



# County of Fresno

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND PLANNING  
STEVEN E. WHITE, DIRECTOR

## EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

- APPLICANT: Deepinder S. Grewal
- APPLICATION NOS.: Initial Study No. 7877 /Unclassified Conditional Use Permit Application No. 3680
- DESCRIPTION: Allow the construction and operation of an interstate freeway commercial development consisting of the interior modification of an existing 9,881 square-foot restaurant; the installation of a new convenience store within the existing building and the installation and operation of a new gas station with six fuel pumps and a 3,280 square-foot by 19-foot tall fuel canopy, on a 2.62-acre parcel in the AE-40 (Exclusive Agricultural, 40-acre minimum parcel size) Zone District.
- LOCATION: The project site is located in the northwest quadrant of the Panoche Road and Interstate 5 Freeway Commercial Interchange Area, approximately 15 miles southwest of the nearest city limits of the City of Mendota (Sup. Dist. 1) ( APN: 027-190-05S) (46272 W. Panoche Road).

### I. AESTHETICS

Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:

- A. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista; or
- B. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway; or
- 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 points.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

**FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:**

The project proposes a freeway interchange commercial development which will involve the renovation of an existing building and modification of an existing parking area to include an automobile fueling station. The project is consistent with the intent of the freeway interchange commercial development regulations contained in Section 860 of the Fresno County Zoning Ordinance, which designates specific Interstate 5 freeway interchanges as either major or minor commercial centers and includes development standards which regulate such things as landscaping, signage, and building height.

Policy LU-D.6 of the Fresno County General Plan requires that a commercial interchange development be designed to achieve aesthetic excellence and incorporate considerations for noise contours abutting traffic ways, architectural cohesiveness, and signing restraints. Section 860.E.2 of the Fresno County Zoning Ordinance addresses development standards for Freeway Interchange Development, and requires that landscaping be provided and maintained, and that plants and related materials be arranged in a manner consistent with and complementary to the building design and materials.

The project proposal would be aesthetically consistent and cohesive with the surrounding development and given that the building is existing and the fuel canopy would be the only new structural addition associated with this project, there would be no impact to the visual character of the area or the quality of public views resulting from this project. It should be noted that there is an electric vehicle (EV) charging facility which has been constructed on the same site as part of unrelated project. The EV charging facility included free standing carports with solar panels mounted on top.

No scenic vistas were identified however, Interstate 5 is designated as a Scenic Highway in the Fresno County General Plan. General Plan Policy OS-L.3.d. requires that commercial developments provide for maintenance of a natural open space area that is 200 feet in depth parallel to the right-of-way of the scenic drive or roadway. The subject parcel's western boundary is located approximately 330 feet west of the nearest right of way of southbound Interstate 5. The development is within the footprint of an existing commercial development and there is already an approximately 100-foot-wide natural Open Space Area adjacent to the subject parcel providing a buffer between the proposed parking area and the southbound I-5 exit ramp. The existing open space buffer is consistent with General Plan Goal OS-I and General Plan Policy OS-L.3.d. Therefore, impacts to public views and the scenic quality of the landscape adjacent to Interstate 5, would be less than significant.

- D. Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

**FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:**

The project proposes to utilize existing pole mounted light fixtures in the parking area and new lighting attached to the fuel canopy, therefore both new and existing light fixtures have the potential to create glare and increase light pollution in the vicinity. As

the project site is adjacent to the southbound Interstate 5 off ramp, new and existing sources of light and glare may impact traffic exiting the freeway onto Panoche Road. To address this potential impact, the following mitigation measure has been included.

\* **Mitigation Measure(s)**

1. *Prior to operation all outdoor lighting shall be hooded, directed downward, and permanently maintained so as not to shine toward adjacent properties and public roads.*

## II. AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:

- A. Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use; or
- B. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act Contract; or
- C. Conflict with existing zoning for forest land, timberland or timberland zoned Timberland Production; or
- D. Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use; or
- 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 forestland to non-forest use?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The subject parcel is zoned agriculturally; however, it is not involved in agricultural operations, and is located within an area designated for freeway interchange commercial development, within a one square-mile area centered around the intersection of Panoche Road and Interstate 5 and is not restricted under Williamson Act contract. The property is classified as Urban and Built-Up Land according to the California Natural Resources Agency, 2016 Fresno County Important Farmlands Map. Urban and Built-Up Land is occupied by structures with a building density of at least one unit to 1.5 acres, or six structures to a 10-acre parcel.

### III. AIR QUALITY

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

- A. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable Air Quality Plan; or
- 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?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The project was reviewed by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD). Based upon review of the project application materials, the District determined that project specific annual emissions of criteria pollutants were not expected to exceed District significance thresholds for carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen, reactive organic gases, oxides of sulfur or particulate matter (PM) 10 or PM 2.5, therefore the project would have a less than significant impact on air quality when compared to those thresholds. Although project emissions from construction would have a less than significant impact, the District recommends utilizing the cleanest reasonably available off-road construction fleets and practices such as eliminating unnecessary idling to further reduce construction related exhaust emissions. Stationary source emissions include any building, structure, facility or installation which emits or may emit any affected pollutant directly or as a fugitive emission.

An Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) analysis was prepared for this project by LSA, dated December 4, 2020, which concluded that the project would generate the release of short-term emissions resulting from construction activities, including operation and fueling of construction equipment and from worker and vendor vehicle trips; and long-term emissions from mobile sources like vehicle traffic generated by the project, area sources, indirect sources associated with energy consumption, and waste disposal. Such emissions would include criteria pollutants and GHG emissions, however, emissions from construction, and operation of the project are not anticipated to exceed Air District significance thresholds for criterial pollutants.

- C. Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations; or
- D. Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The project is located in an area of commercial development which includes restaurants, gas stations, a hotel and convenience stores, where there is a likelihood of the presence of sensitive receptors that could be affected by emissions from existing

vehicle traffic and increased vehicle traffic resulting from the project. However, the addition of the restaurant convenience store and gas station does not represent a significant intensification of development in the area that would lead to increase pollutant concentrations or other emissions that would affect a substantial number of people. Both the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, and the applicants Air Quality Analysis concluded that the project would not cause significance thresholds for criterial pollutants to be exceeded. Additionally, the project site is located in a designated Interstate freeway commercial interchange where regular vehicle traffic is anticipated and occurs regularly. The surrounding area outside of the commercial interchange development primarily consists of farmland, and the nearest residential development where sensitive receptors would be present is located approximately one half-mile away from the project site, and based on web base aerial imagery, there appear to be two to three other residences located approximately three quarter-miles west southwest of the project site, adjacent to some commercial storage buildings that may be agriculturally related. Generally, there is sparse residential development in the vicinity, and because the project is not anticipated to generate substantial concentrations of pollutants, it is likewise unlikely to adversely effect sensitive receptors, either in the vicinity or on the project site and its immediate surroundings. The project will be required to comply with Air District regulation VIII and the Rules contained therein, addressing fugitive particulate matter (PM)<sup>10</sup>.

#### IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

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 Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; or
- B. Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

No riparian habitat or sensitive natural communities were identified in the analysis.

- 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

No wetlands were identified in the analysis. The project site is developed with a paved parking lot and a 9,881 square-foot building, adjacent to similar development. A review of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wetlands Inventory, Wetland Mapper indicates one wetland feature located approximately 560 feet southwest of the

project site, identified as Riverine, Unknown Perennial, Unconsolidated Bottom, Semi permanently Flooded, Excavated feature, which is otherwise not clearly identified on the surface, but may be part of a shallow culvert running along the south side of Panoche Road to the southwest of the project site. Panoche Creek, which contains other wetland features is located approximately 0.67 miles west northwest of the project site. The project proposes a minor physical expansion of the existing building with the construction of the proposed fueling station, canopy and underground fuel storage tanks, which will require minimal grading and is not anticipated to substantially change the drainage patterns of the site causing any adverse effect upon nearby wetland features. The project will be required to demonstrate through certification by a licensed Civil Engineer, that existing drainage patterns will not be changed, and net impervious surface will not be increased as a result of the project. If this cannot be demonstrated, an engineered grading and drainage plan will be required.

- 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

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

A search of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife BIOS, California Natural Diversity Database shows the project site is within the geographic range of the Giant Kangaroo Rat which is listed as Federally and State Endangered, however there have been no recent siting's and the presence of this species is classified as possible extirpated.

- E. Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance; or
- 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is located within the boundaries of the Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) Habitat Conservation Plan area and in an area categorized as Agricultural Fields therefore, the project will not conflict with the provisions of any adopted habitat conservation plan, natural community plan or other approved local, regional or state habitat conservation plan.

## V. CULTURAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

- A. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

No historic resources were identified in the analysis. The existing restaurant building is approximately 45 years old based upon available permit records, however it is not included on any historical properties list maintained by the California State Office of Historic Preservation. Additionally, the existing building exterior will be preserved and only an interior remodel/renovation will occur.

- B. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?
- C. Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

No archeological or cultural resources were identified in the analysis. Notice of the project application was provided to local tribal governments who has previously requested notification under the provisions of AB 52. None of the tribes who were notified responded to the notification or requested consultation. However, due to the possibility for unknown subsurface archaeological or cultural resources to be discovered during ground disturbing activities, the following mitigation measure has been included.

\* **Mitigation Measure(s)**

1. *In the event that cultural resources are unearthed during ground-disturbing activities, all work shall be halted in the area of the find. An Archeologist shall be called to evaluate the findings and make any necessary mitigation recommendations. If human remains are unearthed during ground disturbing activities, no further disturbance is to occur until the Fresno County Sheriff-Coroner has made the necessary findings as to origin and disposition. All normal evidence procedures shall be followed by photos, reports, video, and etc. If such remains are determined to be Native American, the Sheriff-Coroner must notify the Native American Commission within 24 hours.*

VI. ENERGY

Would the project:

- A. Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during project construction or operation; or
- B. Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Project construction will involve the use of energy resources in the form of electricity, water and fossil fuel consumption; however, it is not anticipated to be excessive or

wasteful. The project will entail the construction of a Fuel Station Canopy with six fuel pumps and three underground fuel storage tanks, along with the renovation of an existing building. The project will be subject to the energy efficiency requirements of the California Green Building Standards Code. Once the project is constructed it is not anticipated to result in unnecessary consumption of energy. A portion of the project site parking area is dedicated to an existing solar powered electric vehicle charging facility, which will also count toward meeting required parking space capacity standards, and although it is not part of this project, it has the potential to offset or reduce project operational energy consumption, in terms of the fossil fuels consumption by the travelling public, the supply of which is a feature of this project. No conflicts with state or local renewable energy efficiency plans were identified.

## VII. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Would the project:

- A. Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:
  - 1. 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?
  - 2. Strong seismic ground shaking?
  - 3. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?
  - 4. Landslides?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The subject parcel and surrounding area is in California Building Code Seismic Zone 4 according the Fresno County General Plan Background Report (FCGPBR) Figure 9-4, and in an area of Probabilistic Seismic Hazards (10% probability in 50 years). It is not located in a known earthquake fault zone according to the California Department of Conservation, California Geological Survey (CGS) Information Warehouse: Interactive Regulatory Maps. The project will be subject to current building code with regard to seismic design category requirements. Additionally, the subject parcel is not in an area subject to liquefaction as described in the FCGPBR, Chapter 9, or as indicated on State of California Department of Conservation, California Geological Survey, and other Regulatory Maps.

- B. Result in substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The building and parking area for the proposed project are existing, and minimal grading is associated with the construction of the fuel canopy and installation of the underground tanks. Substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil is not anticipated.



- 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; or
- 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The proposed project is not in an area subject to expansive soils nor in an area prone to liquefaction, landslides, lateral spreading, or collapse. According to the Fresno County General Plan Background Report (FCGPBR), Figure 9-6, the project site is located in an area of shallow subsidence; however, no impacts related to the potential for soil subsidence were identified in the analysis or in reviewing agency comments. Additionally, the project site is located within an existing developed designated commercial interchange area where most of the ground cover consists of asphalt and concrete paving.

Additionally, the project area is confined to the 2.62-acre subject parcel which is currently paved and very little grading is proposed limiting any potential erosion resulting from grading activity; However, a Condition of Approval will be included, requiring that any grading activity proposed with this project would necessitate a grading permit or grading voucher from the Fresno County Department of Public Works and Planning, and any additional runoff generated by the proposed development is required to be stored on site or disposed of per County standards. The project will be subject to current seismic design standards and California Building Standards Code.

- E. Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project proposes to connect to an existing wastewater treatment facility located in the vicinity for the provision of sanitary sewer services. No on-site wastewater treatment systems are proposed with this application.

- F. Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION  
INCORPORATED:

No paleontological resources were identified in the analysis, and as there is minimal ground disturbance of previously disturbed soils proposed, discovery of any previously unknown subsurface paleontological resources is unlikely; however, as the possibility for discovery does exist, the following mitigation measure has been added:

\* **Mitigation Measure**

1. *If a paleontological resource is found, regardless of depth or setting, the Project contractor shall cease ground-disturbing activities within 50 feet of the find and contact a qualified paleontologist. The qualified paleontologist shall evaluate the significance of the resources and recommend appropriate treatment measures.*

VIII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Would the project:

- A. Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment; or
- B. Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The project will generate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions both during construction and during operation. Construction GHG emissions will be generated by diesel and gas-powered vehicles and construction equipment, and operational GHG emissions will be generated primarily by vehicle traffic, and other area sources as discussed below. An Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) analysis was prepared for this project by LSA, dated December 4, 2020; the Analysis estimated that the proposed project would generate approximately 73.2 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e (carbon dioxide equivalent) in construction emissions. When these project emissions are distributed over the anticipated 30-year life of the project, the total construction emissions for the project would equate to 2.4 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e per year.

Operational GHG emissions are typically generated from mobile sources such as vehicle trips, area sources such as landscaping activities, indirect emissions from energy consumption, waste disposal, and water supply, treatment and distribution. Operational GHG emissions were estimated using CalEEMod emissions modeler software. Project operational emissions were estimated to be approximately 1,411 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e per year. Because the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) has not adopted significance thresholds for construction or operational GHG emissions, lead agencies must quantify those emissions. This project's GHG emissions estimates were evaluated based on consistency with the SJVAPCD adopted Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP), and applicable State GHG reduction goals. The Air Quality and GHG Analysis concluded that the proposed project would be in compliance with existing State regulations adopted for the purpose of meeting GHG reduction goals and would also be consistent with state plans and programs designed to reduce GHG emissions, as well as the CCAP, specifically because the project would be consistent with the GHG reduction measures contained in the CCAP such as the provision of pedestrian access to and from the site and the minimization of pedestrian barriers to pedestrian access, site location by virtue of being within an existing commercial development would serve to minimize the need for

additional vehicle trips to obtain other services, such as lodging or banking and the provision of nine (9) electric vehicle (EV) charging spaces, which meets the Zero Emission Infrastructure GHG measure in the CCAP. Additionally, the project will be required to comply all with applicable State energy efficiency standards, and therefore based on the foregoing analysis, the project is anticipated to create a less than significant impact on the environment as a result of project related GHG emissions or from potential conflicts with applicable GHG reduction plans policies or regulations.

## IX. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Would the project:

- A. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials; or
- 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?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The facility will be required to submit plans and specifications related to the installation of underground storage tanks to and apply for and secure a Permit to Operate an Underground Storage Tank System from the Fresno County Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Division. Additionally, the proposed facility will be subject to all applicable California Health and Safety Code (HSC) and the California Code of Regulations (CCR) and be required to submit a Hazardous Materials Business Plan. All hazardous waste shall be handled in accordance with the requirements in the CCR.

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

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

According to a report generated by the U.S. EPA NEPAassist mapping application, the project site is not located on or within a half-mile of a known brownfield, superfund site, or toxic release inventory site. However, it is located within a half-mile of two sites identified as RCRA regulated hazardous waste facilities, identified as a Chevron service station and a Shell Oil service station respectively.

- 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, result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located within the boundaries of an airport land use plan or within two miles of a public airport.

- F. Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not propose any physical changes to the environment that would have the possibility of interfering with an adopted emergency response or evacuation plan.

- G. Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The project site is located within State Responsibility Area (SRA) and therefore subject to all applicable SRA Fire Safe Regulations, and the current Fire Code and Building Code. The site is also located in a wildland fire area; however, the site is immediately adjacent to other similar commercial development, irrigated farmland and the Interstate freeway to the east. The risk loss from wildfires exists, however review of the proposal by the Fresno County Fire Protection District/CALFIRE did not express concerns related to risk of loss to people or structures resulting from wildland fire.

## X. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Would the project:

- A. Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project will connect to a community water system and community sewer system for the provision of services. The project is not anticipated to impact surface or groundwater quality or violate any 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project operational statement indicates that the proposed restaurant will use approximately 5,000 gallons of water per day, consisting of a surface water allocation from an existing community water system which uses surface water supplied by I-5 Property Services, a Municipal and Industrial (M&I) customer of the Westlands Water District. If the applicant's incremental water use is anticipated by I-5 Property Services, to exceed its historic use of 68.47 acre-feet, then I-5 Property Service must submit a supplemental M&I Water application to Westlands Water District which identifies the source of water available to meet the incremental increase in use. No other concerns related to water supply were expressed by any reviewing agencies or departments.

- 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:
1. Result in substantial erosion or siltation on or off site?
  2. Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on or off site?
  3. Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned storm water drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or
  4. Impede or redirect flood flows?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project will not alter the course of a stream or river or add impervious surface area to the site. The site is currently asphalt paved and the paving will be resurfaced or replaced however no new grading or additional paving is proposed. Therefore, the project will not substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff, nor exceed the capacity of the existing storm water drainage system. The project site is not in area at increased risk of flooding (from the 100-year storm event) according to FEMA FIRM Panels 1950H and 1975H.

- D. In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located within a flood hazard zone and is not at risk from tsunami or seiche.

- E. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project will receive its water supply from a surface water allotment provided by the Westlands Water District and provided through I-5 Property Services.

#### XI. LAND USE AND PLANNING

Would the project:

- A. Physically divide an established community; or
- 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project is located within a designated Interstate Freeway Commercial development area and will not impact any established community nor conflict with any land use plans, policies or regulations.

#### XII. MINERAL RESOURCES

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; or
- 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site may be located within an area of known mineral resources as identified by Figure 7-7 of the Fresno County General Plan Background Report (FCGPBR), however this project does not entail any substantial ground disturbance or the extraction or removal of any mineral resources.

#### XIII. NOISE

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; or
- B. Generation of excessive ground-borne vibration or ground-borne noise levels?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

Although construction and operation of the project are expected to generate both temporary and permanent increases in ambient noise levels in the vicinity, the noise levels are not anticipated to be in excess of any County Noise Ordinance limits; and the project will be subject to the applicable restrictions related to exterior noise standards of the County Ordinance Code, Chapter 8.40 Noise Control. Construction noise generation is exempted, provided that it take place only between the hours specified in Section 8.40.060.

- 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; or

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located within two miles of a private airstrip or airport, nor within the boundaries of an airport land use plan. The nearest airport, William Robert Johnson Airport in Mendota is located approximately 15 miles northeast.

XIV. POPULATION AND HOUSING

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)?; or
- B. Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not involve any residential development. The project site is located within a designated Interstate Freeway Major Commercial center and not in an area of substantial residential development. The project does propose a new business, however, whether or not operation of the project would induce substantial unplanned population growth on it's own or cumulatively when considered as part of the surrounding commercial development in the area is speculative; and while employee housing is an allowed use as part of a conditional use permit within a freeway commercial center, none is planned with this project. This project is consistent with other development in the vicinity which has been historically developed as a commercial center and no substantial population growth has occurred, nor displaced any previously existing housing, the current project is therefore unlikely to induce substantial population growth, or displace any housing or people necessitating replacement or construction of new housing.

## XV. PUBLIC SERVICES

Would the project:

- A. Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically-altered governmental facilities, or the 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 following public services:
  - 1. Fire protection;
  - 2. Police protection;
  - 3. Schools;
  - 4. Parks; or
  - 5. Other public facilities?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project will not impact governmental facilities nor result in the need for new or physically altered government facilities, nor affect the provision of any public services. The project was reviewed by the Fresno County Fire Protection District (Cal fire) which did not express any concerns related to the provision of emergency services to the project site. The Project was also reviewed by the California Highway Patrol and the Fresno County Sheriff's Office which expressed no concerns with the project. Because the project site is adjacent to Interstate 5, a portion of the roads which provide access to the site are under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). Caltrans recommended that a Traffic Impact Study be prepared for the project. The Traffic Impact Study is discussed in more detail in Section XVII - Transportation, and in the context of traffic impacts, Caltrans recommendations for the project's mitigation of impacts to state facilities is addressed under Transportation. However, with regard to the provision of public services, and/or public facilities, neither Caltrans or any other federal, state or local government expressed concern that the project would result in adverse impacts to any existing or planned government facilities.

## XVI. RECREATION

Would the project:

- A. 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; or
- B. Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities, which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?



FINDING: NO IMPACT:

There are no neighborhood or regional parks or other recreational facilities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposed development.

## XVII. TRANSPORTATION

Would the project:

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

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION  
INCORPORATED:

The Fresno County General Plan establishes Level of Service (LOS) C as an acceptable level of service on most County roadways. Level of Service is defined in the County General Plan as “a qualitative measurement of the operational characteristics of traffic flow on a roadway or at the intersection of roadways, based on traffic volumes and facility type (road classification). Levels range from A to F, with A representing the highest level of service”.

The County Guidelines for the preparation of Traffic Impact Studies (August 2012) (County Guidelines) identifies Level of Service A-C as acceptable and LOS D-F as unacceptable within the unincorporated areas of the County and LOS D as acceptable within the spheres of influence of the Cities of Fresno and Clovis. The County Guidelines indicate that a project is considered to have a significant environmental impact if its attributable traffic increase when added to the existing conditions would result in any of the following: Cause a roadway segment that is currently operating at an acceptable LOS to deteriorate to an unacceptable LOS or cause the volume to capacity ration to increase by more than 0.05 on a roadway that is currently operating at an unacceptable LOS; at signalized and unsignalized intersections that are operating at an acceptable LOS to deteriorate to an unacceptable LOS or cause the average delay to increase by more than 5.0 seconds. At unsignalized intersections, cause a movement or approach that is operating at an acceptable LOS to deteriorate below an acceptable level.

A Traffic Impact Study (TIS) was prepared for this project by Peter’s Engineering Group, dated November 3, 2020. The TIS references the Transportation Research Board Highway Capacity Manual (HCM 2010) which describes LOS C as having a traffic volume to capacity ratio of no greater than 1, where progression is favorable or cycle length is short, and having an average vehicle delay of 10-15 seconds for unsignalized intersections and 20-35 seconds for signalized intersections.

Based on the conclusions and recommendations of the Traffic Study, the intersection at the south bound approach of Panoche Road and Road A (private road entrance to commercial development) is currently operating at LOS ‘D’, and that after construction of the project the northbound I-5 off ramp to Panoche Road and the southbound

approach at the intersection of Panoche Road and Road A is anticipated to be impacted by longer queues and delays associated with LOS 'E' or 'F'. As a potential mitigation for this projected condition, a single lane roundabout at the intersection of Panoche Road and the I-5 Northbound Ramps is anticipated to operate as LOS 'A' during the Sunday peak hour (highest observed traffic volume) through 2040. A single lane roundabout is expected to operate at LOS B or better during the Sunday peak hour through 2040

An Addendum to the November 3, 2020 Traffic Impact Study dated March 24, 2021 reevaluated the probable costs for future improvements to County facilities and Project-specific equitable share costs for those improvements and provided support for that conclusion. The Traffic Study Addendum concluded that for the Intersection of Panoche Road and Interstate 5, the project should be required to contribute an equitable share of 56.2 percent of \$15,400, the total cost of installation of all-way stop control at Panoche Road and the Northbound ramp, which is \$8,655.00.

For the intersection of Panoche Road and Road A, the private road providing access to the commercial development north of Panoche Road, the project should be required to contribute an equitable share of the cost of future installation of traffic signals, estimated to be 38.4 percent of \$458,100, the total cost of installation of traffic signals, which is \$175,910.

\* **Mitigation Measure(s)**

1. *Prior to the issuance of any development permits related to this project, the applicant/project proponent shall pay the sum of \$ 175,910.00 to the Fresno County Department of Public Works and Planning, which is a proportionate fair share of the cost of future signalization of the intersection of Panoche Road and Road 'A'.*
2. *The project applicant shall enter into a traffic mitigation agreement with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and pay the sum of \$8,655.00, the proportionate fair share of cost for future installation of all way stop control at the intersection of Panoche Road and the northbound Interstate 5 ramps.*

*Evidence that the fees have been paid to Caltrans or a copy of the executed mitigation agreement with Caltrans shall be provided to the County demonstrating that payment of the equitable share of cost has been resolved with Caltrans, prior to issuance of any development permits.*

- B. Be in conflict or be inconsistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The Traffic Impact Study prepared for this project suggested that, based on the State of California Governors Office of Planning and Research (OPR) *Technical Advisory on Evaluating Traffic Impacts in CEQA*, December 18, 2018. the proposed operation of a

restaurant, convenience store and fueling station could be considered to have a similar impact on traffic trip generation as would a local serving use in terms where for the evaluation of Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) because it would be primarily serving those already travelling along the Interstate 5 corridor, and as such those traffic trips would constitute primarily pass by trips, and not new trips, and that in accordance with the State of California Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) Technical Advisory on Evaluating Traffic Impacts in CEQA, dated December 2018; such a local serving use would tend to shorten trips and therefore reduce VMT, resulting in a less than significant impact.

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

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project will be accessed via private roads. There are no design features of the proposed development which would increase traffic hazards. No alteration of the existing traffic patterns is proposed.

- D. Result in inadequate emergency access?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Access to the project site, which is an existing facility, is made via private roads which connect to Panoche Road. No changes to the existing access points are proposed. The project was reviewed by the Fresno County Fire Protection District which did not express any concerns that the project would result in inadequate emergency access. The project site is located in a State Responsibility Area (SRA) and is therefore subject to the applicable Fire Safe Regulations and Fire Code which address road access. The project will also be required to submit a full set of plans to the Fresno County Fire Protection District for approval prior to the issuance of County building permits.

## XVIII. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

- A. 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:
1. 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
  2. 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.)

**FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:**

The project was reviewed by the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center (SSJVIC), which based on a search of the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) indicated that the project area had not been surveyed by a qualified cultural resource consultant and that the archaeological sensitivity of the project site is unknown. SSJVIC also noted and that the site contains built environment resources (buildings) approximately 45 years in age and recommended that the site be evaluated by an architectural historian to determine local, state and national significance of the site.

Because the existing building which was operated as a restaurant will not undergo significant structural alterations, only minor interior remodeling, and will continue to be operated as a restaurant with the addition of a convenience store, no historical architectural evaluation was required.

The SSJVIC did not recommend that a cultural resources inventory be completed for this project, however, it was recommended that conditions be placed on project approval that would require a halt to work if cultural resources are unearthed during ground disturbing activities.

Local Tribal Governments were notified of the project under the provisions of AB 52. Two of those Tribes, the Table Mountain Rancheria and the Santa Rosa Rancheria Tachi-Yokut, requested to consult on this project. On November 2020 a meeting took place between the County and representatives of both Tribal Governments. Both Tribal representatives indicated that they may desire to have site monitoring take place during ground disturbing activity.

Neither of the Tribes identified any cultural or tribal cultural resources on or in the vicinity of the project site, nor did the tribes request any further consultation or mitigation. However, to address the potential for undiscovered subsurface resources to be unearthed during ground disturbing activities, the following mitigation measure has been included.

\* **Mitigation Measure(s)**

1. *In the event that cultural resources are unearthed during ground-disturbing activities, all work shall be halted in the area of the find. An Archeologist shall be called to evaluate the findings and make any necessary mitigation recommendations. If human remains are unearthed during ground disturbing activities, no further disturbance is to occur until the Fresno County Sheriff-Coroner has made the necessary findings as to origin and disposition. All normal evidence procedures shall be followed by photos, reports, video, and etc. If such remains are determined to be Native American, the Sheriff-Coroner must notify the Native American Commission within 24 hours.*

## XIX. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project will not require the relocation or construction of new or expanded utility services and storm water drainage will follow existing patterns, and no new grading is proposed.

- B. Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The project will be supplied surface water by I-5 Property Services, through a municipal industrial allotment from Westlands Water District.

- 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Wastewater generated by the project will be directed to an existing wastewater treatment facility located in the southwest quadrant of the commercial interchange, approximately

- 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; or
- E. Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project will be required to comply with all applicable State and local regulations pertaining to the management of solid waste. The project is not anticipated to generate solid waste that would be in excess of local solid waste infrastructure capacity or impair State or local solid waste reduction goals.

## XX. WILDFIRE

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, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is located in a State Responsibility Area (SRA) Moderate Hazard Class and as such will be subject to all applicable County SRA Fire Safe Regulations. The Fresno County Fire Protection District did not express concern that the project would impair an adopted emergency response plan, emergency evacuation plan, or telecommunication facilities.

- 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Although the project site is situated in an area at moderate risk of wildfire according to the State of California Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) Viewer, it is located in a commercial developed area with relatively flat terrain which is bordered on the west by irrigated farmland and on the east by Interstate 5, where the prevalence of dry vegetation is minimal. The risk to people and structures from wildfire is very low, additionally the project will be required to adhere to applicable Fire Safe Regulations, Current Fire Code and Building Code.

- 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project will not require the installation of new facilities or maintenance of existing facilities, such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water source, power lines or other utilities which would result in increased fire risk or other impacts to the environment, short or long term. The project was evaluated by Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) which provides electrical utility service to the site. Electrical utility infrastructure is existing, however there may be additions and modifications to said infrastructure to serve the electrical vehicle charging station located on the parcel and the project. However, any such modifications are subject to approval by PG&E and subject to the requirements of current Fire Code and Building Code.

- 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located on steeply sloped land, or within a flood channel or area at increased risk of flood or landslide, according to Figure 9-6 of the Fresno County General Plan Background Report (FCGPBR).

## XXI. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Would the project:

- A. 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?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

No significant impacts to Biological Resources were identified. No fish or wildlife species, or plant or animal communities, reductions in the range of rare or endangered plants or animals, or pre-historic resources are anticipated to occur. However, to address the potential for impacts to undiscovered, subsurface cultural or tribal cultural resources, a mitigation measure has been included:

### **Mitigation Measure(s)**

1. *See Mitigation Measure under Sections V, and XVII above.*

- B. 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)?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

No cumulatively considerable impacts were identified in the analysis. The project proposes a commercial development, in conjunction with an existing building, in an area that has been designated for such development, subject to certain design principals, and subject to applicable General Plan Policies, County Ordinance, and California Green Building Standards Code.

- C. Have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings either directly or indirectly?

**FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:**

No environmental effects which would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, directly or indirectly, were identified.

**CONCLUSION/SUMMARY**

Based upon the Initial Study prepared for Unclassified Conditional Use Permit Application No. 3680, staff has concluded that the project will not have a significant effect on the environment.

It has been determined that there would be no impacts to Agricultural and Forestry Resources, Biological Resources, Energy, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Population and Housing, Public Services and Recreation and Wildfire.

Potential impacts related Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hydrology and Water Quality, Noise, Utilities and Service Systems have been determined to be less than significant.

Potential impacts relating to Aesthetics, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Transportation and Tribal Cultural Resources have been determined to be less than significant with compliance with the identified Mitigation Measures.

A Mitigated Negative Declaration is recommended and is subject to approval by the decision-making body. The Initial Study is available for review at 2220 Tulare Street, Suite A, street level, located on the southwest corner of Tulare and "M" Street, Fresno, California.

JS

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