

Carson Transportation Management Systems

Along State Routes 88 and 89 in Amador, El Dorado, and Alpine Counties

10-AMA, ED, ALP-88, 89-Post Miles Vary

EA 10-1G020 and Project Number 1018000275

State Clearinghouse Number 2022020581

Initial Study with Mitigated Negative Declaration



Volume 1 of 4

Prepared by the
State of California Department of Transportation

December 2023



General Information About This Document

The Initial Study circulated to the public for 35 days between October 27, 2023, and December 1, 2023. Comments received during this period are included in Appendix B. Elsewhere, language has been added throughout the document to indicate where a change has been made since the circulation of the draft environmental document. Minor editorial changes and clarifications have not been so indicated.

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State Clearinghouse Number 2022020581
10-AMA, ED, ALP-88,89-VARIOUS
EA 10-1G020/Project ID 1018000275

Install various transportation management system elements
at six locations along State Routes 88 and 89,
throughout Amador, El Dorado, and Alpine counties

**INITIAL STUDY
with Mitigated Negative Declaration**

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

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Transportation
and
Responsible Agency: California Transportation Commission

C. Scott Guidi

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Office Chief, District 10 Environmental
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CEQA and NEPA Lead Agency

12/7/2023

Date

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Mitigated Negative Declaration

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

State Clearinghouse Number: 2022020581

District-County-Route-Post Mile: 10-AMA, ED, ALP-88, 89-Post Miles Vary

EA/Project Number: 10-1G020/1018000275

Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to install transportation management system elements and roadside safety improvements at six locations in Amador, El Dorado, and Alpine counties along State Routes 88 and 89.

Determination

An Initial Study has been prepared by Caltrans District 10. On the basis of this study, it is determined that the proposed action with the incorporation of the identified mitigation measures will not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

The project would have a potentially significant effect on aesthetics. The project would include the following mitigation measures to reduce impacts to less than significant:

Include planting in strategic locations to limit visual intrusion; install native plant material seeding to disturbed soil areas in the construction site; provide a minimum three-year vegetation establishment period; install lighting types that direct light downward and employ shield fixtures to additional light sources to minimize light trespass; and paint or stain transportation management system elements and guardrail to match existing visual surroundings.

Please refer to Section 2.1.1 and Appendix D for a list of mitigation measures applied to the project.

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Office Chief, District 10 Environmental
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12/7/2023

Date

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Chapter 1 Proposed Project

1.1 Introduction

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the lead agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The project will install various transportation management systems elements and roadside safety improvements at six locations in the Kirkwood and Carson Pass area. The project includes locations in Amador, El Dorado, and Alpine counties along State Routes 88 and 89. El Dorado County is within the jurisdiction of Caltrans District 3, while Amador County and Alpine County are within Caltrans District 10.

State Route 88 is a trans-Sierra east-west-oriented corridor that provides year-round passage over the Carson Pass, starting at State Route 99 near Stockton and extending to the Nevada state line in Carson Valley. The facility is a two-lane, undivided conventional highway that carries mostly local commuter and passenger traffic, recreational and tourist traffic, and commercial truck traffic across San Joaquin, Amador, and Alpine counties. State Route 88 is dually designated as a State Scenic Highway and a U.S. Forest Service National Forest Scenic Byway.

State Route 89 is a two-lane, undivided conventional north-south corridor, which starts at U.S. Route 395 at the edge of the eastern Sierra Nevada Mountains to the south and ends at Interstate 5 near Mount Shasta in Siskiyou County to the north. State Route 89 is designated as a State Scenic Highway at select areas within Alpine and El Dorado counties within the project limits.

The project locations are within the Kirkwood and Carson area, a year-round mountain destination along the Sierra Crest in El Dorado National Forest. State Routes 88 and 89 in the project area experience severe weather conditions in the winter months. The annual weather patterns create challenging conditions for motorists, and avalanche and chain control operations are common to the area. Limited cell phone and radio coverage, icy road conditions, and traffic queuing are typical factors that make severe weather conditions in the area challenging for motorists. To address these concerns, Caltrans will install transportation management system elements and roadside safety improvements at six locations across Amador, El Dorado, and Alpine counties, along State Routes 88 and 89. The elements proposed at each location are identified in Table 1-1.

The following transportation management systems and roadside safety improvements will be included in the project:

- Changeable Message Sign
- Streetlight
- Vehicle Detection System
- Closed-Circuit Television Camera System
- Roadway Weather Information System
- Highway Advisory Radios
- Extinguishable Message Sign
- Maintenance Vehicle Pullout
- Midwest Guardrail System

Please refer to Appendix E for further description and sample images of the transportation management system elements included in this project.

1.2 Purpose and Need

1.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the project is to improve roadway mobility and efficiency by addressing the effects of recurrent severe weather conditions on traffic through the strategic deployment of various transportation management systems on State Routes 88 and 89.

1.2.2 Need

There is a need to inform motorists traveling through the Kirkwood and Carson Pass area of weather and traffic conditions that can affect their travel.

1.3 Project Description

Caltrans proposes to install transportation management system elements and roadside safety improvements in and around the Kirkwood and Carson Pass areas at six locations in Amador, El Dorado, and Alpine counties on State Routes 88 and 89. The scope of work would include changeable message signs, vehicle detection systems, closed-circuit television camera systems, roadway weather information systems, highway advisory radios, extinguishable message signs, maintenance vehicle pullouts, Midwest guardrail systems, and a streetlight. The project would have one permanent easement at Location 2, which would acquire 0.063 acre of right-of-way under an existing easement with the U.S. Forest Service. Construction would

involve night work, work off the pavement, excavating, grading, trenching, and vegetation and tree removal. Figure 1-1 indicates the general project vicinity, and Figure 1-2 indicates the six project locations.

Please note: This project originally proposed 13 project locations. Following public review, Caltrans removed seven of the proposed project locations. The remaining six locations have retained their original numbering, and therefore are not numbered sequentially. For information regarding the locations that were removed from the project, please see Appendix C Project History.

Figure 1-1 Project Vicinity Map

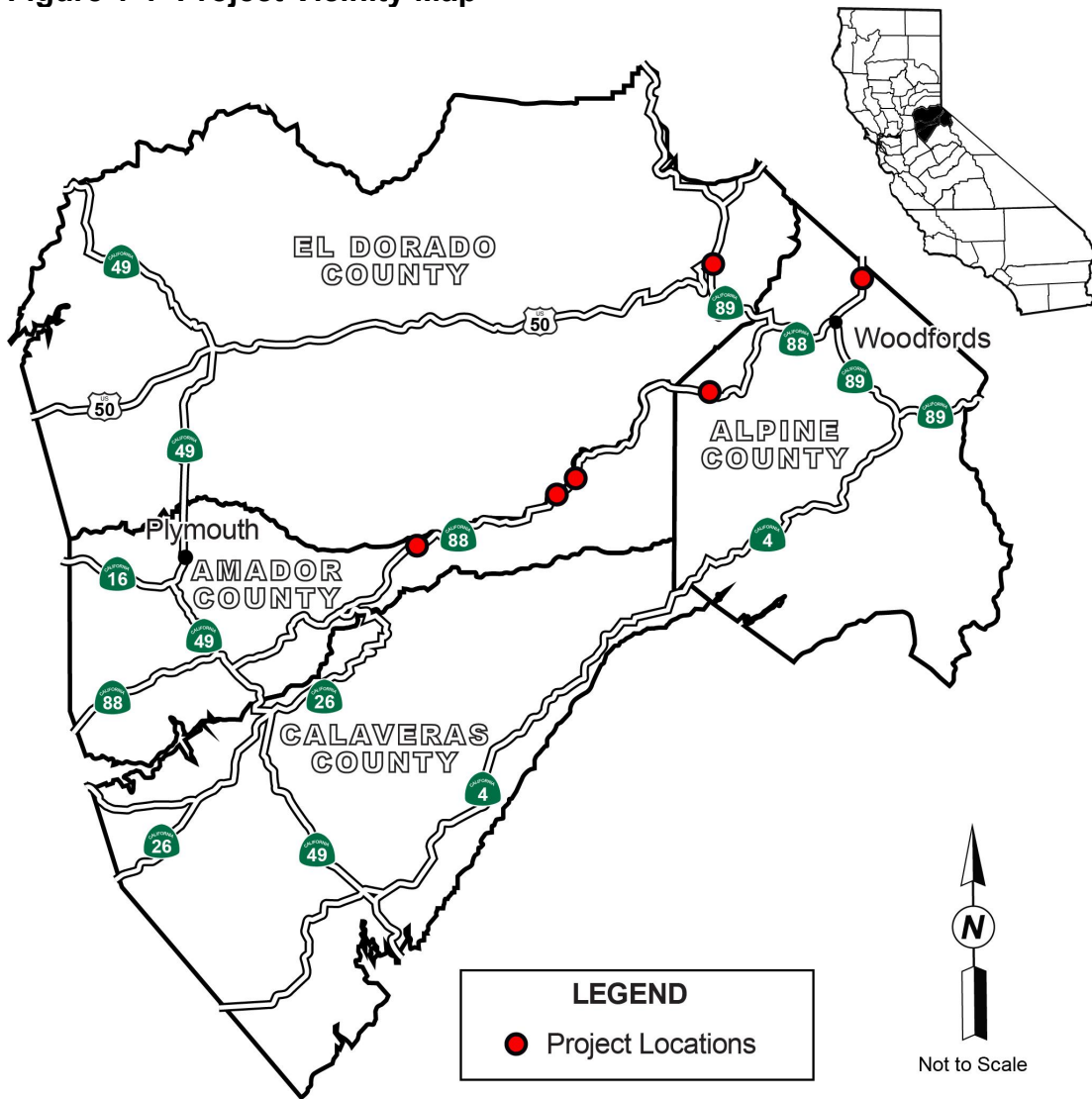
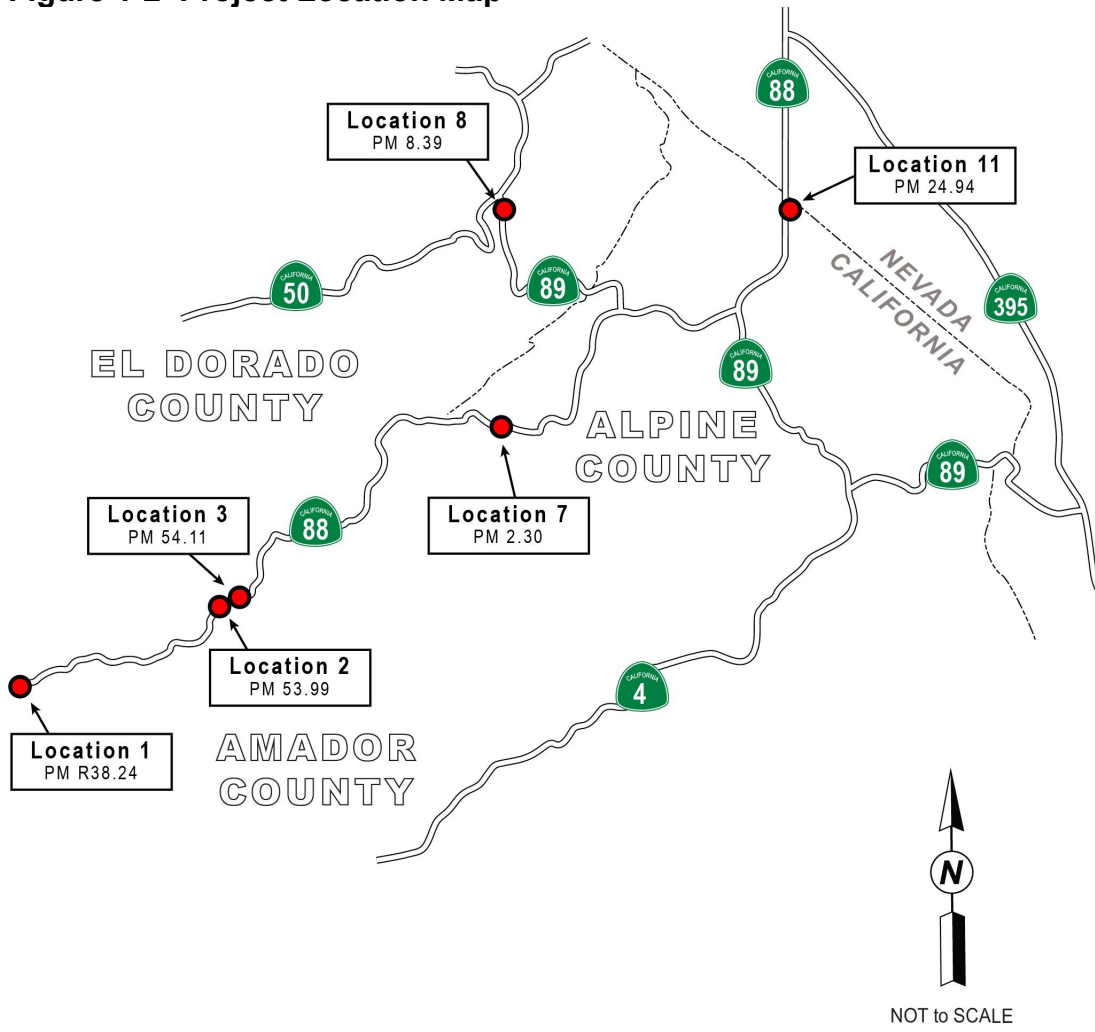


Figure 1-2 Project Location Map



1.4 Project Alternatives

This section describes the project alternatives developed to meet the purpose and need of the project. A Build Alternative and a No-Build Alternative were considered for the project.

1.4.1 Build Alternative

The Build Alternative will install transportation management elements at six locations along State Routes 88 and 89 across Amador, El Dorado, and Alpine counties. Table 1-1 identifies the six project locations and the proposed work at each location. Staging areas would be used near the project locations to temporarily store construction equipment.

Table 1-1 Project Locations and Proposed Work

Location	County	State Route	Post Mile	Proposed Work
1	Amador	88	R38.24	Install one vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, and one maintenance vehicle pullout. Replace the existing metal beam guardrail with Midwest guardrail, and replace existing changeable message sign with an updated changeable message sign.
2	Amador	88	53.99	Install one streetlight.
3	Amador	88	54.11	Install one changeable message sign with controller cabinets, one vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, one roadway weather information system, one highway advisory radio system, two extinguishable message signs, and one maintenance vehicle pullout. Replace the existing metal beam guardrail with Midwest guardrail.
7	Alpine	88	2.30	Install one vehicle detection system.
8	El Dorado	89	8.39	Install one vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, one highway advisory radio system, one extinguishable message sign, and one maintenance vehicle pullout. Replace the existing metal beam guardrail with Midwest guardrail, and replace the existing changeable message sign with an updated changeable message sign.
11	Alpine	88	24.94	Install one closed-circuit television camera system, one highway advisory radio system, two extinguishable message signs, and one guide sign. Replace the existing changeable message sign with an updated message sign.

Please refer to Appendix F for additional descriptions and images of the project locations.

Project work will include work off the paved roadway, trenches, grading, or other ground disturbance, drainage work, tree and vegetation removal, and work on a U.S. Forest Service easement. The following is a description of work involved with each transportation management system element included in the project:

- **Changeable Message Signs** – Changeable message signs are mounted on a cast-in-drilled-hole foundation. The piles are made of reinforced concrete cast into holes that are drilled in the ground. The drill is typically mounted on a portable truck drilling rig. The drilling results in excess material that must be shoveled away from the hole. Concrete is pumped into the hole and fortified with a reinforcement cage. Concrete foundations are poured near the holes for the sign’s electrical controller cabinets. Controller cabinets may require a raised concrete pad in front of the foundation. Constructing the foundations will require roadway or shoulder excavation. Trenching will be required to connect the controller cabinets to the signs.
- **Vehicle Detection System** – Installation of the vehicle detection systems will require shallow excavation of the roadbed and adjacent shoulder to install inductive loop detectors.
- **Closed-Circuit Television Camera System** – These systems will be installed on existing or proposed structures. Roadway or shoulder excavation or trenching will be required to connect the system with an electrical controller cabinet.
- **Roadway Weather Information System** – These systems will be installed on existing or proposed structures. Roadway or shoulder excavation or trenching will be required to connect the system with an electrical controller cabinet.
- **Highway Advisory Radio** – These systems will be installed on signage with transmitters, antennae, and connections to a power source.
- **Extinguishable Message Signs** – Extinguishable message signs will be mounted on cast-in-drilled-hole foundations, as described above.
- **Maintenance Vehicle Pullouts** – Installation of maintenance vehicle pullouts will require grading and paving of unpaved shoulder areas adjacent to existing roadway shoulders.
- **Streetlights** – Streetlights will be mounted on a cast-in-drilled-hole foundation as described above and will require roadway or shoulder excavation or trenching for electrical connections.

This project contains a number of standardized project measures that are used on most, if not all, Caltrans projects and were not developed in response to any specific environmental impact resulting from the proposed project. These measures are listed later in this chapter under Section 1.6, "Standard Measures and Best Management Practices included in All Build Alternatives."

1.4.2 No-Build (No-Action) Alternative

The No-Build Alternative will leave all existing transportation management systems along State Routes 88 and 89 in their current condition. No additional improvement, systems, or roadside safety features will be installed. The existing changeable message signs at Locations 1, 8, and 11 will not be updated or include other transportation management system elements such as the vehicle detection system, closed-circuit television camera system, highway advisory radio, extinguishable message sign and roadway weather information system. Communication and visibility on State Routes 88 and 89 would remain difficult, especially during severe weather conditions. Safety features such as maintenance vehicle pullouts with a Midwest guardrail system will not be added; the pullouts and guardrail proposed in the project would provide maintenance staff a safe place to park when working on transportation management systems. The No-Build Alternative does not meet the purpose and need because it does not improve communication throughout State Routes 88 and 89 in Amador, El Dorado, and Alpine counties and will not provide roadside safety improvements.

1.5 Identification of a Preferred Alternative

This section has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.

An earlier Initial Study with Proposed Negative Declaration was circulated for this project from February 25, 2022, to March 28, 2022. At that time, the project proposed to install various transportation management system elements at 13 locations in Amador, El Dorado, and Alpine counties along State Routes 88, 89, and 4. The project was revised to remove seven locations from the proposed Build Alternative.

The current Initial Study (this document) was prepared to incorporate the reduced scope and updated technical studies. For a detailed project history, see Appendix C. The current Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration, including the revised Build Alternative, was circulated for public review and comment from October 27, 2023, to December 1, 2023. A virtual open house was held on November 14, 2023, to present the revised project scope to the public and address questions from the public. Caltrans compiled comments received via the digital comment card made available on the project website, email, and written mail. These comments, and Caltrans' responses, are included in Appendix B of this document. The comments compiled for the Initial Study with Proposed Negative Declaration, circulated from February 25, 2022, to March 28, 2022, and responses to those comments, are available upon request in Volume 3 of this document.

Following the end of the circulation period on December 1, 2023, and a review of all comments received during circulation, the Caltrans project development team met on December 4, 2023, to select the preferred alternative from the options considered: the Build Alternative and the No-Build Alternative. The project development team considered comments received on the project during circulation, the results of the virtual open house on November 14, 2023, and all available information on the project when making this decision. The meeting participants selected the Build Alternative as the preferred alternative. This decision was documented in the Caltrans Project Report.

The No-Build Alternative was not chosen because it does not meet the purpose and need of the project.

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

AQ-1 Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-9.02, “Air Pollution Control,” will be included in the construction contract.

AQ-2 Caltrans Standard Specification 10-5, “Dust Control,” will be included in the construction contract.

BIO-1 Caltrans Standard Specifications or Special Provisions Section 14-1.02, “Environmentally Sensitive Area,” will be included in the construction contract.

BIO-2 Designated Biologist: A designated biologist will be retained to monitor construction activities and regulated species and habitats; if a contractor-supplied biologist is used, Standard Special Provision 14-6.03D will be included in the construction contract.

BIO-3 Caltrans Special Specifications Section 13-4.03E(3), “Vehicle and Equipment Cleaning,” and Caltrans Construction Site Best Management Practices Manual Section NS-08, “Vehicle and Equipment Cleaning,” will be included in the construction contract to maintain weed-free construction equipment and vehicles.

BIO-4 Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 20-1.03C(3), “Weed Control,” will be included in the construction contract.

BIO-5 Caltrans Standard Specification 21-2.02, “Erosion Control – Materials,” will be included in the construction contract. This section specifies what materials can be used for erosion control and revegetation treatments.

BIO-6 Caltrans Standard Special Provision 14-6.03A, "Species Protection," will be included in the construction contract. This section specifies the conduct of pre-construction surveys and protective buffers for special-status species.

BIO-7 Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 86-1.02M, "Photoelectric Controls," will be included in the construction contract.

BIO-8 Caltrans Standard Provisions Section 14-6.03B, "Bird Protection," will be included in the construction contract. This provision requires a focused survey for active nests of protected raptors and migratory birds if construction activities are scheduled during the nesting period, between February 1 and September 30. If active nests are found, a protective buffer and consultation will be established per the specification. A qualified biologist will be required to ensure buffers are maintained.

- Performing ground disturbance, vegetation removal, or other construction activities within nesting bird habitat during the non-nesting season, between October 1 and January 31, would not require pre-construction surveys or nesting bird avoidance measures.

CUL-1 Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-2.03A, "Archaeological Resources," will be included in the construction contract.

GHG-1 Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 7-1.02A, "Legal Relations and Responsibility to the Public – General," will be added to the construction contract.

GHG-2 Caltrans Standard Specifications 7-1.02C, "Emissions Reduction," will be added to the construction contract.

GHG-3 The contract will include measures to reduce construction waste and maximize the use of recycled materials.

GHG-4 The contract will include measures to reduce consumption of potable water.

GHG-5 The contract will require the contractor to maintain equipment in proper tune and working condition.

GHG-6 The contract will require that the contractor have the right size equipment for the job.

GHG-7 The contract will require that existing project materials would be recycled or reused onsite to the extent feasible.

HW-1 Caltrans Standard Special Provision 7-1.-02K(6)(j)(iii), “Earth Material Containing Lead,” will be added to the construction contract. A lead compliance plan will be required.

HW-2 Caltrans Standard Special Provision 14-11.14 “Treated Wood Waste,” will be required if disposal of treated wood waste is needed.

LG-1 Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 86-1.02K, “Luminaries,” will be included in the construction contract. This section specifies lighting requirements.

NQ-1 Caltrans Standard Specification 14-8.02, “Noise Control,” will be included in the construction contract.

NQ-2 All equipment will have sound-control devices that are no less effective than those provided on the original equipment.

PAL-1 Caltrans Standard Specification 14-7.03, “Discovery of Unanticipated Paleontological Resources,” will be included in the construction contract.

WF-1 Caltrans Standard Specification 7-1.02M (2) mandates fire prevention procedures, including a fire prevention plan, to avoid accidental fire starts during construction.

WQ-1 Caltrans Standard Specification 13-1, “Water Pollution,” will be included in the construction contract.

1.7 Discussion of the NEPA Categorical Exclusion

This document contains information regarding compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and other state laws and regulations. Separate environmental documentation, supporting a Categorical Exclusion determination, has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. When needed for clarity, or as required by CEQA, this document may contain references to federal laws and/or regulations (CEQA, for example, requires consideration of adverse effects on species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species by the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—that is, species protected by the Federal Endangered Species Act).

1.8 Permits and Approvals Needed

The following permits, licenses, agreements, and certifications are required for project construction:

Agency	Permit/Approval	Status
U.S. Forest Service	Permanent Easement	Approved

Chapter 2 CEQA Evaluation

2.1 CEQA Environmental Checklist

This checklist identifies physical, biological, social, and economic factors that might be affected by the proposed project. Potential impact determinations include Significant and Unavoidable Impact, Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated, Less Than Significant Impact, and No Impact. In many cases, background studies performed in connection with a project will indicate that there are no impacts to a particular resource. A “No Impact” answer reflects this determination. The questions in this checklist are intended to encourage the thoughtful assessment of impacts and do not represent thresholds of significance.

Project features, which can include both design elements of the project and standardized measures that are applied to all or most Caltrans projects such as Best Management Practices and measures included in the Standard Plans and Specifications or as Standard Special Provisions, are considered to be an integral part of the project and have been considered prior to any significance determinations documented below.

“No Impact” determinations in each section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project as well as the appropriate technical report (bound separately in Volume 2), and no further discussion is included in this document.

2.1.1 Aesthetics

Considering the information in the Visual Impact Assessment dated September 26, 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Aesthetics
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	Less Than Significant Impact
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	Less Than Significant Impact

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

Affected Environment

The project includes six locations along State Routes 88 and 89 in Amador, El Dorado, and Alpine counties. State Routes 88 and 89 are mainly rural roads with natural features such as rugged mountain passes, dense forests, and open meadows. State Route 88 is dually designated as a State Scenic Highway and a U.S. Forest Service National Forest Scenic Byway. State Route 89 is designated as a State Scenic Highway at select areas within Alpine and El Dorado counties within the project limits.

A Visual Impact Assessment was completed for this project on September 26, 2023. The Visual Impact Assessment follows guidance outlined by the Federal Highway Administration. Key views were identified at each project location to analyze visual resource change, viewer response, and lighting, which are further described below. The full Visual Impact Assessment is provided in Volume 2 of this document.

Visual Impact Level

Visual impacts are determined by assessing changes to visual resources and predicting viewer response to those changes and assigning a value. Those values are then combined to assign a visual impact level.

Visual Resource Change

Visual resource change is assessed by evaluating the visual character and quality of the resources in the project corridor, both before and after construction of the proposed project. Visual character includes primary visual attributes of objects, including form, line, color, and texture, as well as the contrast between the object and the surrounding visual environment, including dominance, scale, diversity, and continuity. Changes to visual character are identified by how visually compatible the project will be with the existing condition. Visual quality is evaluated by identifying the vividness, intactness, and unity in the project corridor, or rather, how

memorable, distinctive, intact, and coherent the elements in the corridor are.

Viewer Response

Viewers are the population affected by the project and include highway users and highway neighbors. Viewer response is a measure of viewer reaction to changes in the visual environment, defined by viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity. Viewer exposure measures the viewer's ability to see an object, including location, quantity of viewers, and duration an object is in view. Viewer sensitivity is a measure of the viewer's recognition of a particular object, including the activity the viewer is engaged in when looking at the object, the specificity of the viewer's awareness, and the local values and attitudes toward aesthetics.

Key Views

Key views are viewpoints that are seen by those driving on the road (in either direction) or seen by those who live near the project area (neighbors). Key views were identified for each project location and were analyzed using visual resource change and viewer response criteria. Key views were selected to demonstrate the level of change to visual resources caused by the proposed project and were analyzed at each project location.

Location 1 – Amador 88, post mile R38.24

Location 1 is in a dense, wooded conifer forest. This area has the visual character of a rural forest, which dominates the viewshed. The vertical lines of the forest edge are coarse and homogenous in color and form. Urban elements are visible but do not impede views.

Location 2 – Amador 88, post mile 53.99

Location 2 is in a moderately dense, wooded conifer forest. The visual character of this location is rural forest that dominates the viewshed with moderately dense roadside vegetation. The vertical lines of the forest edge are coarse and homogenous in color and form. Urban elements are visible but do not impede views. Location 3 is visible from this location.

Location 3 – Amador 88, post mile 54.11

Location 3 is in a moderately dense, wooded conifer forest. The visual character of this location is rural forest that dominates the viewshed with moderately dense roadside vegetation. The vertical lines of the forest edge are coarse and homogenous in color and form. Urban elements are visible in this location but do not impede views. Location 2 is visible from this location.

Location 7 – Alpine 88, post mile 2.30

Location 7 is in an area that transitions from moderately dense to moderately sparse rural wooded coniferous forest. The visual character is rural forest that dominates the viewshed with moderately dense roadside vegetation. The vertical lines of the forest edge are coarse and homogenous in color and form. Urban elements are visible but do not impede views.

Location 8 – El Dorado 89, post mile 8.39

Location 8 is in a moderately dense, wooded coniferous forest. The visual character is mountainous landform with human-made, residential, and commercial landcover within a moderately dense pinion forest near the community of Meyers, California. Views in this area are punctuated by scenes to existing human-made development visible where the forest vegetation is sparse. The vertical lines of the forest edge are coarse and homogenous in color and form.

Location 11 – Alpine 88, post mile 24.94

Location 11 is in the rural upper desert sagebrush scrub and alluvial pasturelands of the Carson River Valley. The visual character is represented by spatially open, upper flat river valleys. The views are an array of uninterrupted background scenes of the surrounding eastern Sierra Mountain ridges that define the valley limits. Human-made development is present in the form of large parcel dwellings or ranches, some of which can be viewed from the roadway. Urban elements are visible along the roadway and within the project location.

Lighting

The proposed project includes three locations in Amador County, one location in El Dorado County, and two locations in Alpine County. All three counties include lighting ordinances to reduce unnecessary lighting and to preserve nighttime views. The Environmental Consequences section will describe the visual change, viewer response, and anticipated impacts if the project is constructed.

Environmental Consequences

The visual impact level is the overall average rating per each project location. The ratings range from high, moderately high, moderate, moderately low, and low. The following is a description of each impact rating:

- High – A visual impact rating of “high” indicates a high level of negative change to a visual resource or a high level of viewer response to the change of a visual resource.
- Moderately High – A visual impact rating of “moderately high” indicates a moderate negative visual resource change with high viewer response or high negative visual resource change with a moderate viewer response.
- Moderate – A “moderate” visual impact rating denotes moderate negative change to the visual resource with moderate visual response.
- Moderately Low – A “moderately low” impact rating denotes low negative change to the visual resource with a moderate viewer response, or moderate negative change to the resource with low viewer response.
- Low – A “low” impact score denotes a low negative change to existing visual resources, with low viewer response to that change.

Below is an analysis of each location and the visual impact level per location. Table 2-1 lists the visual impact rating for each location. See the Visual Impact Assessment in Volume 2 for a more detailed description of the rating process.

Table 2-1 Visual Impact Rating per Location

Location	County	State Route	Post Mile	Proposed Work	Visual Impact Rating
1	Amador	88	R3.8.24	Install one vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, and one maintenance vehicle pullout. Replace the existing metal beam guardrail with Midwest guardrail and replace existing changeable message sign with an updated changeable message sign.	Moderate
2	Amador	88	53.99	Install one streetlight.	Moderate
3	Amador	88	54.11	Install one changeable message sign with controller cabinets, one vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, one roadway weather information system, one highway advisory radio system, two extinguishable message signs, and one maintenance vehicle pullout. Replace the existing metal beam guardrail with Midwest guardrail.	Moderate
7	Alpine	88	2.30	Install one vehicle detection system.	Moderately Low
8	El Dorado	89	8.39	Install one vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, one highway advisory radio system, one extinguishable message sign, and one maintenance vehicle pullout. Replace the existing metal beam guardrail with Midwest guardrail and replace the existing changeable message sign with an updated changeable message sign.	Moderate
11	Alpine	88	24.94	Install one closed-circuit television camera system, one highway advisory radio system, two extinguishable message signs, and one guide sign. Replace the existing changeable message sign with an updated message sign.	Moderately High

Location 1 – Amador 88, post mile R38.24

The project will install one vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, and one maintenance vehicle pullout; replace the existing metal beam guardrail with Midwest guardrail; and replace the existing changeable message sign with an updated changeable message sign at Location 1.

The project will not alter existing views, but some change will occur due to the addition of transportation management system elements and safety improvements. There are no highway neighbors with direct visual access to the site, but there are highway users who move quickly through the site. Transportation management system elements, including a changeable message sign, already exist at this location, and it is anticipated that post-construction views will remain similar to pre-construction views.

The resulting visual impact rating for Location 1 is “moderate.” Project work will not substantially affect scenic features such as rugged mountain passes, extended ridgelines, granite peaks, steeply sloped monolithic rock faces and outcrops, alpine forest landcover, open space pastures, low-lying valleys, or lush meadows bounded by forest trees. Avoidance and minimization measures have been proposed to further lessen visual impacts and are discussed under Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures.

Location 2 – Amador 88, post mile 53.99

The project will install one streetlight at Location 2.

The project will not alter existing views, but minimal change will occur due to the addition of the streetlight. There are no highway neighbors with direct visual access to the project location. There are highway users who travel quickly through this project location. Transportation management system elements already exist, and post-construction views are expected to remain similar to pre-construction views. This location is within view of Location 3 and across the highway from the Peddler Hill Maintenance Station access roadway, which has existing overhead lighting.

The resulting visual impact rating for Location 2 is “moderate.” Project work will not substantially affect scenic features such as rugged mountain passes, extended ridgelines, granite peaks, steeply sloped monolithic rock faces and outcrops, alpine forest landcover, open space pastures, low-lying valleys, or lush meadows bounded by forest trees. Avoidance and minimization measures have been proposed to further lessen visual impacts and are discussed under Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures.

Location 3 – Amador 88, post mile 54.11

The project will install one changeable message sign with controller cabinets, one vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system,

one roadway weather information system, one highway advisory radio system, two extinguishable message signs, and one maintenance vehicle pullout; and replace the existing metal beam guardrail with Midwest guardrail.

The project will not alter existing views, but some change will occur due to the introduction of safety improvements and non-typical, above-ground elements, such as the changeable message sign and extinguishable message sign. There are no highway neighbors with direct visual access to the project location, but there are highway users who move quickly through the project location. Views to the proposed transportation management system elements will be visible only from the roadway. Location 3 is along the same visual corridor as Location 2.

The resulting visual impact rating for Location 3 is “moderate.” Proposed project work will not substantially affect scenic features such as rugged mountain passes, extended ridgelines, granite peaks, steeply sloped monolithic rock faces and outcrops, alpine forest landcover, open space pastures, low-lying valleys, or lush meadows bounded by forest trees. Avoidance and minimization measures have been proposed to further lessen visual impacts and are discussed under Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures.

Location 7 – Alpine 88, post mile 2.30

The project will install one vehicle detection system at Location 7.

The project will not alter existing views, but minimal change will occur due to the addition of transportation management system elements. The project will install a single, above-ground cabinet that is expected to cause little change to the overall visual environment. There are no highway neighbors with visual access to the project location, but there are highway users who move quickly through the project site.

The resulting visual impact for Location 7 is “moderately low.” Project work will not substantially affect scenic features such as rugged mountain passes, extended ridgelines, granite peaks, steeply sloped monolithic rock faces and outcrops, alpine forest landcover, open space pastures, low-lying valleys, or lush meadows bounded by forest trees. Avoidance and minimization measures have been proposed to further lessen visual impacts and are discussed under Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures.

Location 8 – El Dorado 89, post mile 8.39

The project will install one vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, one highway advisory radio system, one extinguishable message sign, and one maintenance vehicle pullout; replace the existing metal beam guardrail with Midwest guardrail; and replace the existing changeable message sign with an updated changeable message sign at Location 8.

The project will not alter existing views, but some change will occur due to the addition of transportation management system elements and safety improvements. Certain transportation management system elements, such as the changeable message sign, already exist at this location, and post-construction views are expected to remain similar to pre-construction views, with the addition of an extinguishable message sign. There are four highway neighbors residing near the proposed facility who have or will have visual access to the project site. The closest neighbor is approximately 150 feet from the site, and the farthest is approximately 500 feet away. There are also highway users that move quickly through the project area. As previously mentioned, most of the elements already exist, and views to the transportation management system elements will be accessible to highway users. The elements are somewhat compatible with the existing residential and commercial land uses in the area.

The resulting visual impact for Location 8 is “moderate.” Project work will not substantially affect scenic features such as deep rugged canyons, mountain passes, views to the upper desert geology, open desert vegetation that transitions to thick pinion forests, roadside views to the East Fork Carson River, mountain ridgelines and rocky peaks, steeply sloped monolithic rock faces and outcrops, linear open space valleys, meadows defined by the forest edge, and skyline features of distant mountain ranges that define the horizon. Avoidance and minimization measures have been proposed to further lessen visual impacts and are discussed under Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures.

Location 11 – Alpine 88, post mile 24.94

The project will install one closed-circuit television camera system, one highway advisory radio system, two extinguishable message signs, and one guide sign; and replace the existing changeable message sign with an updated message sign at Location 11.

The existing views will remain the same with some change occurring due to the installation of the extinguishable message signs and guide sign. There is an existing changeable message sign at this location. There is one highway neighbor immediately adjacent to the project location. The highway neighbor has a direct view of the existing transportation management elements. There are four other residents who live near the project site but who do not have visual access to the project site; the closest of these neighbors is located 2,200 feet from the site. There are also highway users who move quickly through the project site.

The resulting visual impact for Location 11 is “moderately high.” Project work will not substantially affect scenic features such as rugged mountain passes, extended ridgelines, granite peaks, steeply sloped monolithic rock faces and outcrops, alpine forest landcover, open space pastures, low-lying valleys, or lush meadows bounded by forest trees. Mitigation measures have been

proposed to further lessen visual impacts and are discussed under Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures.

Lighting

The project will add new sources of lighting at Locations 1, 2, 3, 8, and 11. Sources of lighting involved in the project include a streetlight, changeable message signs, extinguishable message signs, and Locations 1, 2, 8, and 11 already have existing sources of lighting. Location 3 has no existing lighting; however, it is within view of Location 2, which currently has an overhead light. Installation of a new changeable message sign and an extinguishable message sign will still introduce a new source of light for Location 3.

Caltrans includes Standard Specifications with regard to light color, temperature, and shielding in all construction contracts. It is recommended that temporary outdoor construction lighting and outdoor permanent roadway and signal lighting have color temperatures under 3,000 Kelvin, and preferably under 2,700 Kelvin. Changeable message sign light-emitting diode luminaries, also known as LED lights, are amber in color and under 3,000 Kelvin. Also, Caltrans specifies that light-emitting diode roadway luminaries, specifically overhead lighting, do not allow more than 2.5 percent of lumens, a measure of visible light, to extend above 80 degrees from the ground. This is consistent with light cutoff classifications set forth by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America to reduce or eliminate light emitted into the sky. As such, a less than significant impact to views by light or glare will occur.

Avoidance and minimization measures to further reduce light impacts are identified in Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures below.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

This section lists the avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures for the project. Please see Appendix D for examples of measures that will be applied to the project.

Avoidance and Minimization Measures

Due to the moderate visual impact rating for Locations 1, 2, 3, and 8, the following measures will apply. Only measures AES-2 and AES-4 will apply to Location 7 due to the moderately low visual impact rating.

AES-1 Install conventional highway planting in strategic locations to limit visual intrusion from transportation management system elements within highway viewshed and provide watering schedule to ensure plant establishment success.

AES-2 Install non-irrigated native plant material seeding with duff top-dress covering all disturbed soil areas including the proposed construction site and equipment staging area.

AES-3 Choose lighting types that direct light downward and install shield fixtures to all additional light sources to minimize light trespass into nighttime skies.

AES-4 Paint and/or stain, using Natina stain, changeable message structure and accessories to match existing visual surroundings.

AES-5 Stain new Midwest guardrail system, using Natina stain, to match existing visual surroundings.

AES-6 Provide a minimum three-year vegetation establishment period.

The following measures to reduce lighting impacts will apply to Locations 1, 2, 3, 8, and 11:

LG-2 Lighting must comply with all pertinent county ordinances and standards along with consideration to the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA)–approved lighting standards and fixtures.

LG-3 All lighting must be designed to have minimum impact on the surrounding environment and must be downcast, cutoff-type fixtures that are shielded and direct the light downward only toward objects or surfaces requiring illumination (when needed).

LG-4 Lights must be installed at the lowest allowable height and cast low-angle illumination while minimizing incidental spill-light onto adjacent properties or open spaces and minimize backscatter or sky glow into the nighttime sky in an attempt to eliminate nighttime light pollution.

LG-5 The lowest allowable wattage must be used for all new light sources in or near scenic resource areas identified in this document and documented in pertinent county guidelines and policies. The number of nighttime light sources proposed for dark landscape areas must be minimized.

LG-6 Light fixtures must have non-glare finishes that will not cause reflective daytime glare.

LG-7 Lights must provide good color rendering with natural light qualities, with the minimum intensity needed for security, safety, and personnel access.

Mitigation Measures

Due to the moderately high visual impact rating for Location 11, the following mitigation measures will be applied:

MIT-1 Install conventional highway planting in strategic locations to limit visual intrusion from transportation management system elements within highway viewshed and provide watering schedule to ensure plant establishment success.

MIT-2 Install non-irrigated native plant material seeding with duff top-dress covering all disturbed soil areas including the construction site and equipment staging area.

MIT-3 Choose lighting types that direct light downward and install shield fixtures to all additional light sources to minimize light trespass into nighttime skies.

MIT-4 Paint and/or stain, using Natina stain, changeable message structure and accessories to match existing visual surroundings.

MIT-5 Stain new Midwest guardrail system, using Natina stain, to match existing visual surroundings.

MIT-6 Provide a minimum three-year vegetation establishment period.

2.1.2 Agriculture and Forestry Resources

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

A permanent easement totaling 0.063 acre from the U.S. Forest Service will be required at Location 2. Location 2 is located within the El Dorado National Forest. There is an existing easement in place between the U.S. Forest Service and Caltrans at this location, and the easement will not constitute a change in zoning.

In a letter to Caltrans Right of Way staff dated April 18, 2022, the U.S. Forest Service Amador District Ranger indicated that the U.S. Forest Service had previously conducted environmental analysis at the area and indicated that there are no known potential adverse effects to resources as a result of this project. This project will not require temporary construction easements or permanent right of way acquisition at any location. Considering this information, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Agriculture and Forest Resources
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	No Impact
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	No Impact
c) Conflict with existing zoning, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g))?	No Impact
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	No Impact
e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	No Impact

2.1.3 Air Quality

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

An Air Quality Memorandum was prepared for this project. The project is not expected to cause any operational effects on air pollutants, but construction of the project would temporarily generate air pollutants. Caltrans includes Standard Specifications in each construction contract, as identified in Section 1.6. Considering the information in the Air Quality Memorandum dated August 29, 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Air Quality
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	No Impact
b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?	No Impact
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	No Impact
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	No Impact

2.1.4 Biological Resources

Considering the information in the Natural Environment Study (Minimal Impacts) dated August 31, 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Biological Resources
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries?	Less than Significant
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?	No Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Biological Resources
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	No Impact
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	No Impact
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	No Impact
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	No Impact

Affected Environment

A Natural Environment Study (Minimal Impacts) was completed on August 31, 2023. Environmental study limits, which include all areas that may be directly or indirectly affected by the project, were identified in the study. The project is located within the California Sierra Nevada province. As the project locations are varied, there is a mix of vegetation communities within and adjacent to the project locations, including Sierran Mixed Conifers, Lodgepole Pine, East Side Pine, Montane Riparian, Wet Meadow, and Pasture.

Waters of the United States and Waters of the State of California – Wetlands and Other Waters

Location 7 is 20 feet west of a culvert that carries an intermittent stream. The intermittent stream potentially qualifies as waters of the United States and/or waters of the State of California under the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act, Sections 401 and 404, and the California Fish and Game Code Sections 1600-1616.

Special-Status Plant Species

A list of special-status plant species considered as part of the evaluation is included in the Natural Environment Study (Minimal Impacts), available in Volume 2 of this document. No sensitive plant species considered for review

were detected during botanical surveys, and none are expected to occur within the project environmental study limits.

Invasive Species

Annual grasses and forbs that are components of common ruderal vegetation along mountainous disturbed roadside and non-landscaped areas in the environmental study limits are considered invasive plant species. These include species rated by the California Invasive Plant Council as plants of “limited” or “moderate” invasiveness. No invasive plants from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Invasive Species Program are expected to occur in the project environmental study limits.

Special-Status Animal Species

A list of special-status animal species is included in the Natural Environment Study, available in Volume 2 of this document. No sensitive animal species considered for this review were detected during surveys of the environmental study limits.

Habitat for the following species is not available within the immediate vicinity of the project area:

Carson wandering skipper, southern long-toed salamander, mountain sucker, delta smelt, black swift, amphibious caddisfly, Mono checkerspot butterfly, gray-headed pika, Lahontan cutthroat trout, mountain whitefish, foothill yellow-legged frog, California red-legged frog, and Yosemite toad

Potential habitat for the following species may be present within and adjacent to the project area:

northern goshawk, Morrison bumblebee, western bumblebee, Carson valley silverspot, monarch butterfly, California wolverine, Sierra Nevada mountain beaver, tree-roosting bats, Sierra marten, fisher, North American porcupine, western white-tailed jackrabbit, black-backed woodpecker, great grey owl, Sierra Nevada red fox, American badger, and migratory birds

Common Fish and Wildlife

Suitable nesting habitat for migratory birds, including raptors, occurs within the environmental study limits, and the birds may attempt to nest in appropriate habitats between February 1 and September 30. Within the project area, the potential to encounter nesting migratory birds between these dates is moderate. The project does not fall within any areas identified by the California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project as Natural Landscape Blocks or Essential Habitat Connectivity Areas, though these areas occur adjacent to some of the project locations. The project is located beyond the range of anadromous fish species; no waters designated as Essential Fish Habitat by

the National Marine Fisheries Service occur within the project environmental study limits.

Environmental Consequences

Waters of the United States and Waters of the State of California – Wetlands and Other Waters

The project will install a vehicle detection system at Location 7. Installation will require shallow excavation of the roadbed and adjacent shoulder to install inductive loop detectors. Caltrans Standard Plans denote that all electrical conduit runs are installed within 10 feet of the edge of pavement. Conduit may be installed along the edge of pavement or under paved shoulder areas if necessary.

The potential waters of the United States and waters of the State of California will be designated as Environmentally Sensitive Areas on the project's plans and specifications and delineated in the field with high-visibility markers. All auguring, trenching, and other excavation activities at Location 7 will be limited to the edge of shoulder. No project work is proposed that may impact the intermittent stream adjacent to Location 7, and no Clean Water Act Section 404, Clean Water Act Section 401, and/or California Fish and Game Section 1600 permits will be required.

Special-Status Plant Species

Due to the project area being outside the range of special-status plant species considered for environmental review, the lack of suitable habitat or habitat components within the area, the lack of detection during Caltrans surveys, and because the project will not harm individuals or alter species habitat, Caltrans has determined that the project will have "no effect" on federally or state listed species, California "rare" plant species, or plant species protected by the California Native Plant Protection Act.

Invasive Species

Though existing roadside areas will be temporarily disturbed, the project will not break new ground to be potentially available for new infestations. However, it is possible that weeds originating from the project area could be transported to areas without invasive species. Caltrans implements standard measures on every project to reduce the potential for the project to spread invasive or noxious weeds, as listed in Section 1.6.

Special-Status Animal Species

The project will install or replace light features at four locations that have existing light features, and to install light features at Location 3, which has no existing light features. Location 7 has existing light features, and the project is not proposing additional light features at that location. The presence of artificial light in otherwise dark conditions, including glare, skyglow, light spillage, clutter, and over-illumination, may impact natural ecosystems.

Locations 2 and 8 have existing streetlights, also referred to as overhead lighting. Other existing or proposed lighting elements at these locations are expected to fall within the lighting footprint of the overhead lights. The installation of overhead lighting at Location 2 and installation of extinguishable message signs at Location 8 are expected to have a negligible impact due to being within the light footprint of existing lighting.

Installation of a new changeable message sign and extinguishable message sign at Location 3 will introduce a new, “on the ground” light footprint, however, Location 3 is approximately 625 feet east of Location 2, which is currently illuminated by overhead lights.

The installation of an extinguishable message sign at Location 11 will extend the “on the ground” light footprint beyond the existing changeable message sign light footprint. Extinguishable message signs are expected to have a comparable light footprint as changeable message signs. Light spillage to ground surfaces is expected to be negligible.

Existing lighting conditions at Locations 1, 2, 7, 8, and 11 are assumed to currently extend into migration routes, flyways, or foraging areas for sensitive animal species. The project has little potential to result in additional negative effects if species are present. Standard measures, which are a feature of all or most projects, would reduce potential impacts.

The following species have no habitat within the immediate vicinity of the project area; therefore, it is anticipated that the project will not result in the “take” (hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill) of these species:

Carson wandering skipper, southern long-toed salamander, mountain sucker, delta smelt, black swift, amphibious caddisfly, Mono checkerspot butterfly, gray-headed pika, Lahontan cutthroat trout, mountain whitefish, foothill yellow-legged frog, California red-legged frog, and Yosemite toad

The following species have habitat within the immediate vicinity of the project area, however with the inclusion of standard measures listed in Section 1.6, it is anticipated that the project will not result in the take of these species:

northern goshawk, Morrison bumblebee, western bumblebee, Carson valley silverspot, monarch butterfly, California wolverine, Sierra Nevada mountain beaver, tree-roosting bats, Sierra marten, fisher, North American porcupine, western white-tailed jackrabbit, black-backed woodpecker, great grey owl, Sierra Nevada red fox, American badger and migratory birds

Avoidance and minimization measures are included in the project to further reduce impacts.

Common Fish and Wildlife

Common wildlife species may be impacted due to the installation of new light sources, as discussed above under “Special-Status Animal Species.” With the inclusion of standard measures, the project is not expected to result in the take of migratory birds or active nests. Avoidance and minimization measures are included in the project to further reduce impacts.

The project will not result in adverse impacts to fish species or result in the construction of any features potentially limiting fish passage within the environmental study limits. Project construction activities will also avoid disturbance of natural vegetation communities and habitats supporting common wildlife species. The construction activities are not expected to result in the take of common wildlife species.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The following standard measures, also listed in Section 1.6 of this document, will be included in the project.

WQ-1 Caltrans Standard Specification 13-1, “Water Pollution,” will be included in the construction contract.

BIO-1 Caltrans Standard Specifications or Special Provisions Section 14-1.02, “Environmentally Sensitive Area,” will be included in the construction contract.

BIO-2 Designated Biologist: A designated biologist will be retained to monitor construction activities and regulated species and habitats; if a contractor-supplied biologist is used, Standard Special Provision 14-6.03D will be included in the construction contract.

BIO-3 Caltrans Special Specifications Section 13-4.03E(3), “Vehicle and Equipment Cleaning,” and Caltrans Construction Site Best Management Practices Manual Section NS-08, “Vehicle and Equipment Cleaning,” will be included in the construction contract to maintain weed-free construction equipment and vehicles.

BIO-4 Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 20-1.03C(3), “Weed Control,” will be included in the construction contract.

BIO-5 Caltrans Standard Specification 21-2.02, “Erosion Control – Materials,” will be included in the construction contract. This section specifies what materials can be used for erosion control and revegetation treatments.

BIO-6 Caltrans Standard Special Provision 14-6.03A, “Species Protection,” will be included in the construction contract. This section specifies the conduct of pre-construction surveys and protective buffers for special-status species.

BIO-7 Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 86-1.02M, "Photoelectric Controls," will be included in the construction contract.

BIO-8 Caltrans Standard Provisions Section 14-6.03B, "Bird Protection," will be included in the construction contract. This provision requires a focused survey for active nests of protected raptors and migratory birds if construction activities are scheduled during the nesting period, between February 1 and September 30. If active nests are found, a protective buffer and consultation will be established per the specification. A qualified biologist will be required to ensure buffers are maintained.

- Performing ground disturbance, vegetation removal, or other construction activities within nesting bird habitat during the non-nesting season, between October 1 and January 31, will not require pre-construction surveys or nesting bird avoidance measures.

LG-1 Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 86-1.02K, "Luminaries," will be included in the construction contract. This section specifies lighting requirements.

The following avoidance and minimization measures will be included in the project:

LG-3 All lighting must be designed to have minimum impact on the surrounding environment and must be downcast, cutoff-type fixtures that are shielded and direct the light downward only toward objects or surfaces requiring illumination (when needed).

LG-4 Lights must be installed at the lowest allowable height and cast low-angle illumination while minimizing incidental spill-light onto adjacent properties or open spaces and minimize backscatter or sky glow into the nighttime sky in an attempt to eliminate nighttime light pollution.

LG-5 The lowest allowable wattage must be used for all new light sources in or near scenic resource areas identified in this document and documented in pertinent county guidelines and policies. The number of nighttime light sources proposed for dark landscape areas must be minimized.

LG-6 Light fixtures must have non-glare finishes that will not cause reflective daytime glare.

LG-7 Lights must provide good color rendering with natural light qualities, with the minimum intensity needed for security, safety, and personnel access.

No biological mitigation measures are proposed for this project.

2.1.5 Cultural Resources

A Historic Property Survey Report was prepared for the project on September 2, 2021 and was amended on August 30, 2023. No cultural sites were identified within the area of potential effect for Locations 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, or 11. A finding of No Historic Properties Affected was adopted for the project. Standard measures relating to cultural resources that will be included in the project are identified in Section 1.6. Considering the information in the Historic Property Survey Report dated September 2, 2021, and the Section 106 Memorandum dated August 30, 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Cultural Resources
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	No Impact
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	No Impact
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	No Impact

2.1.6 Energy

The proposed project scope will not result in potentially significant environmental impacts due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary use of energy resources. The transportation management system elements will be connected to existing utility lines at each project location. Also, the project will improve energy efficiency by replacing existing changeable message signs with an energy-efficient version. The new signs will typically run on less than half of the maximum power required (depending on the message); the signs would have a power savings mode and internal fans to keep the signs at an ambient temperature on hot days, and (when on) the new signs will use the same wattage as a small microwave. The Meyers Area Plan, Alpine and Amador County Energy Action Plans mention goals for including energy-efficient design features in new projects. Furthermore, the changeable message signs use light-emitting diode amber lights, which are indicated as energy-efficient light bulbs in the Alpine and Amador County Energy Action Plans. The changeable message signs will be on only when advance warning is required regarding roadway conditions that could affect the traveling public, such as severe weather, work zones or roadwork, and special events; otherwise, the signs would be off. Considering the information in the energy evaluation dated September 11, 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Energy
a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during project construction or operation?	No Impact
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	No Impact

2.1.7 Geology and Soils

The California Earthquake Hazards Zone Application, accessed September 13, 2023, was consulted for this project. Location 11 is located within 1.5 miles of the Genoa Fault. However, the project activities at this location are not anticipated to cause a rupture of the fault due to the limited scope of work. Also, the project is not anticipated to impact soils, or paleontological or geological features. Standard measures relating to cultural resources that will be included in the project are identified in Section 1.6. Considering this information and information in the Paleontological Identification Report dated September 15, 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils
a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42. 	No Impact
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	No Impact
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	No Impact
iv) Landslides?	No Impact
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	No Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in onsite or offsite landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?	No Impact
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?	No Impact
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?	No Impact
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	No Impact

2.1.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Considering the information in the Amended Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Analysis Memorandum dated August 29, 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Greenhouse Gas Emissions
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	Less Than Significant Impact
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	No Impact

Affected Environment

The project has six locations on State Routes 88 and 89 in Amador, El Dorado, and Alpine counties. Set within three different National Forests (Stanislaus National Forest, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, and El Dorado National Forest), the project area is mainly rural with natural resources and a tourism-based economy. State Routes 88 and 89 are considered the regions collector routes by providing access to incorporated communities and major rural residential areas throughout the region. The

Amador County General Plan, El Dorado County Regional Transportation Plan, and Alpine County General Plan address climate change and greenhouse gases in the project area.

Environmental Consequences

The project is will temporarily generate greenhouse gas emissions during construction due to material processing and transportation, onsite construction equipment, and possible traffic delays from construction. Temporary carbon dioxide emissions generated from construction equipment were estimated using the Caltrans Construction Emission Tool. The estimated carbon dioxide emissions for the project would be about 971 tons during 180 working days.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The following standard measures will be implemented for the project to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and potential climate change impacts from the project.

GHG-1 Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 7-1.02A, “Legal Relations and Responsibility to the Public – General,” will be added to the construction contract.

GHG-2 Caltrans Standard Specifications 7-1.02C, “Emissions Reduction,” will be added to the construction contract.

GHG-3 The contract will include measures to reduce construction waste and maximize the use of recycled materials.

GHG-4 The contract will include measures to reduce consumption of potable water.

GHG-5 The contract will require the contractor to maintain equipment in proper tune and working condition.

GHG-6 The contract will require that the contractor have the right size equipment for the job.

GHG-7 The contract will require that existing project materials will be recycled or reused onsite to the extent feasible.

AQ-1 Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-9.02, “Air Pollution Control,” will be included in the construction contract.

2.1.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

An Initial Site Assessment was prepared for this project. The project is not expected to impact or encounter leaking underground storage tanks, naturally occurring asbestos, asbestos-containing material, lead-based paint, treated wood waste, or yellow striping. The Initial Site Assessment identified the potential to encounter non-hazardous concentrations of aurally deposited lead in unpaved areas within the project limits. The construction contract will include standard measures, identified in Section 1.6, to address aurally deposited lead and treated wood waste. Considering the information in the Initial Site Assessment dated September 19, 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	No Impact
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	No Impact
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	No Impact
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	No Impact
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?	No Impact
f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	No Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials
g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?	No Impact

2.1.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

A Water Compliance Memorandum and Preliminary Location Floodplain Study were prepared for this project. The project does not propose in-channel work in waterways, and long-term water quality impacts are not anticipated. The project has the potential for temporary impacts to water quality during construction. Caltrans includes specifications in every construction project to address potential temporary impacts to water during construction. This specification is listed in Section 1.6 as a standard measure that will be included in the project. Considering the information in the Water Compliance Memorandum dated September 8, 2023 and Preliminary Location Floodplain Study dated March 25, 2021, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hydrology and Water Quality
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface water or groundwater quality?	No Impact
b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	No Impact
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would: (i) result in substantial erosion or siltation onsite or offsite;	No Impact
(ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding onsite or offsite;	No Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hydrology and Water Quality
(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	No Impact
(iv) impede or redirect flood flows?	No Impact
d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	No Impact
e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	No Impact

2.1.11 Land Use and Planning

The project will not change the land use within Amador, El Dorado, or Alpine counties. The project will not open new areas to development because all project work will remain within the existing State right-of-way or within an existing easement with the U.S. Forest Service and therefore will not divide any established communities. In a letter to Caltrans Right of Way staff dated April 18, 2022, the U.S. Forest Service Amador District Ranger indicated that the U.S. Forest Service had previously conducted environmental analysis at the area and indicated that there are no known potential adverse effects to resources as a result of this project. The project is consistent with the Amador, El Dorado, and Alpine counties land use policies. Considering the information in the Community Impact Assessment Memorandum dated September 1, 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

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

2.1.12 Mineral Resources

The California Geological Survey’s Mineral Land Classification map was reviewed for the project. The project locations are not indicated as areas with mineral lands classification. In addition, the project scope is within an existing transportation facility under State right of way or easement, not a mineral resource recovery site. Considering the information in the California Geological Survey’s Mineral Land Classification map, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Mineral Resources
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	No Impact
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?	No Impact

2.1.13 Noise

A Noise Compliance Memorandum was prepared for the project. The project will not introduce any potential for long-term traffic noise impacts. Caltrans includes specifications for noise control on every construction project. Such measures are included in Section 1.6 as standard project measures. Considering the information in the Noise Compliance Memorandum dated August 30, 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project result in:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Noise
a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	No Impact
b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	No Impact

Question—Would the project result in:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Noise
c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	No Impact

2.1.14 Population and Housing

Based on the project scope, the proposed project will not change the current land use within the project area, nor would it attract development to the study area. The project will occur within an existing facility and will not increase capacity or increase accessibility through the extension of roads or other infrastructure. The project will not require the relocation of residents or a need for replacement housing elsewhere. Considering the information in the Community Impact Assessment Memorandum dated September 1, 2023, and considering the current project scope, the following significance determinations have been made:

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

2.1.15 Public Services

The project scope will not result in potentially significant environmental impacts to public or emergency services and facilities. Temporary traffic impacts will only occur during construction in the form of one-lane traffic control. Caltrans has an emergency service plan to allow access when emergency service vehicles must pass. It is recognized that the project area is located adjacent to open forest and National Forest areas that can be used for recreation such as camping, hiking, and biking. The contractor will be aware of provisions and specifications that

pertain to pedestrian, bicycle, and first responders. A traffic management plan will be created in the Plans, Specifications, and Estimates phase and implemented in construction. Construction at each location will occur only during weekdays, and night work will be required. Considering the information in the Community Impact Assessment Memorandum dated September 1, 2023, and considering the current project scope, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Public Services
a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services: Fire protection?	No Impact
Police protection?	No Impact
Schools?	No Impact
Parks?	No Impact
Other public facilities?	No Impact

2.1.16 Recreation

The project will not result in any use of existing parks or recreational areas. It is recognized that the project area is located adjacent to open forest and National Forest areas that can be used for recreation such as camping, hiking, and biking; however, the project will not acquire or change land designation used for parks or recreation and therefore will not impact those resources. Considering the information in the Community Impact Assessment Memorandum dated September 1, 2023, and amended Section 4(f) Memorandum dated September 19, 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Recreation
a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	No Impact
b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	No Impact

2.1.17 Transportation

The project will not conflict with existing transportation programs, plans, ordinances, or policies. The project is not considered a project type that will induce vehicle miles traveled and will not alter the geometric design of the roadway or impede emergency access. During construction, a transportation management plan will be used to minimize impacts to the traveling public. Considering the above information, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Transportation
a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	No Impact
b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	No Impact
c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	No Impact
d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	No Impact

2.1.18 Tribal Cultural Resources

Caltrans contacted the Native American Heritage Commission on September 18, 2020, to request a search of the Commission’s Sacred Lands Inventory File and to request a current Native American contact list. The commission reported a negative record search of the Sacred Lands Inventory for the

project area and provided a Tribal contact list. Caltrans sent Assembly Bill 52 Project Notification and Initial Section 106 Outreach letters with project location mappings to Tribes on the commission’s contact list. The United Auburn Indian Community responded on November 30, 2020, requesting to consult on the project. The Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, Calaveras Band of Mi-Wuk Indians, and Jackson Rancheria were contacted to consult on archaeological testing that was conducted at Locations 9 and 13, which are no longer part of the project. For a record of consultation, please refer to the Historic Property Survey Report, available as part of Volume 2 of this document.

Considering the information in the Historic Property Survey Report dated September 2, 2021, and amended on August 30, 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Tribal Cultural Resources
a) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k), or	No Impact
b) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.	No Impact

2.1.19 Utilities and Service Systems

Considering the project scope, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Utilities and Service Systems
a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?	Less Than Significant Impact
b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	No Impact
c) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	No Impact
d) Generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?	No Impact
e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	No Impact

Affected Environment

The six project locations are in a rural, forested area of Amador, El Dorado, and Alpine counties. The project will install and update various transportation management systems and roadside safety improvements. All the project locations are near existing electrical features and utility lines.

Environmental Consequences

The project will require electrical and drainage work. All electrical work for changeable message signs and cabinets, vehicle detection systems, closed-circuit television camera systems, roadway information systems, extinguishable message signs, and streetlights are likely to require roadway and/or shoulder excavation and/or trenching for the placement of hardware and to provide power service. Electrical service points within the existing Caltrans right of way will be used. Closed-circuit television camera systems, highway advisory radios, and roadway weather information systems are typically installed on existing or new structures; vehicle detection system loop detectors will be placed under the

existing roadway. The project will install maintenance vehicle pullouts at some locations, increasing the paved surface area in those locations and requiring an expansion or installation of new stormwater drainage. Also, stormwater drainage damaged by construction activities would be replaced.

Per Caltrans Standard Plans, all electrical conduit runs are installed within 10 feet away from the edge of pavement, including along the edge of pavement or under paved shoulder areas if it is required to avoid sensitive areas.

The standard measures outlined in Section 1.6 of this document will be included in the project.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

With the incorporation of the standard measures outlined in Section 1.6 of this document, the addition of new electric power to the project areas will have a less than significant impact on the environment. Project-specific avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures will not be required.

2.1.20 Wildfire

Current mapping by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection shows the project limits are in a moderate fire hazard severity zone, with some portions in or near high and very high fire hazard severity zones. Due to more recent wildfire risk near the project area, Caltrans maintenance has requested the use of steel posts in guardrail installations that are situated in areas prone to fire, and metal guardrails will be placed near the base of the changeable message signs. Also, maintenance is following fire protocols to include defensible space around transportation management system elements and keeping vegetation mowed within the Caltrans right of way. The project will not impair an emergency response plan; not have the potential to exacerbate wildfire risk; not install infrastructure that could exacerbate wildfire risk; nor expose people or structures to wildfire risk. Caltrans 2022 revised Standard Specification 7-1.02M (2) mandates fire prevention procedures, including a fire prevention plan, to avoid accidental fire starts during construction. The project will not be exposed to greater wildfire risk than the area is under current conditions. Considering the information in the Amended Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Analysis Memorandum dated August 29, 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Wildfire
a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	No Impact
b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?	No Impact
c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?	No Impact
d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?	No Impact

2.1.21 Mandatory Findings of Significance

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Mandatory Findings of Significance
a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	Less Than Significant – considering the information available in the Natural Environment Study and in Section 2.1.4 of this document, the project does not have this potential.

<p style="text-align: center;">Question:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CEQA Significance Determinations for Mandatory Findings of Significance</p>
<p>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.)</p>	<p>No Impact – considering the information available in the Cumulative Impact Assessment Memorandum, dated September 29, 2023, the project will not have cumulatively considerable impacts.</p>
<p>c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?</p>	<p>Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated – considering the information contained in this document and the mitigation measures proposed in Section 2.1.1, the project will not have substantial adverse direct or indirect effects on humans.</p>

Appendix A Title VI Policy Statement

CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

GAVIN NEWSOM, GOVERNOR

California Department of Transportation

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
P.O. BOX 942873, MS-49 | SACRAMENTO, CA 94273-0001
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September 2022

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT

The California Department of Transportation, under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, ensures *“No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”*

Caltrans will make every effort to ensure nondiscrimination in all of its services, programs and activities, whether they are federally funded or not, and that services and benefits are fairly distributed to all people, regardless of race, color, or national origin. In addition, Caltrans will facilitate meaningful participation in the transportation planning process in a non-discriminatory manner.

Related federal statutes, remedies, and state law further those protections to include sex, disability, religion, sexual orientation, and age.

For information or guidance on how to file a complaint, or obtain more information regarding Title VI, please contact the Title VI Branch Manager at (916) 639-6392 or visit the following web page: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/civil-rights/title-vi>.

To obtain this information in an alternate format such as Braille or in a language other than English, please contact the California Department of Transportation, Office of Civil Rights, at PO Box 942874, MS-79, Sacramento, CA 94274-0001; (916) 879-6768 (TTY 711); or at Title.VI@dot.ca.gov.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Tavares'.

TONY TAVARES
Director

“Provide a safe and reliable transportation network that serves all people and respects the environment”

Appendix B Comments and Responses

This appendix has been added since the circulation of the draft environmental document.

This appendix contains the comments received during the public circulation and comment period from October 27, 2023, to December 1, 2023. The comment letters are retyped for readability, verbatim as submitted with acronyms, abbreviations, and any original grammatical or typographical errors included. A Caltrans response follows each comment. Copies of the original comment letters and documents can be found in Volume 4 of this document.

Comments received during the public circulation and comment period for the February 2022 Initial Study with Proposed Negative Declaration, circulated from February 25, 2022, to May 2, 2022, are not addressed in this appendix and are available in Volume 3 of this document.

Note: The page numbers mentioned in the comments below refer to the draft environmental document. Text may have shifted from those pages in the revised final environmental document.

Comment from Angela Franklin, via WiX Comment Box

From: Angela Franklin
Date: October 27, 2023

I still feel like the signs are an excessive waste of money. The money should be spent on ensuring proper cellular coverage is available in the area. people rely on their phones for weather and routing. By the time they see these signs it is too late and most people will ignore them. The current signs are sufficient.

Response to Angela Franklin

Thank you for your interest in the project and for taking time to provide your comments. We truly appreciate all the engagement. Your comment and the Caltrans response will become part of the final environmental document.

The project proposes to install four changeable message signs. Three of these installations would be replacements of existing changeable message signs, to replace outdated and less efficient signs. Only one new sign would be installed. In addition to changeable message signs, the project would install other transportation management system elements, as well as maintenance vehicle pullouts and guardrail. For a list of proposed elements at each location, please refer to Section 1.4 of the final environmental document.

Comment from Steven Katzman, via email

From: Steven Katzman
Date: November 6, 2023
To: Jonathan Coley

Subject: Electronic signs on Hwy 88 and 89

Mr Jonathan coley, and to whom it may concern, Caltrans et al,

I disagree with the findings of your study as set forth in the proposed mitigated negative declaration. These electronic signs in one of the most pristine areas of California are totally uncalled for and will be a huge disturbance to the quality of this area.

I further state that the notice of intent to adopt a proposed mitigated negative declaration and announcement is bureaucratic double talk. The document quote the California Department of Transportation proposes to install transportation management system elements and roadside safety improvements at six locations in Amador El Dorado and Alpine counties along State routes 88 and 89.

Transportation management system elements and roadside safety improvements? Caltrans should just say that they are huge electronic sign boards.

Sincerely,

Steven Katzman

Response to Steven Katzman

Thank you for your interest in the project and for taking time to provide your comments. We truly appreciate all the engagement. Your comment and the Caltrans response will become part of the final environmental document.

The project proposes to install four changeable message signs. Three of these installations would be replacements of existing changeable message signs. Only one new sign would be installed. In addition to changeable message signs, the project would install other transportation management system elements, as well as maintenance vehicle pullouts and guardrail. For a list of proposed elements at each location, please refer to Section 1.4 of the final environmental document.

Comment from Carol Hannagan, via email

From: Carol Hannagan
Date: November 8, 2023
To: Jonathan Coley

Jonathan Coley,

As the vice President of the Chamber of Commerce of alpine county, I strongly oppose the signage proposal for #4,#6, #10, #12, and #13! This is NOT NEEDED and is extremely expensive. There are signs on Highway 88 in Carson Valley with road information along with signs at Highway 50 turnaround. Highway 88/89 Woodfords has signs up with road closures along with 395/89. There is NO NEEDED for these ugly signs to be on a designated beautiful highway.

With people having CPS and support from WAVE/MAPS there is NO NEED for these signs. Do not make our highways so ugly. We enjoy the beauty of these roads and want to keep them natural.

Thank you,

Carol Hannagan

Response to Carol Hannagan

Thank you for your interest in the project and for taking time to provide your comments. We truly appreciate the engagement. Your comment and the Caltrans response will become part of the final environmental document.

As indicated by Caltrans' email response on November 8, 2023, seven locations, including Locations 4, 6, 10, 12, and 13, were not included in the October 2023 draft environmental document, as they have been removed from the project. Chapter 1 of the final environmental document includes the project description with the remaining locations; Appendix C of the final environmental document explains the project history and provides the dates when the seven locations were removed.

Comment from David Griffith, via email and letter

County of Alpine
District 5 Supervisor David Griffith
305 Carson View
Markleeville, CA 96120
dGriffith.9@gmail.com
tel.: 530-694-2168

9 November 2023
Caltrans
Attention: Jonathan Coley
1976 East Doctor Martin Luther King Junior Boulevard
Stockton, California 95295
Via e-mail: Jonathan.coley@dot.ca.gov

Re: Carson Transportation Management Systems Project Proposed Mitigated
Negative Declaration

Dear Jonathan,

I am writing this to you as an individual Supervisor as there isn't an Alpine
County Board meeting scheduled prior to the comment deadline of December
1st.

This is to thank all those at Caltrans for taking the public concern about the
intital proposal into account in the redesign of the project. The redesigned
project satisfies our most important concerns, and I thank you for that.

I would still like to see the changeable message sign at Location 11 (CA/NV
state line on Hwy. 88) removed or replaced with something smaller such as
your roadside extinguishable message signs. As the local Caltrans crews
demonstrated last winter when Woodfords Canyon was closed, so few
motorists paid attention to the changeable message sign that they had to
station a checkpoint by the sign to stop vehicles that were determined to try
anyway. At another time it was Alpine County deputies that manned a
checkpoint.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

David Griffith
Alpine County Supervisor
cc Alpine County Board of Supervisors
Alpine County CAO Nichole Williamson

Response to David Griffith

County Supervisor Griffith, thank you for your interest in the project and for
taking time to provide your comments. We truly appreciate the engagement.
Your comment and the Caltrans response will become part of the final
environmental document.

There is an existing, standard-size changeable message sign at Location 11.
The project would replace this sign with a newer, more efficient standard-size

changeable message sign. Standard-size changeable message signs display 19-inch-tall characters. Any smaller signs would display smaller characters and would decrease the number of characters that can be displayed on the sign, which limits the messages that can be displayed. Caltrans' Intelligent Transportation Systems Operations Branch recommends replacing the existing sign with a standard-size changeable message sign, to maintain readability at this location.

Comment from James Adams, via WiX Comment Box

From: James Adams
Date: November 14, 2023

As the Maintenance Supervisor at the Caltrans Maintenance Station I feel this project will enhance public safety in these remote areas. Maintenance fully supports this project.

Response to James Adams

Thank you for your sharing your perspective as a Caltrans Maintenance Supervisor in this area. We appreciate the work you do to maintain the highways in the area and your experience regarding the project elements. Your comment and the Caltrans response will become part of the final environmental document.

Comment from Amy Skewes-Cox, via email

From: Amy Skewes-Cox
Date: November 20, 2023
To: Jonathan Coley

Dear Jonathan: Please consider this email my set of comments on the CEQA work done for the Carson Traffic Management Systems.

I want to begin by thanking Caltrans for removing the major signs in/near Markleeville and Hope Valley that we strongly opposed when first presented with this project of multiple traffic signs in Alpine County. It was good to realize that Caltrans listened to our concerns and took favorable action. This area is extremely important to many of us who live here and drive Highways 88/89 on a regular basis. This County's Scenic Highways are unique in the State and are important for the tourism industry that is vital to the County's well being.

The following comments are concerns that I would like to have on record. I've professionally prepared CEQA documents throughout Northern California for over 40 years, with an emphasis on land use and visual quality. Here are my comments: .

1. The visual analysis spent way too many pages on overall, general photos of the highway route as if it were a tourist piece. It exemplified a lot of wasted time on the part of the preparers. There should have been specific photos of the specific locations where new signs/systems were proposed. Then, these should have been the basis of the “before” and “after” simulations. It was not clear that the visual simulations used a 55 MM lens which represents how the human eye sees. A wide angle lens can be deceptive.

The visual analysis also focused on potential impacts to trees or rock outcroppings (using terms from CEQA criteria) when discussing impacts to scenic corridors. That is NOT the point in this case. When one puts up a huge metallic sign with bright letters along a designated Scenic Highway, it's the change for the visual experience that should be addressed. You are introducing a glaring manmade object in an area that is natural, forested terrain. It detracts from the views and this was never fully discussed.

2. The amount of money spent on CEQA work (over \$2 Million if I read this correctly) is staggering. The environmental work for this project should have easily been less than \$300,000. It is just mind boggling how much money can be inefficiently spent and unnecessarily. This brings me to my question of why over 10 Caltrans employees were needed on the call of November 14. Given that the call was 5:30 to 7 PM, I assume everyone had to be paid overtime. I've often participated in these types of meetings, and only 2-3 at most from the lead agency are needed.
3. Is Caltrans attempting to look at new technologies that will replace these huge signs along Scenic Highways? With better internet connectivity, drivers can be informed by text messages and online if roads are blocked or storm warnings are needed. I imagine that in 5 years, these signs will be obsolete and who will remove them? It is critical to be forward thinking. Caltrans has a responsibility for keeping highways safe, bridges safe (and you've done a great job on the Markleeville bridge). We don't need warnings such as “Move Over for Workers” etc. glaring at us as we drive down a Scenic Highway. And now with LED bulbs, these letters are even more glaring. I sincerely hope that Caltrans will focus on new technologies for warning systems that don't require these enormous signs throughout our highway system.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. As this is an Initial Study (vs. EIR), I realize you are not required to respond to comments but I appreciate Caltrans providing the opportunity for public input.

Sincerely,

Amy Skewes-Cox

Response to Amy Skewes-Cox

Thank you for your interest in the project and for taking time to provide your comments. We truly appreciate the engagement. Your comment and the Caltrans response will become part of the final environmental document.

Response to comment number 1:

Caltrans Visual Impact Analyses are prepared following the Federal Highway Administration Visual Analysis format. This format requires the preparers to define how the study is prepared and to describe the setting of the project, and does result in an expansive document, particularly since this Visual Impact Analysis covers eight locations across three counties (two of which were removed from the project scope following completion of the Visual Impact Analysis). The preparers are required to approach the area from varying perspectives, including regionally and at the foreground, from the local perspective, and from the travelling public.

The Visual Impact Analysis includes analysis and photos of the specific project locations in Section VIII, Visual Impact. The viewshed for the project was determined by in-field observation, in consideration with line-of-sight views to and from the proposed project locations. The visual observations were gathered and assessed using the defined Federal Highway Administration foreground (zero to ¼ mile), middle ground (¼ mile to 3 miles), and background (greater than 3 miles) viewing distances.

Response to comment number 2:

Work directly related to the preparation of environmental documents, including technical studies, NEPA and CEQA documentation, and virtual public meetings is estimated to have cost \$706,384. This includes both the original project documentation, circulation, and public meeting as well as project documentation, circulation, and public meeting for the revised project scope. Additional costs in the Project Approval and Environmental Document phase would be for Design and other units, such as Traffic Operations or Electrical Design.

Caltrans made a strategic decision, based on the previous virtual public meeting for this project, to provide a comprehensive representation of expertise to address potential questions and concerns.

Response to comment number 3:

Innovation is one of Caltrans' core values. We are continuously researching new technology, including Connected and Automated Vehicles. Caltrans Traffic Operations in Headquarters is in the process of developing a plan that will provide guidance to the districts for future implementation of this technology.

Comment from Brian Cocagne, via WiX Comment Box

From: Brian Cocagne

Date: November 21, 2023

From the California Highway Patrol's perspective, the signs will enable timely notifications of highway conditions and emergency alerts. Cell phone service in the area of the signs is limited and does not let travelers get up to date information and utilizing a cell phone while driving is inherently dangerous. Allowing for the timely notification of traffic conditions will not only assist emergency crews and Caltrans personnel but, could help reduce serious injury or fatal crashes.

Response to Brian Cocagne

Lieutenant Cocagne, thank you for your interest in the project and for taking time to provide your comments. We truly appreciate the engagement. Your comment and the Caltrans response will become part of the final environmental document.

Comment from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, via email

From: Mary Xiong, California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Date: November 30, 2023

To: Jonathan Coley

Dear Mr. Coley:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) received a Notice of Intent to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for the 10-1G020 Carson Transportation management system Project (Project) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) statute and guidelines.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations regarding those activities involved in the Project that may affect California fish, wildlife, native plants, and their habitat. Likewise, we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments regarding those aspects of the project that CDFW, by law, may need to exercise its own regulatory authority under the Fish and Game Code.

CDFW ROLE

CDFW is California's Trustee Agency for fish and wildlife resources and holds those resources in trust by statute for all the people of the State (Fish & G. Code, §§ 711.7, subd. (a) & 1802; Pub. Resources Code, § 21070; CEQA Guidelines § 15386, sub. (a)). CDFW, in its trustee capacity, has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species. (Id., § 1802.) Similarly, for purposes of CEQA, CDFW is charged by law to provide, as available, biological expertise during public agency environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

The proposed Project consists of installing transportation management system elements and roadside safety improvements at six locations in Amador, El Dorado, and Alpine counties along State Routes 88 and 89. The proposed transportation management system elements and roadside safety improvements include: changeable message sign, streetlight, vehicle detection system, closed-circuit television camera system, roadway weather information system, highway advisory radios, extinguishable message sign, maintenance vehicle pullout, and Midwest guardrail system. Proposed project activities include nightwork, work off the pavement, excavating, grading, trenching, and vegetation and tree removal.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CDFW offers the comments and recommendations below to assist Caltrans in adequately identifying and, where appropriate, mitigating the Project's significant, or potentially significant, direct, and indirect impacts on fish and wildlife (biological) resources.

Comment 1: Chapter 1.3 Project Description, Page 3 and *Chapter 2.1.4 Biological Resources, Environmental Consequences, Common Fish and Wildlife, Page 28 and Bat Habitat Assessment* – The MND states that the project would avoid natural vegetation communities and habitats supporting wildlife species, although several project locations are next to forests, pastures, and riparian areas known to be potential habitat for sensitive migratory bird species. The project description also includes vegetation and tree removal as an activity, but it is not clear on where and to what extent the activity will occur.

CDFW recommends, in addition to nesting bird avoidance measures BIO 6 and 8, Caltrans perform a bat habitat assessment (or disclose the results, if already performed) in the Project area to help evaluate potentially significant impacts to bat species. Bats are considered non-game mammals and are

protected by state law from take and/or harassment (Fish and Game Code § 4150, CCR § 251.1). Several bat species are also considered species of special concern, which meet the CEQA definition of rare, threatened, or endangered species (CEQA Guidelines §15065). The habitat assessment should include vegetation proposed for removal (crevices, hollows, exfoliated bark, and foliage). If the assessment determines there to be suitable habitat, CDFW recommends Caltrans consult with a qualified bat biologist to develop a bat avoidance plan. If avoidance is not possible, other minimization measures may be warranted that include passive exclusion, vegetation removal outside of maternity or hibernation roosting seasons (between March 1 and April 15 and September 1 and October 15, respectively), and phased tree removal methods. CDFW recommends the assessment be performed well in advance of the project so that avoidance or exclusion could be appropriately timed in coordination with scheduled construction, if necessary. CDFW recommends the following language be incorporated into the MND to help reduce impacts to bats to a less than significant level: "Replacement Structures. If bat roosts cannot be avoided, replacement roost structures shall be designed to accommodate the bat species they are intended for. Replacement roost structures shall be designed and installed in close coordination with a qualified bat biologist. The size of suitable roosting habitat to be removed shall be quantified by the bat biologist and a minimum of twice the roosting habitat shall be installed in close proximity to the removed roost habitat. Replacement roost habitat shall be monitored by a qualified bat biologist for a minimum of two years to document bat use and monitoring reports shall be submitted to CDFW.

Comment 2: Chapter 2.1.4 Biological Resources Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures, Page 28 – As stated in BIO-6, preconstruction surveys for multiple special-status species are proposed. Species-specific surveys should be conducted to ascertain the presence of species with the potential to be directly, indirectly, on or within a reasonable distance of the project activities. The MND should specify the proposed protocol surveys and guidelines for special-status species that have the potential to occur within the project area. CDFW recommends Caltrans rely on survey and monitoring protocols and guidelines available at: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Survey-Protocols>.

Comment 3: Chapter 2.1.4 Biological Resources, Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures, BIO-4 Weed Control, Page 26 – CDFW recommends the measure require only a native seed mix of known genetic origin whose original stock seed was collected from within the Sierra Nevada and grown in California unless otherwise approved by the Caltrans in coordination with CDFW. Genetically appropriate plants, adapted to local conditions, usually result in higher survival rates (CDFW, 2010). Revegetation should be completed in the fall before the start of the rainy season. CDFW recommends that seed origin requirements are incorporated into the Project's

construction plans and specifications for both the project site itself as well as any habitat restoration, enhancement, or mitigation.

ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

CEQA requires that information developed in environmental impact reports and negative declarations be incorporated into a database which may be used to make subsequent or supplemental environmental determinations (Pub. Resources Code, § 21003, subd. (e)). Accordingly, please report any special-status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to the CNDDDB. The CNDDDB field survey form can be found at the following link: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Submitting-Data>. The completed form can be submitted online or mailed electronically to CNDDDB at the following email address: CNDDDB@wildlife.ca.gov.

FILING FEES

The Project, as proposed, would have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of filing fees is necessary. Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW. Payment of the fee is required in order for the underlying project approval to be operative, vested, and final. (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 14, § 753.5; Fish & G. Code, § 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, § 21089.)

CONCLUSION

Pursuant to Public Resources Code §21092 and §21092.2, CDFW requests written notification of proposed actions and pending decisions regarding the proposed project. Written notifications shall be directed to: California Department of Fish and Wildlife North Central Region, 1701 Nimbus Road, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670 or emailed to r2CEQA@wildlife.ca.gov.

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the MND to assist in identifying and mitigating Project impacts on biological resources. CDFW personnel are available for consultation regarding biological resources and strategies to minimize and/or mitigate impacts. Questions regarding this letter or further coordination should be directed to Mary Xiong, Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist), at (916) 212-3876 or mary.xiong@wildlife.ca.gov.

Thank you,

Mary Xiong
Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist)
North Central Region (Region 2)
1701 Nimbus Rd., Suite A

Rancho Cordova, CA 95670
P: 916-212-3876
mary.xiong@wildlife.ca.gov

Response to California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Thank you for your interest in the project and for taking time to provide your comments.

Response to Comment 1:

Caltrans biologists examined all project locations for their potential to support tree-roosting bats and determined that mature trees with features such as crevices, hollows, exfoliated bark, and dense foliage will not be affected by proposed project activities. In the few areas where near-roadway trenching is expecting to conflict with woody vegetation, impacts will be limited to shrubs and immature trees of less than 4 inches in diameter.

Response to Comment 2:

The Caltrans Natural Environment Study was updated in August 2023. The update identified that the Environmental Study Limits are within the range of a number of special-status species and that potential habitat for a number of special-status species is present within or directly adjacent to the project Environmental Study Limits. This update is reflected in the environmental document.

Caltrans will review the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's survey protocols for special-status species that have the potential to occur within the project area. Caltrans Standard Special Provisions, identified in Appendix D, will be used to specify requirements for preconstruction surveys for special-status species that have the potential to occur within the project area for the purposes of ensuring that proposed project activities do not result in the "take," as defined by California Fish and Game Code Section 86, of these species. Detection of a regulated species during these preconstruction surveys would result in a protective radius and work stoppage until such time as it can be determined that the project activity would no longer result in take of the species.

Response to Comment 3:

Caltrans will develop its revegetation seed mix for the proposed project during the Plans, Specifications, and Estimates phase of project development.

Response to Comment 4, Environmental Data:

Biological surveys conducted for the project did not detect any sensitive or regulated biological resources appropriate for reporting to the California Natural Diversity Database. Aquatic features in the vicinity of the specific locations already appear in databases, including the National Wetland Inventory and National Hydrologic Data.

Response to Comment 5, Filing Fees:

The filing fees for the project will be paid to the State Clearinghouse prior to submittal of the Notice of Determination.

Comment from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, via email

From: Peter Minkel, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

Date: December 1, 2023

To: Jonathan Coley

COMMENTS TO REQUEST FOR REVIEW FOR THE MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION, CARSON TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS, SCH#2022020581, ALPINE, AMADOR, AND EL DORADO COUNTIES

Pursuant to the State Clearinghouse's 25 October 2023 request, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Valley Water Board) has reviewed the Request for Review for the Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Carson Transportation Management Systems, located in Alpine, Amador, and El Dorado Counties.

Our agency is delegated with the responsibility of protecting the quality of surface and groundwaters of the state; therefore our comments will address concerns surrounding those issues.

I. Regulatory Setting

Basin Plan

The Central Valley Water Board is required to formulate and adopt Basin Plans for all areas within the Central Valley region under Section 13240 of the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act. Each Basin Plan must contain water quality objectives to ensure the reasonable protection of beneficial uses, as well as a program of implementation for achieving water quality objectives with the Basin Plans. Federal regulations require each state to adopt water quality standards to protect the public health or welfare, enhance the quality of water and serve the purposes of the Clean Water Act. In

California, the beneficial uses, water quality objectives, and the Antidegradation Policy are the State's water quality standards. Water quality standards are also contained in the National Toxics Rule, 40 CFR Section 131.36, and the California Toxics Rule, 40 CFR Section 131.38.

The Basin Plan is subject to modification as necessary, considering applicable laws, policies, technologies, water quality conditions and priorities. The original Basin Plans were adopted in 1975, and have been updated and revised periodically as required, using Basin Plan amendments. Once the Central Valley Water Board has adopted a Basin Plan amendment in noticed public hearings, it must be approved by the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board), Office of Administrative Law (OAL) and in some cases, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). Basin Plan amendments only become effective after they have been approved by the OAL and in some cases, the USEPA. Every three

(3) years, a review of the Basin Plan is completed that assesses the appropriateness of existing standards and evaluates and prioritizes Basin Planning issues. For more information on the

Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basins, please visit our website:
http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/basin_plans/

Antidegradation Considerations

All wastewater discharges must comply with the Antidegradation Policy (State Water Board Resolution 68-16) and the Antidegradation Implementation Policy contained in the Basin Plan. The Antidegradation Implementation Policy is available on page 74 at:
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/basin_plans/sacsjr_2018_05.pdf

In part it states:

Any discharge of waste to high quality waters must apply best practicable treatment or control not only to prevent a condition of pollution or nuisance from occurring, but also to maintain the highest water quality possible consistent with the maximum benefit to the people of the State.

This information must be presented as an analysis of the impacts and potential impacts of the discharge on water quality, as measured by background concentrations and applicable water quality objectives.

The antidegradation analysis is a mandatory element in the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System and land discharge Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) permitting processes. The environmental review

document should evaluate potential impacts to both surface and groundwater quality.

II. Permitting Requirements

Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit

If the project will involve the discharge of dredged or fill material in navigable waters or wetlands, a permit pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act may be needed from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). If a Section 404 permit is required by the USACE, the Central Valley Water Board will review the permit application to ensure that discharge will not violate water quality standards. If the project requires surface water drainage realignment, the applicant is advised to contact the Department of Fish and Game for information on Streambed Alteration Permit requirements. If you have any questions regarding the Clean Water Act Section 404 permits, please contact the Regulatory Division of the Sacramento District of USACE at (916) 557-5250.

Clean Water Act Section 401 Permit – Water Quality Certification

If an USACE permit (e.g., Non-Reporting Nationwide Permit, Nationwide Permit, Letter of Permission, Individual Permit, Regional General Permit, Programmatic General Permit), or any other federal permit (e.g., Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act or Section 9 from the United States Coast Guard), is required for this project due to the disturbance of waters of the United States (such as streams and wetlands), then a Water Quality Certification must be obtained from the Central Valley Water Board prior to initiation of project activities. There are no waivers for 401 Water Quality Certifications. For more information on the Water Quality Certification, visit the Central Valley Water Board website at:
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/water_quality_certification/

Waste Discharge Requirements – Discharges to Waters of the State

If USACE determines that only non-jurisdictional waters of the State (i.e., “non-federal” waters of the State) are present in the proposed project area, the proposed project may require a Waste Discharge Requirement (WDR) permit to be issued by Central Valley Water Board. Under the California Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, discharges to all waters of the State, including all wetlands and other waters of the State including, but not limited to, isolated wetlands, are subject to State regulation. For more information on the Waste Discharges to Surface Water NPDES Program and WDR processes, visit the Central Valley Water Board website at:
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/waste_to_surface_water/

Projects involving excavation or fill activities impacting less than 0.2 acre or 400 linear feet of non-jurisdictional waters of the state and projects involving dredging activities impacting less than 50 cubic yards of non-jurisdictional waters of the state may be eligible for coverage under the State Water Resources Control Board Water Quality Order No. 2004-0004-DWQ (General Order 2004-0004). For more information on the General Order 2004-0004, visit the State Water Resources Control Board website at: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/board_decisions/adopted_orders/water_quality/2004/wqo/wqo2004-0004.pdf

Dewatering Permit

If the proposed project includes construction or groundwater dewatering to be discharged to land, the proponent may apply for coverage under State Water Board General Water Quality Order (Low Threat General Order) 2003-0003 or the Central Valley Water Board's Waiver of Report of Waste Discharge and Waste Discharge Requirements (Low Threat Waiver) R5-2018-0085. Small temporary construction dewatering projects are projects that discharge groundwater to land from excavation activities or dewatering of underground utility vaults. Dischargers seeking coverage under the General Order or Waiver must file a Notice of Intent with the Central Valley Water Board prior to beginning discharge.

For more information regarding the Low Threat General Order and the application process, visit the Central Valley Water Board website at: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/board_decisions/adopted_orders/water_quality/2003/wqo/wqo2003-0003.pdf

For more information regarding the Low Threat Waiver and the application process, visit the Central Valley Water Board website at: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/board_decisions/adopted_orders/waivers/r5-2018-0085.pdf

Limited Threat General NPDES Permit

If the proposed project includes construction dewatering and it is necessary to discharge the groundwater to waters of the United States, the proposed project will require coverage under a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. Dewatering discharges are typically considered a low or limited threat to water quality and may be covered under the General Order for Limited Threat Discharges to Surface Water (Limited Threat General Order). A complete

Notice of Intent must be submitted to the Central Valley Water Board to obtain coverage under the Limited Threat General Order. For more information regarding the Limited Threat General Order and the application process, visit the Central Valley Water Board website at:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/board_decisions/adopted_orders/general_orders/r5-2016-0076-01.pdf

NPDES Permit

If the proposed project discharges waste that could affect the quality of surface waters of the State, other than into a community sewer system, the proposed project will require coverage under a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. A complete Report of Waste Discharge must be submitted with the Central Valley Water Board to obtain a NPDES Permit. For more information regarding the NPDES Permit and the application process, visit the Central Valley Water Board website at: <https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/help/permit/>

If you have questions regarding these comments, please contact me at (916) 464-4684 or Peter.Minkel2@waterboards.ca.gov.

Peter Minkel Engineering Geologist

cc: State Clearinghouse unit, Governor's Office of Planning and Research, Sacramento

Response to Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

Thank you for your interest in the project and for taking time to provide your comments.

Response to Comment 1, Basin Plan:

As described in the Water Quality Memorandum prepared on September 8, 2023, the project applicant would prepare and implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan, as required by the State Water Resources Control Board's Construction General Permit. Therefore, the construction and operation of the project would protect beneficial uses designated in the Central Valley Basin Plan.

Response to Comment 2, Antidegradation Considerations:

Project-related impacts on water quality were evaluated in the Water Quality Memorandum dated September 8, 2023. As discussed in this technical study, implementation of the required Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan during construction would prevent the project from contributing to water quality degradation of downstream surface water and groundwater-receiving water bodies.

Response to Comment 3, Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit:

The project does not anticipate discharge of dredged or fill material into navigable waters or wetlands. No work is anticipated in or near navigable water or wetlands, and therefore a Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit is not required.

Response to Comment 4, Clean Water Act Section 401 Permit – Water Quality Certification:

Permits are not required for this project. The project does not anticipate disturbing waters of the United States; therefore, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit, or any other federal permit, is not required.

Response to Comment 5, Waste Discharge Requirements – Discharges to Waters of the State:

Permits are not required for this project. The project does not anticipate disturbing “non-federal” waters of the State; therefore, no permits are required to be issued by the Central Valley Water Board.

Response to Comment 6, Dewatering Permit:

Although dewatering is not expected in the project scope of work, if project work should include construction or groundwater dewatering to be discharged to land, it is Caltrans’ policy to obtain all necessary permits from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board. If this were to occur, it may require a permit for construction dewatering under the Limited Threat General Order.

Response to Comment 7, Limited Threat General NPDES Permit:

As stated in response to comment 6, no dewatering is expected for this project. If dewatering were to occur, it is Caltrans’ policy to obtain all necessary permits from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Response to Comment 8, NPDES Permit:

As stated in response to comment 6, no discharge is expected for this project. If any discharge were to occur, it is Caltrans’ policy to obtain all necessary permits from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Appendix C Project History

An Initial Study with Proposed Negative Declaration was previously circulated for this project from February 25, 2022, to March 28, 2022. At that time, the project proposed to install various transportation management system elements at 13 locations in Amador, El Dorado, and Alpine counties along State Routes 88, 89, and 4. During the circulation period, Caltrans received requests for a public information meeting from members of the public. The circulation period was then extended to May 2, 2022, and a virtual (online) public meeting was held on April 21, 2022. In addition, the Caltrans project development team presented the project at the Alpine County Board of Supervisors meeting on April 19, 2022. Comments received during the circulation period and at the public meeting indicated public opposition to proposed work at several project locations due to potential environmental impacts. Table B-1 shows the project locations and work activities at each location that were proposed in 2022.

Table B-1 Proposed Project Locations in 2022

Location	County	State Route	Post Mile	Proposed Work
1	Amador	88	R38.24	One vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, and one maintenance vehicle pullout.
2	Amador	88	53.99	One streetlight
3	Amador	88	54.11	One changeable message sign, one vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, one roadway weather information system, one highway advisory radio, two extinguishable message signs, and one maintenance vehicle pullout.
4	Amador	88	R65.95	One changeable message sign, one vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, one roadway weather information system, one highway advisory radio, two extinguishable message signs, one maintenance vehicle pullout, and one streetlight.
5	Amador	88	71.27	One changeable message sign, one vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, one roadway weather information system, one highway advisory radio, two extinguishable message signs, and one maintenance vehicle pullout.
6	Alpine	88	2.00	One roadway weather information system
7	Alpine	88	2.30	One vehicle detection system

Location	County	State Route	Post Mile	Proposed Work
8	El Dorado	89	8.39	One vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, one highway advisory radio, one extinguishable message sign, and one maintenance vehicle pullout.
9	Alpine	88	13.34	One changeable message sign, one vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, one roadway weather information system, one highway advisory radio, two extinguishable message signs, and one maintenance vehicle pullout.
10	Alpine	88	18.86	One changeable message sign, one vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, one roadway weather information system, one highway advisory radio, two extinguishable message signs, and one maintenance vehicle pullout.
11	Alpine	88	24.94	One closed-circuit television camera system, one highway advisory radio, and two extinguishable message signs.
12	Alpine	89	14.59	One changeable message sign, one vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, one roadway weather information system, one highway advisory radio, and two extinguishable message signs.
13	Alpine	4	R0.84	One changeable message sign, one vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, one roadway weather information system, one highway advisory radio, two extinguishable message signs, and one maintenance vehicle pullout.

Following the public comment period, Caltrans reviewed the project scope and removed Locations 4, 5, 6, 9, and 12 from the project. Caltrans sent postcards to residents of Amador, El Dorado, and Alpine counties near the project locations on July 7, 2023, to inform them of the removed project locations. An electronic survey was listed on the postcard to gather feedback from county residents on the location updates. A detailed summary of this effort is included in the Community Impact Analysis Memo, available upon request as part of Volume 2 of this document.

On August 29, 2023, the project development team agreed to remove Locations 10 and 13 from the project scope due to public opposition to the project locations and potentially significant impacts to the locations' visual resources. As a result, the project will move forward only with the proposed elements at Locations 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, and 11. As a result of these changes, the project no longer proposes work on State Route 4. Table B-2 describes the proposed project work that remains in 2023.

Table B-2 Proposed Project Locations and Work in 2023

Location	County	State Route	Post Mile	Proposed Work
1	Amador	88	R38.24	One vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, and one maintenance vehicle pullout.
2	Amador	88	53.99	One streetlight.
3	Amador	88	54.11	One changeable message sign, one vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, one roadway weather information system, one highway advisory radio, two extinguishable message signs, and one maintenance vehicle pullout.
7	Alpine	88	2.30	One vehicle detection system.
8	El Dorado	89	8.39	One vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, one highway advisory radio, one extinguishable message sign, and one maintenance vehicle pullout.
11	Alpine	88	24.94	One closed-circuit television camera system, one highway advisory radio, and two extinguishable message signs.

Because the project removed seven proposed locations from the scope of work, and due to a change in anticipated project impacts, a revised and updated Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration (this document) was prepared and was circulated to the public for review and comment. The Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration was circulated from October 27, 2023 to December 1, 2023, and a virtual public open house was held on November 14, 2023.

Appendix D Project Measures

This appendix holds the standard measures, avoidance and minimization measures, and mitigation measures referenced throughout the document. Examples of the proposed aesthetic treatments are included.

Standard Measures

AQ-1 Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-9.02, "Air Pollution Control," will be included in the construction contract.

AQ-2 Caltrans Standard Specification 10-5, "Dust Control," will be included in the construction contract.

BIO-1 Caltrans Standard Specifications or Special Provisions Section 14-1.02, "Environmentally Sensitive Area," will be included in the construction contract.

BIO-2 Designated Biologist: A designated biologist will be retained to monitor construction activities and regulated species and habitats; if a contractor-supplied biologist is used, Standard Special Provision 14-6.03D will be included in the construction contract.

BIO-3 Caltrans Special Specifications Section 13-4.03E(3), "Vehicle and Equipment Cleaning," and Caltrans Construction Site Best Management Practices Manual Section NS-08, "Vehicle and Equipment Cleaning," will be included in the construction contract to maintain weed-free construction equipment and vehicles.

BIO-4 Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 20-1.03C(3), "Weed Control," will be included in the construction contract.

BIO-5 Caltrans Standard Specification 21-2.02, "Erosion Control – Materials," will be included in the construction contract. This section specifies what materials can be used for erosion control and revegetation treatments.

BIO-6 Caltrans Standard Special Provision 14-6.03A, "Species Protection," will be included in the construction contract. This section specifies the conduct of pre-construction surveys and protective buffers for special-status species.

BIO-7 Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 86-1.02M, "Photoelectric Controls" will be included in the construction contract.

BIO-8 Caltrans Standard Provisions Section 14-6.03B, "Bird Protection," will be included in the construction contract. This provision requires a focused survey for active nests of protected raptors and migratory birds if construction activities are scheduled during the nesting period, between February 1 and September 30. If active nests are found, a protective buffer and consultation

will be established per the specification. A qualified biologist will be required to ensure buffers are maintained.

- Performing ground disturbance, vegetation removal, or other construction activities within nesting bird habitat during the non-nesting season, between October 1 and January 31, will not require pre-construction surveys or nesting bird avoidance measures.

CUL-1 Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-2.03A, "Archaeological Resources," will be included in the construction contract.

GHG-1 Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 7-1.02A, "Legal Relations and Responsibility to the Public – General," will be added to the construction contract.

GHG-2 Caltrans Standard Specifications 7-1.02C, "Emissions Reduction," will be added to the construction contract.

GHG-3 The contract will include measures to reduce construction waste and maximize the use of recycled materials.

GHG-4 The contract will include measures to reduce consumption of potable water.

GHG-5 The contract will require the contractor to maintain equipment in proper tune and working condition.

GHG-6 The contract will require that the contractor have the right size equipment for the job.

GHG-7 The contract will require that existing project materials would be recycled or reused onsite to the extent feasible.

HW-1 Caltrans Standard Special Provision 7-1.-02K(6)(j)(iii), "Earth Material Containing Lead," will be added to the construction contract. A lead compliance plan will be required.

HW-2 Caltrans Standard Special Provision 14-11.14 "Treated Wood Waste," will be required if disposal of treated wood waste is needed.

LG-1 Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 86-1.02K, "Luminaries," will be included in the construction contract. This section specifies lighting requirements.

NQ-1 Caltrans Standard Specification 14-8.02, "Noise Control," will be included in the construction contract.

NQ-2 All equipment will have sound-control devices that are no less effective than those provided on the original equipment.

PAL-1 Caltrans Standard Specification 14-7.03, "Discovery of Unanticipated Paleontological Resources," will be included in the construction contract.

WF-1 Caltrans Standard Specification 7-1.02M (2) mandates fire prevention procedures, including a fire prevention plan, to avoid accidental fire starts during construction.

WQ-1 Caltrans Standard Specification 13-1, "Water Pollution," will be included in the construction contract.

Avoidance and Minimization Measures

AES-1 Install conventional highway planting in strategic locations to limit visual intrusion from transportation management system elements within highway viewshed and provide watering schedule to ensure plant establishment success.

AES-2 Install non-irrigated native plant material seeding with duff top-dress covering all disturbed soil areas including the proposed construction site and equipment staging area.

AES-3 Choose lighting types that direct light downward, and install shield fixtures to all additional light sources to minimize light trespass into nighttime skies.

AES-4 Paint and/or stain, using Natina stain, changeable message structure and accessories to match existing visual surroundings.

AES-5 Stain new Midwest guardrail system, using Natina stain, to match existing visual surroundings.

AES-6 Provide a minimum three-year vegetation establishment period.

LG-2 Lighting must comply with all pertinent county ordinances and standards along with consideration to the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA)-approved lighting standards and fixtures.

LG-3 All lighting must be designed to have minimum impact on the surrounding environment and must be downcast, cutoff-type fixtures that are shielded and direct the light downward only toward objects or surfaces requiring illumination (when needed).

LG-4 Lights must be installed at the lowest allowable height and cast low-angle illumination while minimizing incidental spill-light onto adjacent

properties or open spaces and minimize backscatter or sky glow into the nighttime sky in an attempt to eliminate nighttime light pollution.

LG-5 The lowest allowable wattage must be used for all new light sources in or near scenic resource areas identified in this document and documented in pertinent county guidelines and policies. The number of nighttime light sources proposed for dark landscape areas must be minimized.

LG-6 Light fixtures must have non-glare finishes that will not cause reflective daytime glare.

LG-7 Lights must provide good color rendering with natural light qualities, with the minimum intensity needed for security, safety, and personnel access.

Mitigation Measures

MIT-1 Install conventional highway planting in strategic locations to limit visual intrusion from transportation management system elements within highway viewshed and provide watering schedule to ensure plant establishment success.

MIT-2 Install non-irrigated native plant material seeding with duff top-dress covering all disturbed soil areas including the proposed construction site and equipment staging area.

MIT-3 Choose lighting types that direct light downward and install shield fixtures to all additional light sources to minimize light trespass into nighttime skies.

MIT-4 Paint and/or stain, using Natina stain, changeable message structure and accessories to match existing visual surroundings.

MIT-5 Stain new Midwest guardrail system, using Natina stain, to match existing visual surroundings.

MIT-6 Provide a minimum three-year vegetation establishment period.

Examples of Aesthetic Treatments

Figure C-1 Guardrail without Natina, Guardrail with Natina



Figure C-2 Changeable Message Sign without Natina, Changeable Message Sign with Natina



Figure C-3 Cabinet without Natina, Cabinet with Natina



Figure C-4 Simulation of Vegetation Screening



Figure C-5 Example of a Light Shield



Note that the project will not be installing any light sources such as the light source in this image. The black shielding at the top of the image is an example of the type of shielding that may be used on changeable message signs.

Appendix E Transportation Management System Elements

Changeable Message Sign: an electronic sign structure with changeable messages, lit with amber lighting, used to alert the traveling public. Changeable message signs provide motorists with advance warning of conditions ahead and inform them of alternative routes when necessary. Changeable message signs can provide advance notice of upcoming roadwork or special events that will affect travel and notify the traveling public of work zones ahead. The image below shows a changeable message sign.



Streetlight: a light mounted on a pole used to illuminate the highway. The image below shows a streetlight.



Vehicle Detection Systems: a system of loop detectors buried underneath the roadway that connects to a controller cabinet. The purpose of the loop detectors is to detect car movement on the state highway system. Vehicle detection systems collect and report valuable, real-time traffic volumes, occupancy, and speed data. The image below shows a cabinet used for a vehicle detection system.



Closed-Circuit Television Camera System: a camera system in which signals are not publicly distributed. The purpose of the closed-circuit television camera system is to monitor and verify roadway conditions and, in the case of incidents or congestion, assist in dispatching appropriate resources for incident response. The image below shows a closed-circuit television camera.



Roadway Weather Information System: these systems are meteorological measurement stations positioned strategically to collect local atmospheric data. This data will be used to automate changeable message signs to provide travelers with advance notice of adverse weather conditions. In addition, accurate and reliable weather information helps maintenance and operations personnel prepare for and mitigate costly delays, closures, and collisions due to weather conditions. The image below shows a roadway weather information system.



Extinguishable Message Sign: a moveable sign with fixed messages to alert the traveling public of the highway advisory radio's activation. The image below shows an extinguishable message sign.



Maintenance Vehicle Pullout: a parking area next to the highway that provides a safe area for maintenance personnel to park their vehicles during routine maintenance of roadway elements. The image below shows a maintenance vehicle pullout under a changeable message sign.



Midwest Guardrail System: railing used as a barrier along the edge of the road. The image below shows a Midwest guardrail system.



Highway Advisory Radio: a low-powered, noncommercial radio station used to broadcast real-time information to motorists traveling in the area. The image below shows a highway advisory radio system.



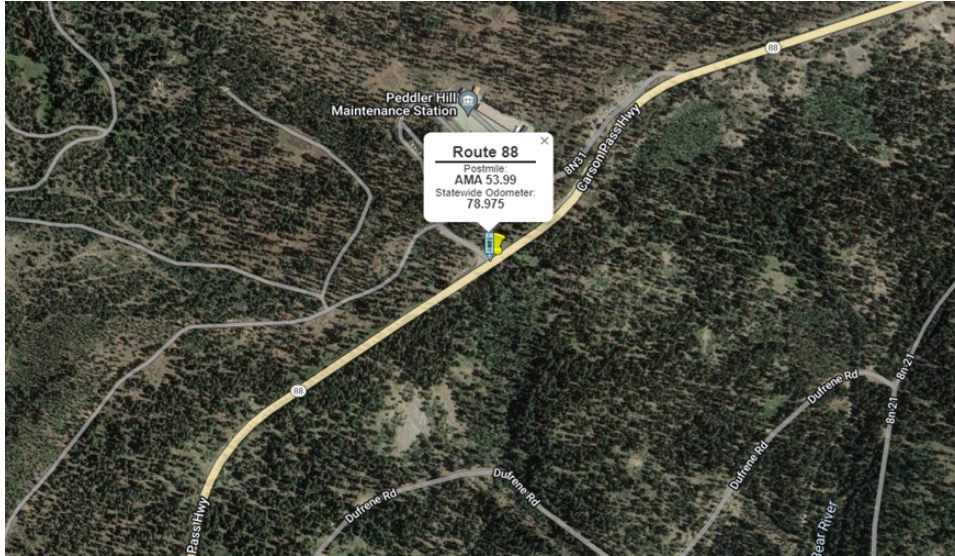
Appendix F Project Locations

Below is a description of the work for each location and a visual of each proposed location.

Location 1: will install one vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, and one maintenance vehicle pullout, replace existing metal beam guardrail with Midwest guardrail, and replace the existing changeable message sign with an updated changeable message sign.



Location 2: will install one streetlight.



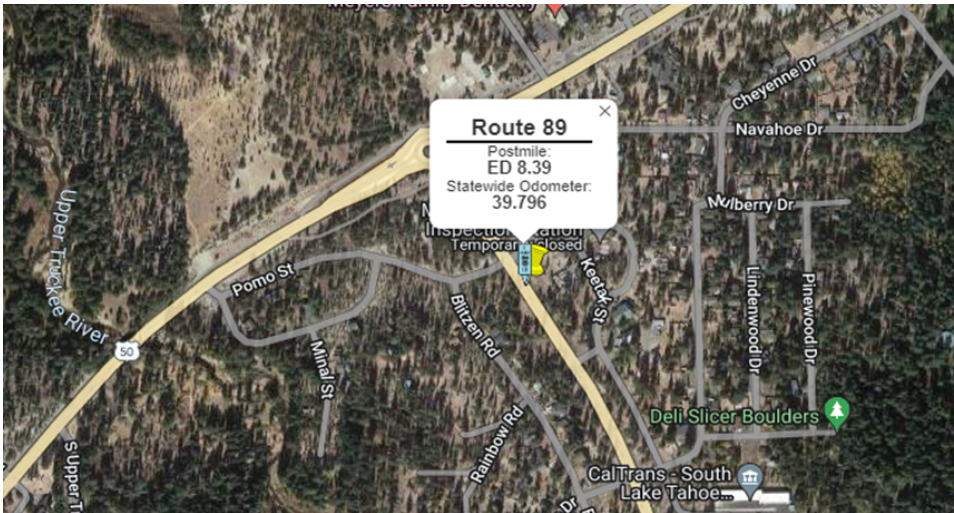
Location 3: will install one changeable message sign with controller cabinets, one vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, one roadway weather information system, one highway advisory radio, two extinguishable message signs, and one maintenance vehicle pullout.



Location 7: will install one vehicle detection system.



Location 8: will install one vehicle detection system, one closed-circuit television camera system, one highway advisory radio, one extinguishable message sign, one maintenance vehicle pullout, replace existing metal beam guardrail with Midwest guardrail, and replace the existing changeable message sign with an updated changeable message sign.



Location 11: will install one closed-circuit television camera system, one highway advisory radio, two extinguishable message signs, and replace the existing changeable message sign with an updated changeable message sign.



List of Technical Studies Bound Separately (Volume 2)

The following studies were conducted for this project and are available upon request.

Air Quality Memorandum

Community Impact Assessment Memorandum

Cumulative Impact Assessment Memorandum

Noise Compliance Memorandum

Water Quality Memorandum

Natural Environment Study – Minimal Impacts

Preliminary Location Floodplain Study

Historical Property Survey Report (and amendments)

- Historic Resource Evaluation Report
- Archaeological Survey Report

Hazardous Waste Reports

- Initial Site Assessment
- Preliminary Site Investigation (Geophysical Survey)

Section 4(f) Memorandumh

Visual Impact Assessment

Paleontological Identification Report

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

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

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

Please provide the following information in your request:

Project title: Carson Transportation Management Systems

General location information: Along State Routes 88 and 89 in Amador, El Dorado, and Alpine counties

District number-county code-route-post mile: 10-AMA, ED, ALP-88, 89-VARIOUS

Project ID number: 1018000275