern alignment. None were observed on site during site surveys and occurrence of these species in disturbed areas at the project site is considered unlikely.

Jurisdictional Wetlands, Waters, and Riparian Habitats

A delineation of jurisdictional waters was conducted on March 26, 2020. The delineation was performed to determine the approximate location, type, and areal extent of waters, wetlands, and riparian habitats within the project site that would likely be subject to the jurisdiction of the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).

No evidence of jurisdictional wetlands was observed during the site visits. Other waters subject to USACE and RWQCB jurisdictions within the project site are confined to the Paso Robles Creek and Graves Creek channels, delineated by ordinary high water. Paso Robles Creek and Graves Creek have clear boundaries for channel bed and adjacent riparian banks. The channels are subject to USACE and RWQCB jurisdiction and the riparian banks are subject to the jurisdiction of CDFW.

Invasive Species

The California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC) maintains an inventory of non-native, invasive plant species that have been documented to occur within the state and provides information on the distributions and overall status of invasive plants that threaten to displace native stands of vegetation. Plant species that are listed within the Cal-IPC Inventory and were observed within the project site during the field surveys included tree-of-heaven, fennel, slender wild oat, red brome, ripgut brome, bur clover, Italian thistle, ryegrass, black mustard, perennial mustard, smilo grass, and periwinkle.

Native Oak Trees

Native oak trees with scenic value are described in the Aesthetics section. The native oaks in the UPRR and Highway 101 rights-of-way are associated with an understory of ruderal species. Mature native oaks occur at the upland margins of the Graves Creek riparian zone.

Discussion

(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 Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?*

Several special status plant species have marginally suitable habitat within the project site but were not observed during determinate-level field surveys during the appropriate bloom periods. Therefore, special status plants are not expected to occur within the project site during project implementation.

As described above, several special status species have potential to occur during construction based on the habitats found on site, particularly in the Paso Robles Creek and Graves Creek channels and riparian zones. No direct impacts to the creek channels are proposed for the project and the potential for indirect impacts would be avoided and minimized with standard construction measures to avoid sedimentation and erosion and potential discharge of pollutants to the creeks.

Vegetation clearing and earthwork at the upper boundaries of the riparian zones may be required for construction of the span bridges and approach trail segments. The need for bridge support structures located in the riparian zone will be determined during the final project design phase. Impacts to bank will be minimized to the extent feasible.

Occurrence of special-status species in the non-creek portions of the project alignment, which consists of low-value, disturbed habitat conditions, is considered unlikely. Impacts to special-status wildlife in all project areas would be avoided and minimized with implementation of mitigation measures BIO-1 through BIO-3 (Exhibit B), subject to any modifications from the permit application process. These include conducting pre-construction surveys during the appropriate timeframes and implementing the species-specific measures described in the NES and NES Addendum in the event special-status species are present on site. Implementation of these measures would reduce potential impacts to these species to a less than significant level.

(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 Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?

Sensitive natural communities in the project area are limited to the Paso Robles Creek and Graves Creek corridors. The Paso Robles Creek channel and riparian banks have been disrupted in the project area by construction and maintenance of the UPRR bridge and Highway 101 bridge. Disturbance includes the presence of bridge abutments and support piers in the channel and on the banks, substantial vegetation clearing, and the presence of spoil piles, large concrete blocks, and rocks placed on the banks. The proposed project impacts consist of minor additional vegetation clearing, a span bridge with foundations at/above the top of bank, and potentially bridge support piers located on the banks. Based on the existing disturbed conditions, these project impacts are not expected to have a substantial adverse effect on the existing habitat conditions. No impacts to the channel are proposed.

Project impacts at Graves Creek would include clearing the riparian zone on both creek banks for the width necessary to install bridge abutments and the span bridge. The exact crossing location, trail configuration just south of the creek, and bridge abutment locations would be determined as part of the final project design. Channel impacts would be avoided. The need to place bridge supports on the bank would be limited to the extent possible. Tree clearing and removal would be limited to the minimum required to install the bridge and foundations. Any trees removed would be replaced, and a tree protection plan would be implemented during construction, as described in the Aesthetics section and mitigation measure AE-1 (Exhibit B).

(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?

The project would not result in direct or indirect impacts to jurisdictional wetlands. There are no wetlands or vernal pools in the project area.

(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?

The project would not alter the condition or impede flow in Paso Robles Creek or Graves Creek, including potential amphibian and reptile breeding areas in the channels. Minor vegetation clearing in the riparian zone is not expected to alter or interfere with wildlife migration along the creek corridors. The project is primarily

situated in substantially disturbed land and would not interfere with the movement of native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors.

(e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

As described in the Aesthetics section, the County implements an oak tree replacement policy for removal of native oak trees with diameter at breast height (DBH) of four inches or greater. There are approximately 20 mature native oak trees with DBH greater than four inches in the project alignment. Removal of mature native trees would be avoided to the extent possible. Any trees that are removed for the project would be replaced in accordance with the County policy, which generally provides a 3:1 or 4:1 replacement ratio, and a 10:1 replacement ratio for trees with greater than or equal to 2.5 feet DBH.

(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 habitat conservation plans have been established for the project area. Therefore, the project would not conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project would primarily be located in previously disturbed areas with low-value habitat conditions, and in close proximity to developed areas that experience routine human disturbance. Potential for impacts to biological resources in these areas is considered unlikely, with the exception of potential for nesting birds to be present during the breeding season.

The Paso Robles Creek corridor in the project area is highly disturbed but the channel provides aquatic habitat. No channel impacts are proposed.

The Graves Creek channel and riparian banks provide a corridor of less disturbed habitat within the project alignment. No impacts to the channel are proposed. The final configuration of the bridge crossing would be determined as part of the final design phase based on right-of-way issues, and the trail configuration on the south bank, which includes a steep slope. Construction of the bridge abutments and bridge approach supports would require vegetation clearing and excavation activities that would likely extend into the riparian zones. Vegetation clearing and direct impacts to riparian banks would be minimized to the extent possible. Removal of mature native trees would be minimized to the extent possible, and would be mitigated with replacement plantings in similar locations.

Special-status species with potential to occur on site include CRLF, steelhead, southwestern willow flycatcher, least Bell's vireo, two-striped garter snake, western pond turtle, coast range newt, lesser slender salamander Monterey big-eared woodrat, California legless lizard, western spadefoot, western red bat, and nesting migratory birds, coast range newt, and migratory birds. Of these, southwestern pond turtle is the only species observed onsite during field surveys.

While some of these species are more likely to occur on site than others, the County would conduct appropriately timed pre-construction surveys to determine presence of any of these species on site, including nesting birds. In the event pre-construction surveys identify any special-status species on site, detailed mitigation measures specific to the species would be implemented (BIO-1 through BIO-3, Exhibit B). These measures generally include many of the standard measures already included for protection of biological resources (e.g., Exhibit B, BIO-4 through BIO-15). They also include species-specific measures such as having qualified biologists relocate individuals out of harm's way.

Standard mitigation measures would be implemented to avoid adverse impacts to biological resources, including, for example, measures to protect water quality in the creek channels and conducting work in jurisdictional areas during the dry season (Exhibit B, BIO-4 through BIO-15). Incorporation of the proposed mitigation measures would reduce project impacts to biological resources to a less than significant level.

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to § 15064.5?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b)	Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to § 15064.5?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(c)	Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

No historical buildings, structures or sites listed in the California Register of Historical Resources are located in or near the project area.

With respect to archaeological resources, the project site lies within a region historically occupied by the Salinan and Chumash. The Chumash occupied the coast between San Luis Obispo and northwestern Los Angeles County, inland to the San Joaquin Valley. They were divided into two broad groups, of which the Obispeño were the northern group. The Salinan were northern neighbors of the Chumash, and although the presence of a firm boundary between the Chumash and the Salinan is uncertain, ethnographic accounts have placed Salinan territories in the northern portion of the County. Neither tribal group has recognized tribal lands in the project area. For purposes of CEQA compliance, the County solicits and considers input from all interested tribal members through the Assembly Bill (AB) 52 Tribal Consultation process.

Both tribes have a rich and complex history dating back as much as 10,000 years before present. The material culture and lifeways of the Northern Chumash appear to have been similar in many ways to their northern neighbors, the Salinan. The Northern Chumash had a complex system of social organization. They were hunter-gatherer-fishers and resided in numerous permanent villages and temporary camps, following annual cycles of hunting and gathering. Acorns provided a main staple of the diet. The Salinas River corridor and associated creeks, including Paso Robles Creek and Graves Creek, would be considered particularly archaeologically sensitive because they provided access to water, fish, and a diversity of plants and animals associated with the riparian zones.

A number of archaeological reports have been completed for past projects at or in the vicinity of the project area. Many of these investigations resulted in significant archaeological finds in the project vicinity.

Cultural resources in the project area were evaluated with an Archaeological Survey Report (ASR), a Supplemental ASR to address project revisions, and a Historic Property Survey Report (HPSR). Conclusions from these investigations are that the project will have no effect on cultural resources.

Discussion

(a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to § 15064.5?

There are no historical resources within the project site, as defined in Section 15064.5(a) of the CEQA Guidelines. Therefore, the project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

(b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to § 15064.5?

The area within and around the project APE has been extensively studied for archaeological resources. The ASR and Supplemental ASR did not identify any archaeological resources within the project's APE. Much of the project area has been previously disturbed by construction of roads, the railroad, and development. Therefore the project is not expected have substantial adverse effects on archaeological resources.

(c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?

Native American tribal outreach conducted for the project provided confirmation that the project is in an area that is considered sensitive because of proximity to the Salinas River. Significant resources were discovered at a site near the project in the past. No significant resources were identified within the project APE.

Conclusion/Mitigation

Cultural resource investigations have resulted in a determination of no previously identified site in the APE, and the project is not expected to affect cultural resources. Standard mitigation measures, including conducting a pre-construction archaeological briefing for all construction crews and specifying the procedures to be implemented in the event of any unanticipated finds (Exhibit B, CR-1, CR-2, and CR-3) would reduce potential project impacts to previously unidentified cultural resources to a less than significant level.

VI. ENERGY

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

Energy considerations under CEQA are intended to evaluate projects with respect to the goals of decreasing energy consumption and reliance on fossil fuels, and increasing reliance on renewable energy sources (CEQA Guidelines Appendix F). Relevant factors for consideration can include energy consumption required for the project, compliance with energy standards, and effects of the project on local and regional energy supplies, electricity demand, and transportation energy requirements.

Discussion

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

From an operational perspective, the project would not serve automobiles and would provide an alternative for bicycle and pedestrian travel between Templeton and Atascadero, which may indirectly reduce energy consumption by providing local transportation alternatives.

Construction vehicle emissions have been evaluated for the project as part of the evaluation described in the Air Quality section, and would be designed and managed to avoid wasteful or unnecessary consumption of fuel that would contribute to air emissions. Therefore, the project is not expected to contribute to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of fossil fuels.

(b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

The County is collaborating with two adjoining counties to develop energy efficiency programs to help reduce energy use, reduce carbon emissions, and meet the goals of local climate action plans. Efforts to date have focused on building codes, construction workforce training, and residential energy efficiency assistance programs. These County efforts are not directly relevant to the project.

However, as discussed in the Air Quality section, the County APCD's Clean Air Plan includes approaches for controlling transportation-related air emissions. The Plan specifies a goal of increasing opportunities and convenience for bicycling and walking as a means of reducing vehicle traffic. The project would enhance bicycling and pedestrian alternatives to vehicle transit and is therefore consistent with the Plan.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project is not expected to result in significant effects on energy resources. Additionally, the project is consistent with the goals in the Clean Air Plan to encourage increased bicycle and pedestrian transportation modes and may have a beneficial effect of reduced energy consumption. The air quality impact assessment for the project, described in the Air Quality section above, addresses construction-related consumption of fossil fuels and recommends project-specific mitigation measures that may avoid wasteful or unnecessary fuel consumption. No additional mitigation measures pertaining to energy use are required.

VII. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(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.	☐	☐	☒	☐
	(ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	☐	☐	☒	☐
	(iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	☐	☐	☒	☐
	(iv) Landslides?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(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 on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?	☐	☐	☒	☐

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(d)	Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(f)	Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Setting

The project site is primarily underlain by quaternary units consisting of unconsolidated and semi-consolidated alluvium, lake, playa, and terrace deposits. The younger-aged units [Qa – late Pleistocene to Holocene] generally have low potential for paleontological resources but may be underlain by older units with increased potential. A section of the project area at the north and west end of South Main Street is underlain by older alluvium deposits [Qoa] with moderate sensitivity for paleontological resources. A short section of the project footprint along the east side of South Main Street is underlain by the Monterey Formation, which has the potential to contain paleontological resources such as vertebrates, invertebrates, and plants.

The project site is not underlain by or located in close proximity to a known earthquake fault zone (based on California Department of Conservation fault maps). The Rinconada fault is approximately two miles east of the project site and is mapped as a potentially capable fault. No earthquakes attributed to this fault have been recorded during historic time, it is probably inactive, and poses little if any seismic hazards (USGS 1976).

However, the entire county is mapped as a seismically active area. The bulk of the central portion of the County, including Templeton and Atascadero, is mapped as a D1 hazard zone based on the USGS Seismic Design Standards. Secondary seismic hazards including liquefaction, settlement, and landslides result from the interaction of ground shaking with existing soil conditions. The project area is relatively flat, is not considered a landslide risk area, and the soil types have low erodibility and pose low to moderate liquefaction risk.

Soil types include Hanford and Greenfield (moderate erodibility, low shrink-swell potential) along the northern portion of Main Street in the project area, and Still clay loam (low erodibility, low to moderate shrink-swell potential) for the remainder of the project area.

Discussion

(a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:

(a-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.

(a-ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?

(a-iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

(a-iv) Landslides?

In regard to (a-i) through (a-iv), the project site is not in the County Geologic Study Area designation or in a high liquefaction risk area. The project is not near active faults, so does not pose expected risks to users from fault rupture. The project area is relatively flat and is not considered a landslide risk area and the soil types pose low to moderate liquefaction risk. Therefore, the project is not expected to directly or indirectly cause substantial adverse effects related to seismic-related hazards.

(b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

Project construction would require grading and excavation that would expose soils to potential erosion. Preparation of the multi-use trail surface may require soil disturbance to a depth of one to two feet. Excavations for bridge approach supports and the bridge abutments would require localized areas of excavation on the order of 16 to 20 feet deep.

The mapped soil types in the project area are characterized by low erodibility. Potential sedimentation and erosion during construction would be addressed in the project's Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP; required for construction disturbance greater than one acre). Erosion controls would be most critical in areas bordering Paso Robles Creek and Graves Creek. All areas disturbed during construction would be stabilized with native, drought-tolerant plants.

(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 on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?

The project setting would not be considered unstable. Soils within the project site have low erodibility and low to moderate shrink-swell (expansion) potential. The project area has relatively flat topography outside of the creek crossings and is not in an identified landslide risk zone. Any risks from soil instability pertaining to the pedestrian bridges would be addressed in the engineering design of the structures. The proposed bridges would span Paso Robles Creek and Graves Creek without any direct impact to the creeks or creekbanks. Therefore, the project is not expected to result in any geologic or soil-related hazards.

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

The mapped soil units in the project area have low to moderate shrink-swell capacity. Any instabilities related to soil type would be addressed in the engineering design of the pedestrian bridges so as not to pose substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property.

(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?

The project does not include development of any facilities that would result in the generation of wastewater and would have no impact on waste disposal.

(f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

The project includes areas with low to moderate sensitivity for unique paleontological or geological resources. The southern bank of Graves Creek in the project vicinity has bedrock outcroppings. However, no blasting or rock removal is anticipated to be required for the project. For most of the project length, construction would be limited to shallow excavation and regrading in areas that have been previously disturbed. Deeper excavation (e.g., on the order of 18 feet below grade) would be required in limited areas (e.g., 20 feet by 20 feet) for the foundations for the bridges spanning Paso Robles Creek and Graves Creek. Individual abutment foundation piles may be drilled to a depth of 40 feet below grade. None of these project impacts are anticipated to result in potential for significant impacts to paleontological resources.

If the final project design includes revisions that result in a substantial disturbance to geological formations with moderate sensitivity for paleontological resources, a paleontological resources protection plan would be implemented.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project consists of a low-profile recreational trail in an area with relatively flat topography. The pedestrian bridges would span two creeks without substantial bank alterations that could threaten the stability of the channels or banks. Standard construction and site stabilization measures would be employed to minimize the potential for soil erosion (Exhibit B, BIO-12 and BIO-15). Therefore, the project is not expected to have adverse impacts pertaining to geology and soils and no mitigation measures are required.

Based on low to moderate sensitivity for resources, previous disturbance, and limited proposed excavation, the project is not expected to result in significant impacts to paleontological resources.

VIII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions are broadly recognized as contributing to an increase in the earth's average surface temperature and long-term changes in climate.

The passage of Assembly Bill (AB) 32, the California Global Warming Solutions Act (2006), recognized the need to reduce GHG emissions and set the GHG reduction goal for the State of California into law.

The County's plan for reducing GHG emissions is the EnergyWise Plan (Climate Action Plan) adopted in 2011 and updated in 2016. The County APCD approved thresholds for GHG emission impacts, and these thresholds have been incorporated the APCD's CEQA Air Quality Handbook. Potential sources of GHG emissions include burning fossil fuels.

Discussion

(a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

As discussed under Air Quality above, the project would not generate any operational air emissions. The project would result in short-term construction equipment exhaust emissions as well as emissions from construction commutes, which result in contributions of GHG emissions. These would be temporary in nature and of limited magnitude given the scope of the project, and are not expected to have a significant impact on state or regional GHG emissions or the environment.

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

The proposed Class I bicycle and pedestrian trail would extend existing bike trails and connect the City of Atascadero to the community of Templeton in northern San Luis Obispo County. Providing community-wide pedestrian and bicycle networks is a stated goal of the County's GHG reduction targets identified in the County EnergyWise Plan. Therefore, the project would be consistent with the applicable goals and measures of the Plan.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project would not generate operational emissions that would contribute to GHG levels, and construction-related emissions are estimated to be below the threshold that would warrant mitigation from the perspective of GHG levels. The project would increase opportunities for alternative modes of transportation, which could have a beneficial effect by reducing vehicle emissions that contribute to GHG levels. Therefore, no mitigation measures specific to GHG are required.

IX. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(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?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(c)	Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(f)	Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(g)	Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

The information in this section is based on an Initial Site Assessment (ISA)/Phase I (August 2015) and Phase II (November 2015) Environmental Site Assessments and an addendum to the ISA/Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (May 2020) to address project revisions. These investigations consisted of database review and site inspections of the project area to identify potential or known hazardous materials, hazardous waste, and contamination in the project area. No documented spills or cleanup actions were identified associated with the project area or nearby properties. Soil sampling was conducted to determine if soil contaminants are present in the UPRR right-of-way.

There is potential for aerially deposited lead in surface soils in highway rights-of-way due to historic use of leaded gasoline. Based on proximity of the project site to Highway 101, and potential concern with contaminants in the UPRR bed, soil samples were analyzed for petroleum -related contaminants and metals, including lead.

Discussion

(a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?

The project would not require the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials. Hazardous materials related to the project would be limited to construction activities, discussed under (b) below.

(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?

Construction activities have the potential to create a hazard to the public or the environment through accidental leaks or spills of construction vehicle and equipment fuels and lubricants. Standard construction measures pertaining to handling fuels and lubricants and responding in the event of a spill would help ensure any adverse effects are less than significant (Exhibit B, BIO-8 and BIO-11).

Results of the soil sampling conducted in the project area did not result in identification of any contaminants of concern. Petroleum-related contaminants were either not detected or detected at low levels (e.g., below applicable regulatory screening levels).

Aerially deposited lead in Caltrans right-of-way is managed in accordance with an agreement between Caltrans and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (the Caltrans Statewide Agreement). Out of ten soil samples analyzed for the project's northern alignment, a single sample had a total lead concentration that exceeded the Caltrans Statewide Agreement action level for reuse, transport, and disposal. Based on this result, elevated lead in site soils is not anticipated to be a widespread concern during project construction. Construction is not anticipated to require substantial soil excavation or to require substantial amounts of soils stockpiling, transport, or offsite disposal. Nonetheless, soil sampling for total and soluble lead will be conducted in areas subject to these activities. Soils that exceed the lead screening levels would be handled in accordance with the protective measures specified in Caltrans Statewide Agreement, which includes restrictions on soil reuse and disposal, and protective measures such as covering exposed soils with plastic sheeting.

(c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?

The northern stretch of the project sites runs adjacent to the Templeton High School. The project would accommodate bicycle and pedestrian traffic and does not include any other uses that would result in

hazardous emissions or handling of hazardous materials or waste. Construction-related air emissions would be of concern for impacts to students because of the close proximity of the project to the school grounds and athletic fields; these impacts are addressed by the dust control measures described in the Air Quality section and mitigation measure AQ-1 (Exhibit B).

(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?

The project site was searched in CalEPA's Cortese List data resources including the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) EnviroStor database, the State Water Resources Control Board (Water Board) GeoTracker database, Water Board list of waste disposal sites, Water Board list of "active" Cease and Desist Orders and Cleanup and Abatement Orders, and DTSC list of hazardous waste facilities. The project site is not in or near a hazardous material site. Therefore, the project would not result in a hazard to the public or the environmental associated with a site included on a list of hazardous material sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5.

(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?

The project is not located within the vicinity of an airport, airport land use plan, or private airstrip. The closest airport review area is approximately seven miles north in Paso Robles.

(f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

Most of the project area is in a zone with 0- to 5-minute emergency response times. The project would not interfere with or alter existing transportation networks and therefore would not interfere with emergency response or evacuation plans. Most of the project route is off road and construction activities would not interfere with access to existing roads. As such, the project would not impair implementation of, or physically interfere with, an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.

The local fire response requested that emergency access to trail sections be included as part of the design.

(g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?

The project is not located in a mapped fire hazard severity zone. Construction of a multi-use trail and pedestrian bridges would not alter existing conditions in the vicinity of the project pertaining to wildfire risk. The bulk of the construction activities for the project would be occurring in off road locations, and typical construction zone management practices pertaining to use of vehicles over dry vegetation would help reduce any risk of construction-generated fires (Exhibit B, HZ-2).

Conclusion/Mitigation

Operation of the project would not create hazards or use hazardous materials. There is potential for soils in close proximity to Highway 101 to have elevated concentrations of lead. In the event site grading results in excess soil that must be disposed of offsite, the contractor would be required to conduct soil sampling for total and soluble lead (Exhibit B, HZ-1). Any soils that exceed designated screening levels for lead would be handled and disposed of in accordance with the Caltrans Statewide Agreement to prevent unintended

exposure or environmental releases. There is the potential for construction-related hazards pertaining to accidental fuel spills and risk of wildfire from construction vehicles parked or driving over dry vegetation. The mitigation measures described in (b) and (g) above pertaining to these threats (Exhibit B, BIO-8, BIO-11, and HZ-2) would ensure that potential effects are less than significant. No additional mitigation measures are necessary.

X. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(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 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?	☐	☐	☒	☐

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(d)	In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(e)	Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

The community of Templeton and the northern half of City of Atascadero are in a portion of the Salinas River watershed that has experienced the most urban and agricultural development. Surface waters in the project area include Paso Robles Creek and Graves Creek, tributaries to the Salinas River. The upper Salinas River is on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Section 303(d) listed of impaired surface waters based on sodium, chloride, and pH, and is proposed to be listed for turbidity; no Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) to manage discharges of these constituents to the river has been developed yet. Elevated salts in surface water or groundwater can result from of contributions from agriculture (fertilizer and amendments), septic systems, wastewater treatment discharge, and livestock. Paso Robles Creek and Graves Creek have not been assessed for 303(d) listing or TMDLs.

The Central Coast Region Regional Water Quality Control Board maintains a water quality control plan for the central coastal basin (June 14, 2019 edition). The plan establishes designated waterway uses, water quality objectives, and management approaches to prevent adverse water quality impacts, including development of TMDLs. Plan measures applicable to the project include construction measures to manage soil disturbance and prevent erosion.

The project is in the Atascadero subbasin of the Salinas Valley groundwater basin. Pursuant to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), the Atascadero Subbasin has been designated as a very low priority basin, meaning it is not subject to the requirements of the SGMA to develop a groundwater sustainability plan (GSP). Nonetheless, a groundwater sustainability agency was created for the subbasin, and it is proceeding with development of a GSP although it is not required by the SGMA. The plan will detail how long-term sustainability of the subbasin can be achieved.

The Templeton Community Services District provides drinking water for the community from deep groundwater wells, from shallower Salinas River underflow wells, and from Nacimiento water deliveries. Treated wastewater is discharged into ponds where it percolates into (i.e., recharges) the Salinas River underflow.

Discussion

(a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?

The project would not generate uses that would introduce contaminants or waste materials that would have the potential to degrade surface water or groundwater quality. The project would not generate new septic

systems or wastewater, and would not introduce new sources of nutrients in the watershed. Trail use would not introduce contaminants that could adversely affect surface water or groundwater quality. Construction would be managed in accordance with standard best management practices to control construction debris, construction vehicle fuel leaks and spills, and soil erosion that could affect water quality. Therefore, the project is not expected to violate water quality standards or waste discharge requirements.

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

The project would use pervious trail shoulders that would allow precipitation and runoff from the paved portion of the trail to percolate into the ground. Therefore, the project would not reduce groundwater recharge in the project area. Dust control during construction would be accomplished with limited amounts of water trucked to the site; this water would percolate back into the ground so would not decrease regional groundwater supplies. Areas disturbed during construction would be stabilized with non-irrigated native and drought-tolerant plants. None of the project features would consume water or increase water demand. Therefore, the project would not substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge.

(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:

(c-i) Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?

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

(c-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?

(c-iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?

In regard to (c-i) through (c-iii), the project would add roughly 1.6 acres of impervious surface on the paved portion of the multi-use trail bordered by pervious shoulder. Stormwater runoff from the impervious surface would be able to percolate through the pervious shoulders throughout the relatively flat project area, and is not expected to generate substantial stormwater flows. The bridges crossing Paso Robles Creek and Graves Creek would be installed in a manner that minimizes the potential for bank erosion. No alterations to the creek channels or more than incremental floodplain fill are proposed. Therefore, the project would not substantially alter existing drainage patterns, increase stormwater runoff, or result in substantial erosion or flooding.

Development of the proposed project site would cumulatively disturb more than one acre. Therefore, the project would be implemented in accordance with an approved Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan. Adherence to the plan would ensure that potential impacts to water quality from runoff and erosion are less than significant.

In regard to (c-iv), portions of the project located in the path of flood flows include the proposed pedestrian bridges spanning Paso Robles Creek and Graves Creek. The bridge decks would be designed to be a minimum of one foot above the base flood elevation so that the bridges would not impede passage of flows up to and including 100-year flood flows. Portions of the bridge crossings may be in the 100-year floodplain; floodplain encroachment would be minimized to the extent feasible in the final project design.

(d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

The proposed creek bridge spans would be pre-fabricated and pre-engineered, would not include any support structures within the creek bed, and the bridge decks would be above the 100-year flood elevation. For the Graves Creek bridge, it may be possible to install a span bridge with the supports and approach ramps located outside the 100-year floodplain. For the Paso Robles Creek bridge, it is likely that some or all of the bridge supports would be in 100-year floodplain. However, the bridge would be constructed of clean materials and would not introduce any risk of pollutant release in the event of inundation. Floodplain encroachment, if necessary, would be minimal and designed so as not to impede or redirect flood flows and to minimize trapping of flood-borne debris.

(e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

There are no water quality control plans specific to the project area. Paso Robles Creek and Graves Creek join the Salinas River a short distance downstream from the project. While a TMDL has yet to be developed for this portion of the Salinas River, the project would not contribute pollutant runoff that would have an adverse effect on water quality in the Salinas River.

A groundwater sustainability plan (GSP) for the Atascadero subbasin is currently being developed. The project would not require groundwater withdrawals and would maintain existing groundwater recharge in the project area. Therefore the project would not interfere with the development or implementation of the GSP.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project would provide a trail for non-vehicle-based transportation modes that would not introduce pollutants into the environment. The potential for construction-related pollutants (e.g., spills of fuels and lubricants; soil erosion) would be managed with standard mitigation measures so that the potential for adverse effects on water quality would be less than significant (Exhibit B, BIO-8 and BIO-11). Incorporation of pervious surfaces in the project design would minimize any alterations in existing stormwater runoff patterns and groundwater recharge, resulting in less than significant impacts. In regard to flood hazard zones, the pedestrian bridges would be designed and installed in a manner that would not impede or redirect flood flows.

Standard construction practices that would be used for the project to ensure effects on hydrology and water quality are less than significant, including, for example, conducting work near jurisdictional areas during the dry season, requiring a construction spill response plan, and requirements to clear trash from the construction site. Refer to mitigation measures BIO-4, 8, 10, 11, and 13 in Exhibit B. No additional mitigation measures are required.

XI. LAND USE AND PLANNING

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Physically divide an established community?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

The project spans a narrow corridor between residential development and the Templeton High School near the south side of the community of Templeton, and residential and commercial developments at the north side of the City of Atascadero. Highway 101 is the main direct connection between the two communities in the vicinity of the project.

Discussion

(a) Physically divide an established community?

The project would function as a new recreational area and would provide pedestrian and bicycle connectivity from the community of Templeton to the City of Atascadero. Therefore, the project would not physically divide an established community, but rather would connect two established communities in northern San Luis Obispo County.

(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?

The project has been identified as a regional need in the San Luis Obispo County Parks and Recreation Plan, County Bikeway Plan, and the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) 2014 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (2014 RTP/SCS).

The County Inland Land Use Ordinance (Title 22) prescribes design standards for the Salinas River Highway Corridor for the purpose of maintaining existing public views of scenic vistas and backdrops containing varied topography including ridgelines and rock features, significant stands of trees and wildflowers, and natural landmarks, historic buildings, and pastoral settings. The project site is in Area 4 of the Salinas River Highway Corridor, the South Templeton-North Atascadero Highway Corridor Design Standard area. While County projects are not required to comply with Title 22, the design standards apply to residential buildings and accessory structures, agricultural accessory structures, and signs, and would not be applicable to the proposed multi-use trail. Nonetheless, efforts to preserve and replace existing trees in the project's Highway 101 corridor, described in the Aesthetics section, would be consistent with the County standards for the area.

Title 22 also contains flood hazard standards, which state that structures in flood hazard zones must be designed so as not to limit the capacity of the floodplain or increase flood heights, must be anchored to prevent collapse or movement that could result in damage to other structures, must have floodproofed utilities, and must not alter the flood carrying capacity of a watercourse. While not directly applicable to County projects, the project complies with this portion of the County ordinances.

The project would not conflict with an applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project, and would be consistent with the standards for similar projects contained in the County plans and ordinances.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project would not have an adverse effect on land use and planning, and would have a beneficial effect by increasing connectivity between two adjacent communities. No mitigation is required.

XII. MINERAL RESOURCES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

The closest mineral recovery site in the project vicinity is sand mining operations in the Salinas River floodplain. No such mining operations are located in the project area.

Discussion

(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?

(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?

In regard to (a) and (b), there are no known mineral resources on the project site. The project site is not designated by the County General Plan or other land use plans as a locally important mineral recovery site. Additionally, the narrow, linear project alignment, primarily on previously disturbed lands and in close

proximity to existing development, is not conducive to future mineral recovery proposals. Therefore, the project would not result in the loss of availability or a mineral resources or mineral resource recovery site.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project would have no effect on mineral resources and no mitigation is required.

XIII. NOISE

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project result in:					
(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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b)	Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

Most of the project length is in a zone with background noise levels of 70 dB in close proximity to Highway 101 and the UPRR. Portions of the project bordering South Main Street and the Templeton High School are in 60 to 65 dB zones.

Noise-sensitive land uses located near the project site include Templeton High School, immediately adjacent to the northern portion of the project, and Templeton Middle School, roughly 750 feet north of the project. There are also residential land uses adjacent to the northern and southern ends of the project site.

Discussion

(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?

The project would generate negligible levels of operational noise. The project would generate temporary construction noise for the duration of construction. Construction noise would be temporary, confined to daylight hours, and would not constitute an excessive disturbance in areas already subjected to noise from Highway 101 and the UPRR.

(b) Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

Construction is not expected to require activities that would cause excessive groundborne vibration or noise levels. Concrete columns to support the two pedestrian bridges would be installed with a drill rig. Any groundborne noise from this activity is not expected to be excessive and would be of short duration.

(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?

The project is not located in the vicinity of a private airstrip, airport land use plan, or public airport.

Conclusion/Mitigation

Construction-generated noise would be temporary, would be limited to daylight hours, and is not expected to be excessive, particularly in light of ambient noise levels created along Highway 101 and the UPRR. Operation of the project would not introduce any substantial new sources of noise. No mitigation measures are required.

XIV. POPULATION AND HOUSING

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(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)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b)	Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

Land uses in and adjacent to the project area include suburban residential, public facilities, and agriculture in the community of Templeton, and commercial and residential developments in the City of Atascadero.

Discussion

(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)?

The project does not involve residential or other development that would directly or indirectly induce population growth in the area.

(b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

The project site is currently undeveloped. Therefore, the project would not displace substantial numbers of housing or people.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project would have no effect on housing and population and no mitigation measures are required.

XV. PUBLIC SERVICES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
	Other public facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

The project is in a local fire responsibility area served by the Templeton Fire Department and the Atascadero Fire and Emergency Services. Police protection in Templeton is provided by the County sheriff and California Highway Patrol; Atascadero is served by the Atascadero Police Department.

Discussion

(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, or other public facilities?*

Development of the multi-use trail would not result in an increase in the local population. The project would not result in the need for new or expanded fire or police protection facilities, school facilities, or any other public facilities in the area.

The project would expand upon and extend existing recreational facilities for passive recreational use that would not require new recreational personnel or facilities. Therefore, the project would not result in impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, or the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities.

The Atascadero Fire and Emergency Services requested that emergency access points be included for portions of the trail where necessary. This may require minor earth disturbance and/or inclusion of gated access points to the trail. These measures will be addressed in the final project design to accommodate safe emergency access where appropriate along the trail.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project would not adversely affect public services and no mitigation is required.

XVI. RECREATION

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(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?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Aside from Highway 101, there is no formal roadway or trail connection between Templeton and Atascadero. Cyclists use the highway, and cyclists and pedestrians informally use the railroad tracks or other routes to make this connection. The project would provide an alternative to these routes. The project has been designated in the County Parks and Recreation Plan, the County Bikeway Plan, and the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) Regional Transportation Plan. In addition to a Templeton to Atascadero trail corridor, SLOCOG has developed a Master Plan for creation of a destination trail system along the Salinas River from San Miguel to Santa Margarita (the de Anza Trail) and this project would form one segment of such a trail system.

Discussion

(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?

The proposed multiuse trail would extend existing pedestrian trails already constructed in Atascadero. As such the project is expected to enhance existing recreational facilities in the County, and provide specific recreational benefits to the residents of Templeton and Atascadero. The project would be designed to accommodate the anticipated users and is not expected to result in adverse impacts to other trail segments, neighborhood or regional parks, or other regional recreational facilities, from increased interest in and use of the trail system.

(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?

The proposed multiuse trail would extend existing pedestrian trails already constructed in Atascadero. The trail would be a component of the Salinas River corridor trails, which are the subject of regional planning efforts. While the purpose of the project is to expand and enhance recreational opportunities, the proposed trail would be designed to accommodate the anticipated recreational use. Therefore, the project is not expected to require the construction or expansion of additional recreational facilities.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project would not have adverse effects on recreation and no mitigation measures are required.

XVII. TRANSPORTATION

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(a)	Conflict with a program plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	☐	☐	☒	☐

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(b)	Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(d)	Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

Access to the proposed project would be from existing trails and the sidewalk on San Ramon Road in Atascadero at the south end of the project, and from the community of Templeton at the north end. Trail users could access the project from any point in Templeton by bicycle or on foot, or by parking at or near the Templeton High School. South Main Street is a dead-end street. The trail would parallel the existing road.

Discussion

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

The project would not result in an increase in existing traffic volumes in the local street system. The project is an extension of the existing multi-use bike and pedestrian trail system that is currently in place in northern San Luis Obispo County. The project is consistent with the intent and the range of conceptual alternatives in the regional Salinas River Corridor trail planning.

The project has also been identified as a regional need in the San Luis Obispo County Parks and Recreation Plan, County Bikeway Plan, and the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) 2014 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (2014 RTP/SCS) and would be developed in compliance with all applicable federal, State, and local transportation and circulation regulations.

Therefore, the project would not conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance or policy establishing a measure of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system, or level of service standards, travel demand measures, or other standards established by the county congestion management agency for area roads and highways.

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

The project would not eliminate or alter existing vehicle transportation routes or affect the capacity of existing roads. The project would extend an existing recreational trail and is expected to attract new users to the trail; however, it is not expected to result in a substantial increase in unique vehicle trips to the area. In addition, by encouraging bicycle and pedestrian travel, the project may reduce motor vehicle trips on the project vicinity. Therefore, the project is not expected to increase vehicle miles traveled, has the potential to decrease

local vehicle traffic, and would be considered to have less than significant impacts on transportation under Section 15064.3(b)(2).

Consideration has also been given to the December 2018 Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA, specifically as it pertains to estimating project effects on vehicle miles traveled (VMT), in conjunction with SB 743 requirements for communities to achieve a 15% reduction in VMT. The Technical Advisory lists assets that serve bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the list of projects that would not likely lead to a measurable and substantial increase in VMT, and therefore would not require an induced travel analysis.

The proposed bicycle and pedestrian trail would provide improved connectivity for pedestrian and bicycle travel in northern San Luis Obispo County and would primarily serve local residents. Therefore, the project would not substantially increase vehicle trips or otherwise generate new criteria pollutant emissions. Additionally, the proposed trail would be consistent with SLOAPCD's Transportation Control Measure (TCM) T-3 (Bicycling and Bikeway Enhancements), the goal of which is to increase the countywide average bicycle mode share.

(c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?

The project would not introduce hazardous design features or incompatible uses. Bicycles are currently allowed on the adjacent segment of Highway 101. The project would provide an off-highway alternative for bicyclists, reduce the potential hazards associated with bicycle travel on Highway 101 and its on and off ramps.

Therefore, the project does not include design features that would result in new hazards and impacts would be less than significant.

Project construction is not expected to require any closures of Highway 101. There may be a need for temporary, single lane closures for moving materials and equipment during construction. Any lane closures would be for a short duration.

(d) Result in inadequate emergency access?

The proposed multi-use trail would be 12 feet wide (two four- to five-foot-wide paved travel lanes and two two-foot-wide shoulders), beginning just south of Paso Robles Creek in the City of Atascadero and extending north to Vineyard Drive in the community of Templeton. The trail would also include a 10- to 12-foot wide clear span bridge over Paso Robles Creek and a UPRR undercrossing. Emergency vehicle access points would be incorporated into the trail design in the event of need to access the trail for emergency or fire response.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project would not have adverse impacts on transportation, and would potentially have beneficial effects by encouraging regional non-motorized alternatives and providing bicyclists with an alternative to using Highway 101. Impacts on transportation would be less than significant and no mitigation measures are required.

XVIII. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a)	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:				
	(i) 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	☐	☒	☐	☐
	(ii) 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.	☐	☒	☐	☐

Setting

California Assembly Bill (AB) 52 was passed to ensure effective consultation with Native American tribes concerning the potential for impacts to tribal cultural resources from proposed projects. A Tribal Cultural Resource is a site feature, place, cultural landscape, sacred place or object that is of cultural value to a Native American tribe, and that is listed in or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources or a local historic register.

The project setting as it pertains to cultural resources is described in the Cultural Resources section above. In regard to Tribal Cultural Resources, a sacred sites database search and AB 52 consultation with the tribal contacts that requested notification of County projects was conducted for the project.

Discussion

(a) 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:

(a-i) 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)?

(a-ii) 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.

In regard to (a-i) and (a-ii), as described in the Cultural Resources section, cultural resource evaluations conducted for the project concluded that the project would not have substantial adverse effects on cultural resources. No sites listed or eligible for listing in the National or State registers were identified in the project area. Information regarding a sacred site in the vicinity of the project was obtained as a result of Native American tribal outreach; the site would not be impacted by the project.

Conclusion/Mitigation

As described in the Cultural Resources Section, it is appropriate to include mitigation measures that require a pre-construction archeological briefing for construction crews and procedures to be implemented in the event of any unanticipated finds. These mitigation measures would reduce potential project impacts to cultural resources to a less than significant level. No additional mitigation measures pertaining to tribal cultural resources are required.

XIX. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(b)	Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(e)	Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

The Templeton Community Services District provides water, wastewater, and solid waste services throughout all but the southern-most extent of the project area. At the southern end of the project area, the City of Atascadero Public Works Department provides wastewater services and the Atascadero Mutual Water Company provides drinking water services.

Discussion

(a) Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?

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

(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?

(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?

(e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

In regard to (a) through (e), the project would not generate wastewater, would not require use of water with the exception of minimal amounts of water for dust control during construction, and would not interfere with existing wastewater or water supply systems. Solid waste generated by the project would be limited to construction debris, which is not anticipated to be substantial, would be handled in accordance with all regulations related to the disposal of solid waste, and would not result in exceedance of local solid waste disposal facility capacity.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The project would not have adverse effects on utilities and service systems and no mitigation measures are required.

XX. WILDFIRE

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:					
(a)	Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(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?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Initial Study – Environmental Checklist

Setting

The project setting from the perspective of wildfires is described in the Hazards and Hazardous Materials and Public Services sections.

Discussion

(a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

(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?

(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?

(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?

In regard to (a) through (d), the project would not alter or interfere with emergency response or emergency evacuation plans or procedures. Construction would use existing roads for access to the project area, but the project alignment is primarily in off-road locations. Construction access along South Main Street, Templeton, at the north end, and San Ramon Road, Atascadero, at the south end, would not block or interfere with use of these roads for emergency or evacuation purposes.

Conclusion/Mitigation

The potential for construction vehicles working in dry vegetation off-road locations is described in the Hazards and Hazardous Materials section, including a mitigation measure to restrict construction vehicles from parking in areas with dry groundcover. The project would not otherwise have any adverse effects on wildfire risk and no additional mitigation measures are required.

XXI. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(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?	☐	☒	☐	☐
(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)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c)	Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Setting

The project setting is described in terms of surrounding land uses on pages one through three of the Initial Study and from the perspective of environmental resources in each resource section of this document, including, for example, aesthetics, biological resources, and cultural resources.

Discussion

(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?

The project has the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment. Incorporation of the Biological Resources (BR) and Cultural Resources (CR) mitigation measures included in Exhibit B would ensure that the project would not substantially reduce the number of fish and wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of rare or endangered plant or animal species, and/or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or pre-history. Therefore, the anticipated project-related impacts are less than significant.

(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)?

The project proposes an extension of an existing recreational trail and is included in a comprehensive county-wide trail master plan. The project would be located primarily in existing rights-of-way (County, UPRR, Caltrans) and small portions of adjacent privately owned lands immediately bordering the rights-of-way. Operational impacts are limited to pedestrian and bicycle use of the proposed extension of an existing trail, with periodic trail maintenance requirements. The project may have regional benefits to transportation networks by providing an alternative route for bicyclists currently using the adjacent section of Highway 101, and by encouraging non-motorized modes of regional transportation.

Construction-related impacts would be temporary and limited by the limited duration and scope of the project. The project is not expected to have impacts that would be individually limited, but cumulatively considerable. Therefore, project impacts, when considered together with past, on-going, and future projects in the vicinity, would not be cumulatively considerable and would not compound or increase other environmental impacts. Therefore, all project-related impacts would be less than significant.

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

The project would not result in environmental effects that would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly. The anticipated effects of the project would not conflict with any adjacent land uses. Potential exposure to contaminants in soil is described in the Hazards and Hazardous Materials Section, and the mitigation measures in that section as well as the Air Quality section would ensure no adverse effects on construction workers and sensitive receptors in the vicinity during construction. From an operational perspective, the project may discourage current practices of pedestrians and bicycles using either Highway 101 or the UPRR bridge; this would have a beneficial effect on safety. The project is expected to result in net benefits to transportation and public safety; therefore, all impacts are considered less than significant.

Conclusion/Mitigation

With the implementation of the project-specific mitigation measures, including appropriate measures listed in Exhibit B, the project would have a less than significant impact on the environment.

Exhibit A - Initial Study References and Agency Contacts

The County Planning Department has contacted various agencies for their comments on the proposed project. With respect to the subject application, the following have been contacted (marked with an ☒) and when a response was made, it is either attached or in the application file:

Contacted	Agency	Response
☐	County Public Works Department	**Not Applicable**
☒	County Environmental Health Services	**None**
☒	County Agricultural Commissioner's Office	**In File****
☐	County Airport Manager	**Not Applicable**
☐	Airport Land Use Commission	**Not Applicable**
☒	Air Pollution Control District	**In File****
☐	County Sheriff's Department	**Not Applicable**
☐	Regional Water Quality Control Board	**Not Applicable**
☐	CA Coastal Commission	**Not Applicable**
☒	CA Department of Fish and Wildlife	**None**
☐	CA Department of Forestry (Cal Fire)	**Not Applicable**
☐	CA Department of Transportation	**Project partner**
☐	Community Services District	**Not Applicable**
☒	Other County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures	**In File****
☒	Other Templeton Fire; Atascadero Fire; Templeton Area Advisory Group	**In File****

** "No comment" or "No concerns"-type responses are usually not attached

The following checked ("☒") reference materials have been used in the environmental review for the proposed project and are hereby incorporated by reference into the Initial Study. The following information is available at the County Planning and Building Department.

☒ Project File for the Subject Application

County Documents

☐ Coastal Plan Policies
☐ Framework for Planning (Coastal/Inland)
☒ General Plan (Inland/Coastal), includes all maps/elements; more pertinent elements:
- ☐ Agriculture Element
- ☐ Conservation & Open Space Element
- ☐ Economic Element
- ☐ Housing Element
- ☐ Noise Element
- ☒ Parks & Recreation Element/Project List
- ☐ Safety Element

☒ Land Use Ordinance (Inland/Coastal)
☐ Building and Construction Ordinance
☐ Public Facilities Fee Ordinance
☐ Real Property Division Ordinance
☐ Affordable Housing Fund
☐ Airport Land Use Plan
☐ Energy Wise Plan
☐ Select Planning Area
☐ Design Plan
☐ Specific Plan
☐ Annual Resource Summary Report
☐ Circulation Study

Other Documents

☒ Clean Air Plan/APCD Handbook
☐ Regional Transportation Plan
☐ Uniform Fire Code
☒ Water Quality Control Plan (Central Coast Basin – Region 3)
☒ Archaeological Resources Map
☐ Area of Critical Concerns Map
☒ Special Biological Importance Map
☒ CA Natural Species Diversity Database
☒ Fire Hazard Severity Map
☒ Flood Hazard Maps
☒ Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Survey for SLO County
☒ GIS mapping layers (e.g., habitat, streams, contours, etc.)
☐ Other

In addition, the following project-specific information and/or reference materials have been considered as a part of the Initial Study:

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), 2016. Templeton to Atascadero Connector Project, Biological Assessment, City of Atascadero and Community of Templeton, San Luis Obispo County, California. RPSTPLE-CML-5949(140). December.

Caltrans, 2017. Templeton to Atascadero Connector Project, Natural Environment Study, City of Atascadero and Community of Templeton, San Luis Obispo County, California. RPSTPLE-CML-5949(140). February.

Caltrans, 2020. Templeton to Atascadero Connector Project, Draft Addendum to the Natural Environment Study, City of Atascadero and Community of Templeton, San Luis Obispo County, California. RPSTPLE-CML-5949(140). July.

County of San Luis Obispo Department of Public Works, 2020. Biological Assessment Technical Memorandum Templeton to Atascadero Connector Trail, July.

County of San Luis Obispo Department of Public Works, 2020. Supplemental Archaeological Survey Report for the Templeton to Atascadero Connector Project, San Luis Obispo County, California. August.

County of San Luis Obispo Department of Public Works, 2020. Draft Historic Property Survey Report. August.

Rincon Consultants, Inc., 2015. Phase II Environmental Site Assessment, Templeton to Atascadero Bikeway Connector, San Luis Obispo County, California, November.

Rincon Consultants, Inc., 2018. Archaeological Survey Report for the Templeton to Atascadero Connector Project, San Luis Obispo County, California.

Tetra Tech, Inc., 2015. Initial Site Assessment/Phase I Environmental Assessment, Templeton to Atascadero Bikeway Connector Project. August.

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), 1976. The Rinconada and related faults in the Southern Coast Ranges, California, and their tectonic significance. USGS Professional Paper 981.

Exhibit B - Mitigation Summary

AE-1 Tree Avoidance and Replacement. The final project design will be configured to avoid removal of, or trail construction requirements within the drip line of, mature native oak trees to the extent practicable. All native trees greater than 4-inch diameter at breast height (DBH) that are removed as a result of the project will be replaced at a 4:1 ratio in comparable locations along the project length or vicinity. All oak trees greater than 2.5-feet DBH that are removed will be replaced at a 10:1 ratio in comparable locations along the project length or suitable nearby locations.

Prior to construction, the County will develop a tree protection plan to avoid and minimize inadvertent damage to trees to remain on site. The tree protection plan may include, for example: (a) trimming will be used instead of tree removal where possible; (b) trees scheduled for removal will be clearly marked, (c) trees to remain on-site that are within fifty feet of construction or grading activities will be marked for protection (e.g. fencing or flagging), including as much of the root zone (1.5 times the canopy width) as possible, prior to any site disturbance, (d) grading, utility trenching, compaction of soil, or placement of fill will be avoided in the fenced areas, (e) care will be taken to avoid surface roots within the top 18" of soil, and (f) if any roots must be removed or exposed, they will be cleanly cut and not left exposed above the ground surface.

AQ-1 Dust Control. During construction, the County shall reduce the amount of the disturbed area where possible.

a. The County will use water trucks or sprinkler systems in sufficient quantities to prevent airborne dust from leaving the site. Increased watering frequency would be required whenever wind speeds exceed 15 mph. Reclaimed (non-potable) water should be used whenever possible.

b. All dirt stock pile areas should be sprayed daily as needed.

c. Permanent dust control measures identified in the approved project revegetation and landscape plans should be implemented as soon as possible following completion of any soil disturbing activities.

d. Exposed ground areas that are planned to be reworked at dates greater than one month after initial grading should be sown with a fast germinating, non-invasive grass seed and watered until vegetation is established.

e. All disturbed soil areas not subject to revegetation should be stabilized using approved chemical soil binders, jute netting, or other methods approved in advance by the APCD.

f. All roadways, driveways, sidewalks, etc. to be paved should be completed as soon as possible. In addition, building pads should be laid as soon as possible after grading unless seeding or soil binders are used.

g. Vehicle speed for all construction vehicles will not exceed 15 mph on any unpaved surface at the construction site.

h. All trucks hauling dirt, sand, soil, or other loose materials are to be covered or should maintain at least two feet of freeboard (minimum vertical distance between top of load and top of trailer) in accordance with CVC Section 23114.

i. The County or its contractor will install wheel washers where vehicles enter and exit unpaved roads onto streets, or will wash trucks and equipment prior to leaving the site.

j. The County or its contractor will sweep streets at the end of each day if visible soil material is carried onto adjacent paved roads. Water sweepers with reclaimed water should be used where feasible.

k. All of these fugitive dust mitigation measures will be shown on grading and building plans.

l. The County or its contractor will designate a person or persons to monitor the fugitive dust emissions and enhance the implementation of the measures as necessary to minimize dust complaints, reduce visible emissions below 20% opacity, and to prevent transport of dust offsite. Their duties will include holidays and weekend periods when work may not be in progress. The name and telephone number of such persons will be provided to the APCD Compliance Division prior to the start of any grading, earthwork or demolition.

BIO-1 **CRLF Measures.** In accordance with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's determination that the project may affect, and is likely to adversely affect, California red-legged frog, the applicant shall implement the following measures for protection of California red-legged frog from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Programmatic Biological Opinion for Projects Funded or Approved under the Federal Highway Administration's Federal Aid Program (the Caltrans PBO, 2011):

1) Only U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service- (Service) approved biologists will participate in activities associated with the capture, handling, and monitoring of California red-legged frogs.
2) Ground disturbance will not begin until written approval is received from the Service that the biologist is qualified to conduct the work, unless the individual(s) has/have been approved previously and the Service has not revoked that approval.
3) A Service-approved biologist will survey the project site no more than 48 hours before the onset of work activities. If any life stage of the California red-legged frog is found and these individuals are likely to be killed or injured by work activities, the approved biologist will be allowed sufficient time to move them from the site before work begins. The Service-approved biologist will relocate the California red-legged frogs the shortest distance possible to a location that contains suitable habitat and that will not be affected by activities associated with the proposed project. The relocation site should be in the same drainage to the extent practicable. The County will coordinate with the Service on the relocation site prior to the capture of any California red-legged frogs.
4) Before any activities begin on the project, a Service-approved biologist will conduct a training session for all construction personnel. At a minimum, the training will include a description of the California red-legged frog and its habitat, the specific measures that are being implemented to conserve the California red-legged frog for the project, and the boundaries within which the project may be accomplished. Brochures, books, and briefings may be used in the training session, provided that a qualified person is on hand to answer any questions.
5) A Service-approved biologist will be present at the work site until all California red-legged frogs have been relocated out of harm's way, workers have been instructed, and disturbance of habitat has been completed. After this time, the State or local sponsoring agency will designate a person to monitor on-site compliance with all minimization measures. The Service-approved biologist will ensure that this monitor receives the training outlined in measure (4) above and in the identification of California red-legged frogs. If the monitor or the Service-approved biologist recommends that work be stopped because California red-legged frogs would be affected in a manner not anticipated by the County and the Service during review of the proposed action, they will notify the resident engineer (the engineer that is directly overseeing and in command of construction activities) immediately. The resident engineer will either resolve the situation by

eliminating the adverse effect immediately or require that all actions causing these effects be halted. If work is stopped, the Service will be notified as soon as possible.

6) During project activities, all trash that may attract predators will be properly contained, removed from the work site, and disposed of regularly. Following construction, all trash and construction debris will be removed from work areas.
7) All refueling, maintenance, and staging of equipment and vehicles will occur at least 60 feet from riparian habitat or water bodies and in a location from where a spill would not drain directly toward aquatic habitat (e.g., on a slope that drains away from the water). The monitor will ensure contamination of habitat does not occur during such operations. Prior to the onset of work, the County will ensure that a plan is in place for prompt and effective response to any accidental spills. All workers will be informed of the importance of preventing spills and of the appropriate measures to take should a spill occur.
8) Habitat contours will be returned to their original configuration at the end of project activities. This measure will be implemented in all areas disturbed by activities associated with the project, unless the Service and the County determine that it is not feasible or modification of original contours would benefit the California red-legged frog.
9) The number of access routes, size of staging areas, and the total area of the activity will be limited to the minimum necessary to achieve the project goals. Environmentally Sensitive Areas will be delineated to confine access routes and construction areas to the minimum area necessary to complete construction, and minimize the impact to California red-legged frog habitat; this goal includes locating access routes and construction areas outside of wetlands and riparian areas to the maximum extent practicable.
10) The County will attempt to schedule work activities for times of the year when impacts to the California red-legged frog would be minimal. For example, work that would affect large pools that may support breeding will be avoided, to the maximum degree practicable, during the breeding season (November through May). Isolated pools that are important to maintain California red-legged frogs through the driest portions of the year will be avoided, to the maximum degree practicable, during the late summer and early fall. Habitat assessments, surveys, and coordination between the County and the Service during project planning will be used to assist in scheduling work activities to avoid sensitive habitats during key times of the year.
11) To control sedimentation during and after project implementation, the County will implement best management practices outlined in any authorizations or permits issued under the authorities of the Clean Water Act that it receives for the project. If best management practices are ineffective, the County will attempt to remedy the situation immediately, in coordination with the Service.
12) If a work site is to be temporarily dewatered by pumping, intakes will be completely screened with wire mesh not larger than 0.2 inch to prevent California red-legged frogs from entering the pump system. Water will be released or pumped downstream at an appropriate rate to maintain downstream flows during construction. Upon completion of construction activities, any diversions or barriers to flow will be removed in a manner that would allow flow to resume with the least disturbance to the substrate. Alteration of the stream bed will be minimized to the maximum extent possible; any imported material will be removed from the stream bed upon completion of the project.
13) Unless approved by the Service, water will not be impounded in a manner that may attract California red-legged frogs.
14) A Service-approved biologist will permanently remove any individuals of non-native species, such as bullfrogs (*Rana catesbeiana*), signal and red swamp crayfish (*Pacifasticus leniusculus*;

Procambarus clarkii), and centrarchid fishes from the project area, to the maximum extent possible. The Service-approved biologist will be responsible for ensuring his or her activities are in compliance with the California Fish and Game Code.

15) If the County demonstrates that disturbed areas have been restored to conditions that allow them to function as habitat for the California red-legged frog, these areas will not be included in the amount of total habitat permanently disturbed.
16) To ensure that diseases are not conveyed between work sites by the Service-approved biologist, the fieldwork code of practice developed by the Declining Amphibian Populations Task Force will be followed at all times.
17) Project sites will be re-vegetated with an assemblage of native riparian, wetland, and upland vegetation suitable for the area. Locally collected plant materials will be used to the extent practicable. Invasive, exotic plants will be controlled to the maximum extent practicable. This measure will be implemented in all areas disturbed by activities associated with the project, unless the Service and the County determine that it is not feasible or practical.
18) The County will not use herbicides as the primary method used to control invasive, exotic plants. However, if the County determines the use of herbicides is the only feasible method for controlling invasive plants at a specific project site, it will implement the following additional protective measures for the California red-legged frog:

    a. The County will not use herbicides during the breeding season for the California red-legged frog.
    b. The County will conduct surveys for the California red-legged frog immediately prior to the start of any herbicide use. If found, California red-legged frogs will be relocated to suitable habitat far enough from the project area that no direct contact with herbicides would occur.
    c. Giant reed and other invasive plants will be cut and hauled out by hand and painted with glyphosate or glyphosate-based products, such as Aquamaster® or Rodeo®.
    d. Licensed and experienced County staff or a licensed and experienced contractor will use a hand-held sprayer for foliar application of Aquamaster® or Rodeo® where large monoculture stands occur at the project site.
    e. All precautions will be taken to ensure that no herbicide is applied to native vegetation.
    f. Herbicides will not be applied on or near open water surfaces (no closer than 60 feet from open water).
    g. Foliar applications of herbicide will not occur when wind speeds are in excess of 3 miles per hour.
    h. No herbicides will be applied within 24 hours of forecasted rain.
    i. Application of all herbicides will be done by a qualified County staff or contractors to ensure that overspray is minimized, that all application is made in accordance with label recommendations, and with implementation of all required and reasonable safety measures. A safe dye will be added to the mixture to visually denote treated sites. Application of herbicides will be consistent with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Pesticide Programs, Endangered Species Protection Program county bulletins.
    j. All herbicides, fuels, lubricants, and equipment will be stored, poured, or refilled at least 60 feet from riparian habitat or water bodies in a location where a spill would not drain directly toward aquatic habitat. The County will ensure that contamination of habitat does not occur during such operations. Prior to the onset of work, Caltrans will ensure that a

plan is in place for a prompt and effective response to accidental spills. All workers will be informed of the importance of preventing spills and of the appropriate measures to take should a spill occur.

19) Upon completion of the project, the County will ensure that a Project Completion Report is completed and provided to the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office using the required form.

BIO-2 **Special-Status Species Measures:** Within two weeks of construction start, a qualified biologist will conduct pre-construction surveys for steelhead, southwestern willow flycatcher, least Bell's vireo, two-striped garter snake, western pond turtle, coast range newt, lesser slender salamander Monterey big-eared woodrat, California legless lizard, western spadefoot, western red bat, and coast range newt within potentially suitable habitat areas during the appropriate active period for each species. In the event any special-status species are observed onsite, the mitigation measures described for that species in the NES and NES Addendum will be implemented.

BIO-3 **Migratory Bird Measures.** The applicant shall implement the following to avoid and minimize potential impacts to migratory birds:

1. If feasible, removal of vegetation within suitable nesting bird habitats shall be scheduled to occur in the fall and winter (between September 1 and February 14), after fledging and before the initiation of the nesting season.
2. If construction activities are scheduled to occur during the nesting season (February 15 through August 31), a pre-construction nesting bird survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist throughout all areas of potentially suitable and accessible habitats within 500 feet of any proposed construction activities. The pre-construction nesting bird survey shall be performed no more than two weeks prior to construction to determine the presence/absence of nesting birds within the project area.
3. If active nests are encountered on site during the pre-construction nesting bird surveys, an appropriate avoidance buffer (likely 100 feet from active passerine nests and 250 feet from active raptor nests) will be established around the occupied nest(s). If the identified nest(s) belongs to a special status species CDFW will be consulted. Avoidance will be accomplished by installation of high visibility orange construction fencing or flagging around the occupied areas with the appropriate setback. A qualified biological monitor will facilitate installation of the fence or flagging and will conduct periodic site visits to ensure that the fencing remains intact for the duration of development activities in proximity to the active nest(s) and he or she will continue to monitor the nest(s). Construction activities will not occur within the nesting bird avoidance buffer area(s) until the biological monitor determines that either: a) all young have fledged and that the nest(s) are no longer occupied, or b) construction activity is not precluding nesting activity. Any and all active nests will be appropriately documented by the monitoring biologist and a letter-report will be submitted to CDWF, documented project compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the California Fish and Game Code Section 3513.

BIO-4 Prior to construction, a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan will be prepared for the project, if disturbance is greater than one acre. If disturbance is less than one acre, a Water Pollution Prevention Plan will be prepared in accordance with County of San Luis Obispo Public Works Department requirements. Provisions of this plan will be implemented during and after construction as necessary to avoid and minimize erosion and stormwater pollution in and near the work area.

BIO-5 Prior to construction, the County of San Luis Obispo Public Works Department will retain a qualified biological monitor(s) to monitor construction and ensure compliance with the avoidance and minimization efforts outlined in all of the project environmental documents. At a minimum, monitoring will occur during initial ground disturbance activities and vegetation removal.

BIO-6 Prior to construction, all personnel will participate in an environmental awareness training program conducted by a qualified biologist. The program will include a description of the special-status aquatic resources and federally designated critical habitat within the project boundary. If appropriate, the biologist may train and designate a representative of the County of San Luis Obispo Public Works Department or other designee to provide training to subcontractors or personnel that will be onsite for short durations during the project.

BIO-7 Prior to initiation of any construction activities, including vegetation clearing or grubbing, sturdy high-visibility fencing will be installed to protect the jurisdictional areas adjacent to the designated work areas. This fencing will be placed so that unnecessary adverse impacts to the adjacent habitats are avoided. No construction work (including storage of materials) will occur outside of the specified project limits. The fencing will remain in place during the entire construction period, will be monitored periodically by a qualified biologist, and will be maintained as needed by the contractor.

BIO-8 Prior to construction, the contractor will prepare a Hazardous Materials Response Plan to allow for a prompt and effective response to any accidental spills. Workers will be informed of the importance of preventing spills and of the appropriate measures to take should a spill occur.

BIO-9 Construction activities in riparian zones will be planned to avoid trees and shrubs to the extent practicable. Consideration will be given to trimming and pruning trees where possible, rather than complete removal. Removal of trees in the riparian zones will be mitigated in accordance with the tree replacement measures in mitigation measure AE-1.

BIO-10 Construction activities within jurisdictional areas will be conducted during the dry season when stream flows/lake levels will be at annual lows (typically June 1 through October 31) in any given year, or as otherwise directed by the regulatory agencies. Deviations from this work window can be made with permission from the relevant regulatory agencies.

BIO-11 During construction, the cleaning and refueling of equipment and vehicles will occur only within a designated staging area and at least 60 feet (20 meters) from riparian habitat, wetlands, or other aquatic areas. At a minimum, equipment and vehicles will be checked and maintained on a daily basis to ensure proper operation and avoid potential leaks or spills.

BIO-12 During construction, erosion control measures (e.g., silt fencing, fiber rolls, and barriers) will remain available onsite and will be utilized as necessary to prevent erosion and sedimentation in jurisdictional areas. No synthetic plastic mesh products will be used for erosion control and use of these materials onsite is prohibited. Erosion control measures and other suitable Best Management Practices used will be checked to ensure that they are intact and functioning effectively and maintained on a daily basis throughout the duration of construction.

BIO-13 During construction, trash will be contained, removed from the work site, and disposed of regularly. Following construction, trash and construction debris will be removed from the work areas. Vegetation removed from the construction site will be taken to a certified landfill to prevent the spread of invasive species. If soil from weedy areas (such as areas with poison hemlock or other

invasive exotic plant species) must be removed offsite, the top 6 inches (152 millimeters) containing the seed layer in areas with weedy species will be disposed of at a permitted landfill.

BIO-14 Persons who are under County or contractor control will not have firearms or pets; nor will they engage in hunting or fishing.

BIO-15 Upon completion of the project, all temporarily disturbed areas will be returned to original contours and stabilized with a native seed mix.

CR-1 A qualified archaeologist will conduct a preconstruction archeological briefing for all construction personnel working on the project. The archaeological briefing shall include a description of the kinds of resources that may be found in the area, the importance of cultural resources to the Native American community, a discussion of laws pertaining to significant archaeological and historical sites, and protocol to be used in the event of an unanticipated discovery..

CR-2 If previously unidentified cultural materials are unearthed during construction, work shall be halted in that portion of the project area until a qualified archaeologist can assess the significance of the find. Additional archaeological surveys will be needed if the project limits are extended beyond the present survey limits.

CR-3 As specified by California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, if human remains are found on the project site during construction, the person responsible for the excavation, or his or her authorized representative, shall immediately notify the San Luis Obispo County Coroner's office, and the County Environmental office by telephone. No further excavation or disturbance of the discovery or any nearby area reasonably suspected to overlie adjacent remains (as determined by an Archaeologist and/or Native American monitor) shall occur until the Coroner has made the necessary findings as to origin and disposition pursuant to Public Resources Code 5097.98.

HZ-1 To comply with Caltrans requirements pertaining to stockpiling, transportation, reuse, or disposal of soil with elevated concentrations of aerially deposited lead, prior to construction, shallow surface soils (i.e., to 2.5 feet below ground surface) that would be subjected to grading will be analyzed for total and soluble lead concentrations to determine if Caltrans soil reuse and disposal restrictions apply.

HZ-2 Any staging or equipment/vehicle parking areas shall be free of combustible vegetation and work crews shall have shovels and a fire extinguisher on site during all construction activities.