

Notice of Preparation

Notice of Preparation

To: State Clearinghouse

1400 Tenth Street

Sacramento, CA 95814 (Address)

From: California Dept. of Transportation

50 Higuera Street

San Luis Obispo CA, 93401 (Address)

Subject: Notice of Preparation for a Draft Environmental Impact Report

California Dept. of Transportation

will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an environmental impact report for the project identified below. We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project.

The project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. A copy of the Initial Study (is is not) attached.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

Please send your response to Lucas Marsalek at the address shown above. We will need the name for a contact person in your agency.

Project Title: Caltrans District 5 Maintenance Station and Equipment Shop Project

Project Applicant, if any: Caltrans District 5

Date 3/23/2022

Signature



Title

Associate Environmental Planner

Telephone

805 458 5408

Reference: California Code of Regulations, Title 14, (CEQA Guidelines) Sections 15082(a), 15103, 15375.

**Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report
for the Caltrans District 5 Maintenance Station and Equipment Shop Project in
San Luis Obispo, CA**

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the Lead Agency, is preparing an environmental document to address impacts associated with the proposed Caltrans District 5 Maintenance Station and Equipment Shop Project in San Luis Obispo County, California. The document will be prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Caltrans will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project, which is known as the Caltrans District 5 Maintenance Station and Equipment Shop Project. As required by CEQA, Caltrans is distributing this Notice of Preparation (NOP) and requesting comments from responsible and trustee agencies regarding the significant environmental issues, reasonable alternatives, and reasonable mitigation measures that will be discussed in the Environmental Impact Report. An Initial Study has not been prepared for this project and therefore is not attached to this Notice of Preparation.

Project Location

The project is located at 4485 Vachell Lane San Luis Obispo, California. The project is on a 57-acre state-owned property, APN 076-071-016, immediately south of the City of San Luis Obispo in the County of San Luis Obispo, California.

Project History

Planning for the Caltrans District 5 Maintenance Station and Equipment Shop Project began in 1991. In 1999, several locations were evaluated, which resulted in Caltrans purchasing the 57-acre property at 4485 Vachell Lane in 2000.

In 2005, a Facility Project Study Report was completed for the relocation of the maintenance station. It proposed a facility on the 57-acre state-owned property at 4485 Vachell Lane. At that time, it was assumed Caltrans would be responsible for building the Buckley Road extension. With the inclusion of the Buckley Road extension and other increased cost estimates, the project was removed from the 10-year Budget Plan and put on hold indefinitely due to lack of funding.

In 2008, the Avila Ranch housing development was proposed on a 150-acre parcel on the east side of Vachell Lane, across the street from the state's property. The Avila Ranch parcel has been annexed into the City of San Luis Obispo and added to its General Plan as residential zoning to meet its goal for more housing. To build the 720 homes proposed, the developer was required to build and pay for the Buckley Road extension, which bisects the state's parcel.

In 2017, a Caltrans District 5 Land Swap Report detailed current and future square footage needs for the maintenance station and equipment shop operations. The report

analysis used Caltrans' general space allocation guidelines and benchmark data to compute for square foot needs. Based on Caltrans' space planning guidelines and future estimated employee counts in 2027, it became clear that expanding/relocating Caltrans' maintenance station and equipment shop facilities were needed.

Phased construction on Avila Ranch began in 2019, and several more years of construction are expected. Construction of the Buckley Road extension began in summer 2021, with completion expected before the end of 2022.

In 2019, funding for the Caltrans District 5 Maintenance Station and Equipment Shop Project was approved.

Project Description

The Caltrans District 5 Maintenance Station and Equipment Shop Project involves the construction and operation of a new District 5 maintenance station and equipment shop and associated site improvements.

The proposed project would include a developed area of about 19.6 acres within 34 acres of Caltrans' property located south of the Buckley Road extension. About 15.25 acres of the developed area would be impervious surfaces; the remainder of the site would be unpaved and include landscaping and stormwater management elements. The approximate grading required for construction would include about 118,000 cubic yards of cut and 113,450 cubic yards of fill; a stormwater retention vault will require an additional 3,600 cubic yards of cut. These grading estimates would require that about 8,150 cubic yards are hauled offsite. Before the construction of the new developments, the project would demolish about 13,800 square feet of existing buildings and structures located on the project site.

The proposed project would include the following structures, site elements, parking, ancillary improvements, and utilities as listed below:

Structures

The maintenance station will be situated in the northern half of the project site and will include about:

- 9,000-square-foot regional maintenance office
- 6,500-square-foot structure crews building
- 28,000-square-foot special crews building
- 11,000-square-foot road crews building
- 13,500-square-foot warehouse building

The equipment shop will be situated in the southern half of the project site and will include about:

- 45,000-square-foot vehicle and equipment shop

- 3,800-square-foot storage building

Miscellaneous Site Elements

The project site will include the following preliminary site elements:

- Vehicle wash rack(s)
- Waste enclosures
- Standby generator
- Fueling island (fueling station and fuel storage)
- Material storage bins, containers, and covered storage
- Emulsion tank
- One-acre asphalt pad for DMV commercial driver testing
- Solar voltaic canopies

Parking Areas

The project site will include parking to support staff and operations and will be surfaced with asphalt paving. Solar-covered vehicle parking areas will be incorporated wherever feasible. Approximate parking space counts include:

- A total of 274 standard parking spaces for staff, standard fleet, and visitors
- A total of 106 parking spaces for large fleet vehicles
- A total of 5 parking spaces for semitruck fleet vehicles

Ancillary Improvements

The project site will include the following preliminary ancillary improvements:

- Security fencing and access-controlled vehicle gates
- Fire protection and hydrants
- Landscape and irrigation
- Exterior lighting
- Sidewalk and street improvements at driveways to Buckley Road
- About 380 linear feet of retaining walls ranging from three to ten feet in height.

Utilities and Stormwater Drainage

The project site will include preliminary, new, and/or updated utilities needed to support operations:

- New water connection to be provided by the City of San Luis Obispo
- New sewer connection to be provided by the City of San Luis Obispo

- An updated natural gas connection to be provided by the Southern California Gas Company
- An updated electricity connection to be provided by the Pacific Gas and Electric Company
- An updated communications connection
- A new stormwater drainage system, which may include underground vault(s).

Offsite work will be required for driveway connections at the new Buckley Road extension. Traffic signal control at the driveway connections to the new Buckley Road extension may be needed.

Additional offsite work will be required for drainage and utility connections (water, sewer, electricity, natural gas, communications).

Development of a Reasonable Range of Project Alternatives

Factors determining alternative project configurations include considerations of project objectives, traffic circulation, site suitability, availability of infrastructure, and a level of environmental impacts. The Environmental Impact Report will discuss the rationale for the selection of alternatives that are feasible and, therefore, merit in-depth consideration, and alternatives that are infeasible (e.g., failed to meet project objectives or did not avoid significant environmental effects) and therefore rejected. The Build Alternative details identified in this Notice of Preparation are general in nature. Further environmental resource analyses are necessary before more specific project design details can be identified. The need for project redesign would be determined during environmental review.

Alternatives

Build Alternative: A new maintenance station, equipment shop, and other site elements would be built south of the Buckley Road extension on state-owned property.

No-Build Alternative: The project would not be built.

Table 1. Potential Regulatory Permits and Approvals

Agency or Issue	Approval or Permit
State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB)	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit, Construction Stormwater General Permit (including the development and implementation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP)), and Best Management Practices.
San Luis Obispo County Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA)	Permits associated with storage and use of diesel and gasoline, oils and lubricants, and specialty fire suppression liquids, tanks, and oil/water separators. Because more than 10,000 gallons of petroleum products are stored onsite, a Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure Plan must be filed and be stamped by a registered civil engineer.
San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District (SLO County APCD)	Air permits for miscellaneous equipment (i.e., emergency generator) and Authority to Construct Permits.
State Fire Marshal; State Architect	Approval for ADA, structural review and fire suppression, and code compliance review.
County of San Luis Obispo	Encroachment permit(s) for public road driveway connections and utility connections.
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Biological Opinion for the California red-legged frog.
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) and Letter of Map Revision (LOMR).
San Luis Obispo County Airport Land Use Commission	Review development and determine consistency with the Airport Land Use Plan.
San Luis Obispo Local Agency Formation Commission	Outside User Agreement (or exemption) for water and sewer service from the City of San Luis Obispo.

Potential Environmental Effects of the Project

Aesthetics

This project is between South Higuera to the west, Buckley Road to the north, and Vachell Lane to the northeast. Existing commercial use, recreational vehicle (RV) storage facilities, and buildings exist to the north and northeast. The Octagon Barn also exists to the north, and agricultural use and open space exist to the south, southeast, and southwest. The Buckley Road extension, which is currently under construction, is adjacent to the north of the project site. The Avila Ranch housing development, also currently under construction, is northeast of the project site across Vachell Lane and will encompass about 150 acres of residential and mixed-use development.

The project site is on the rural fringe of the City of San Luis Obispo and is influenced by distant views of the hills, including the Irish Hills and Cerro San Luis Obispo to the northwest, South Hills Open Space to the northeast, Johnson Ranch Open Space to the west, Davenport Creek Hills to the south, and Islay Hill Open Space to the east. This project could impact the existing public viewshed along U.S. Route 101, Vachell Lane, and Buckley Road. U.S. Route 101 is eligible for designation as a scenic highway, and Vachell Lane and Buckley Road are considered to have local scenic value. The project could also introduce a new source of nighttime lighting.

Agriculture

The project site consists of 34 acres of prime farmland soils as classified by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Currently, the site is cultivated with rotational row crops. The Buckley Road extension results in a direct loss of about 3 acres of prime soils and also cuts off the farming area to the north, making cultivation more difficult due to the presence of the bisecting roadway. The project may result in additional land use conflicts and direct loss of onsite agricultural operations.

Air Quality

The project may result in short-term construction-related and long-term operational air quality impacts to the local region and nearby sensitive receptors.

Biological Resources

The project is in highly disturbed agricultural land and upland habitat with little value for listed species. However, it is likely suitable upland habitat for California red-legged frogs may exist. Animal and plant surveys will be completed before the start of the Environmental Impact Report. No impacts to the nearby creek and jurisdictional area are expected.

Cultural and Historical Resources

The project vicinity is an area of moderate sensitivity for archeological resources and built environment historic resources. Therefore, there is potential for unknown prehistoric or historic archaeological deposits to occur within the project site. The project site will be studied, and impacts to cultural and historical resources will be further evaluated in the Environmental Impact Report.

Energy

The project would use fossil fuels during construction and electricity and fossil fuels during long-term operation. The project would follow all federal, state, and local regulations related to energy efficiency and use. While local plans, policies, and regulations do not apply to the state, assessments of the project's impact on air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, and transportation will be further evaluated in the Environmental Impact Report. The building envelope that impacts some of the direct and indirect energy use would be required to follow the latest Title 24 building codes. Title 24 building codes are building energy-efficient standards designed to reduce wasteful and unnecessary energy consumption in newly built and existing buildings. Additionally, certification from the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design building rating system could be required.

Geology and Soils

Geotechnical and paleontological studies have not been completed and will be further evaluated in the Environmental Impact Report. The project's buildings and structures

will be designed and built in compliance with the California Building Code (CBC). The California Building Code is intended to ensure that buildings resist major earthquakes and the potential for liquefaction.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Project construction would result in one-time emissions of greenhouse gases during construction. The permanent change in land use from agricultural practice to an urban environment would also result in a one-time release of greenhouse gas emissions. The long-term operation of the project would result in annual greenhouse gas emissions from the direct combustion of fossil fuels, solid waste, and indirect use of electricity and water use. The building envelope that impacts some of the direct and indirect energy use would be required to follow the latest Title 24 building codes. Title 24 building codes are building energy-efficient standards designed to reduce wasteful and unnecessary energy consumption in newly built and existing buildings.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Potential hazardous waste impacts involve asbestos-containing materials and lead-based paint on buildings and structures to be demolished and petroleum hydrocarbon contamination in the soil. A Preliminary Site Investigation will be prepared on the project site to identify the extent of the contamination and will be further evaluated in the Environmental Impact Report.

Hydrology and Water Quality

The confluence of East Fork San Luis Obispo Creek and Tank Farm Creek is on the eastern side of the project and flows south along the eastern property line. The City and County of San Luis Obispo provide the stormwater infrastructure and maintenance surrounding the project. Groundwater characteristics at the project site are unknown and will be studied during the Geotechnical Investigation and Initial Site Assessment. Most of the project site is within the current 100-year floodplain of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Project construction and long-term operation could impact surface water, groundwater, and the floodplain of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Land Use and Planning

The proposed project site is within the existing Sphere of Influence of the City of San Luis Obispo. In 2000, Caltrans purchased the 57-acre parcel of land where the project site is located. Before Caltrans purchased the land, the entire parcel was used for agricultural row crops. The site is currently designated Prime Farmland. The project site's local land use zoning classification is Agricultural (34 acres), respectively (County of San Luis Obispo, 2010). However, state-owned land, and development on thereof, is not subject to local, city, or county land use and zoning regulations. Nonetheless, the state is subject to the requirement under CEQA to assess project-related impacts that may occur because of conflicts between existing and proposed land uses.

The proposed project site is within the San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport's Influence Area. Therefore, the project will need to comply with applicable development standards of the Airport Land Use Plan (Amended and Restated March 26, 2021).

Noise

The project will introduce new land uses, which could include the use and maintenance of heavy equipment during construction and long-term operation. Noise levels could become higher at some locations next to the project site.

Public Services

The project could cause an increase in onsite infrastructure and personnel (employees) during construction and long-term operation. The Environmental Impact Report will further evaluate the project impacts to public services, including but not limited to: fire protection, police protection, nearby schools, nearby parks, and other public facilities.

Transportation (Vehicle Miles Traveled)

The project will add vehicle trips, driveway connections to public roads, and potentially new traffic control(s) on public roads. Traffic impacts related to these project components will be further evaluated in the Environmental Impact Report. Senate Bill 743 concurrence and analysis of this transportation project's impact under CEQA due to increases in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) attributable to the project will be necessary.

Utilities and Service Systems

The project could increase demand for water, wastewater, stormwater infrastructure, solid waste, electricity and natural gas, and communications. The project's demand for these utilities and service systems during construction and long-term operation will be further evaluated in the Environmental Impact Report. There are existing electrical transmission lines and an easement across the southern limits of the project site.

Wildfire

The project site is on land that is relatively flat and historically used for agricultural row crops. Surrounding areas around the project site consist of more agriculture, rural residences, and urbanization. The project is within a "Moderate" area of fire risk, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's (CalFire) Fire Hazard Severity Zone mapping. Fire protection services will be evaluated in the "Public Services" section of the Environmental Impact Report.

Comments

Your input regarding the scope of the EIR, environmental factors potentially affected, and project alternatives must be submitted to Caltrans no later than 5:00 pm on Monday, April 25th, 2022.

Written comments can be mailed to:

California Department of Transportation, District 5
50 Higuera Street
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
Attention: Lucas Marsalek

Or emailed to:

lucas.marsalek@dot.ca.gov

Public Meeting

A virtual public scoping meeting is scheduled during the minimum 30-day public scoping period, which began with the release of this Notice of Preparation (NOP). The virtual public scoping meeting is meant to provide an additional opportunity for public comment, identify public and agency concerns, and define issues that need to be examined in the Environmental Impact Report. No decision(s) will be made on the project itself.

Meeting Details:

When: Monday, April 11, 2022, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Where: Virtual Meeting

To attend the virtual meeting:

- Find the Caltrans District 5 Maintenance Station and Equipment Shop Project on the Caltrans District 5 Project website (<https://dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-5/district-5-current-projects>) and click on the meeting link.
- Enter this URL in your web browser:
(<https://cadot.webex.com/cadot/onstage/g.php?MTID=ef1d6fc5b97bb9c2626184cefe1411a94>)
- Visit signin.webex.com and click on “Join” on the top right corner of your screen. Enter meeting number: **2486 247 2896** and Password: **WxiXmszW773**

Figure 1: Project Vicinity Map

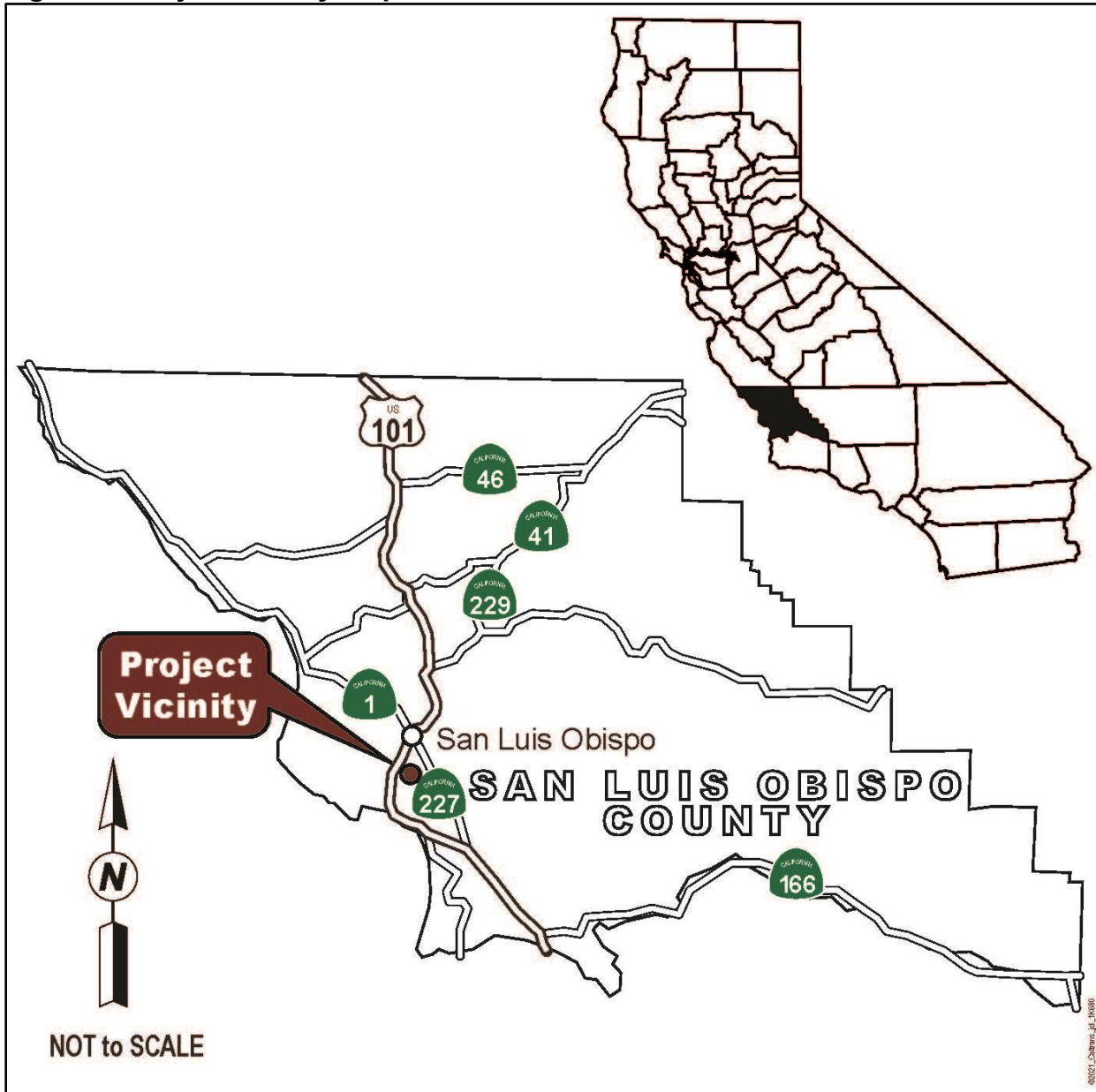


Figure 2: Project Location Map

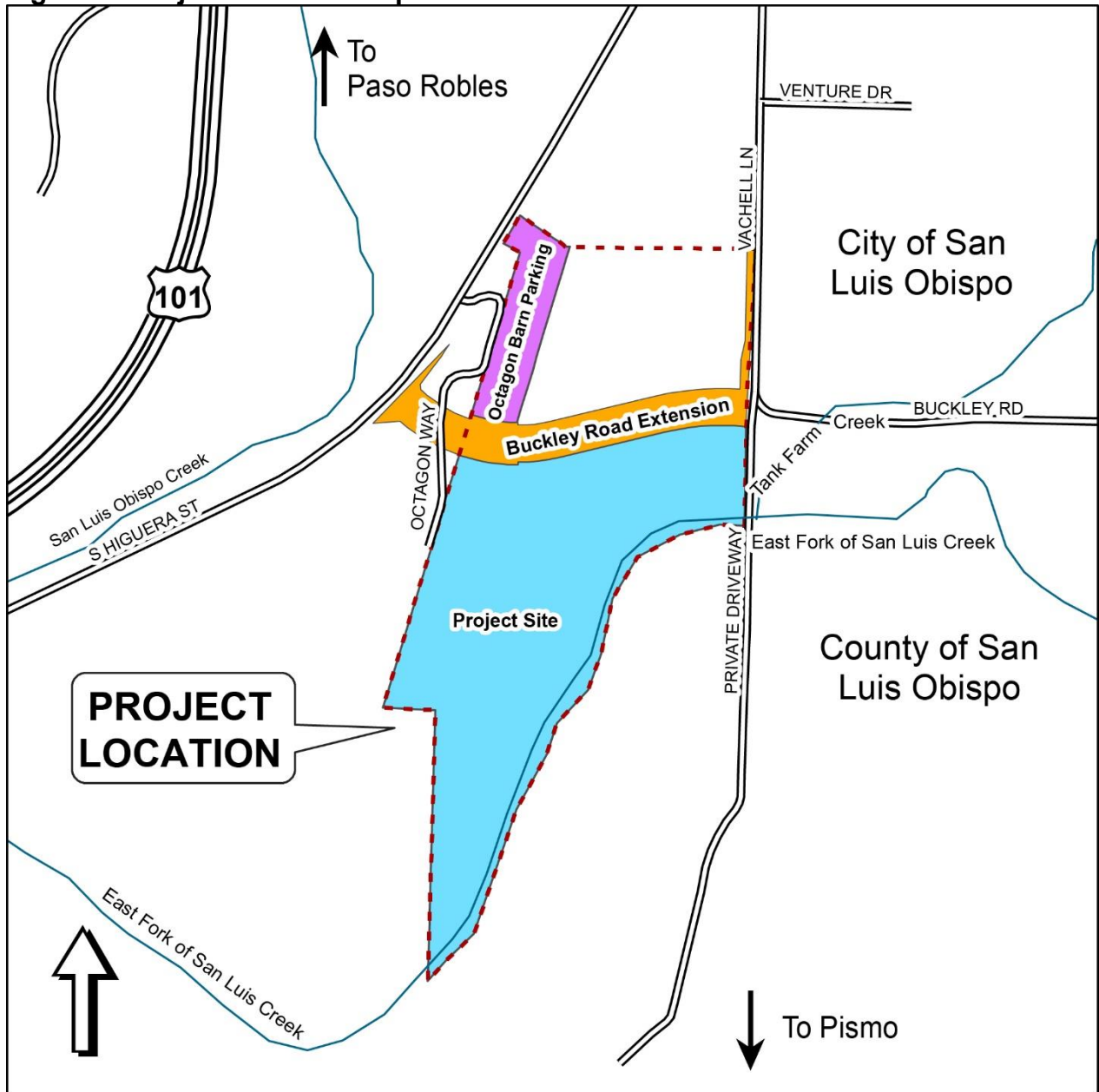
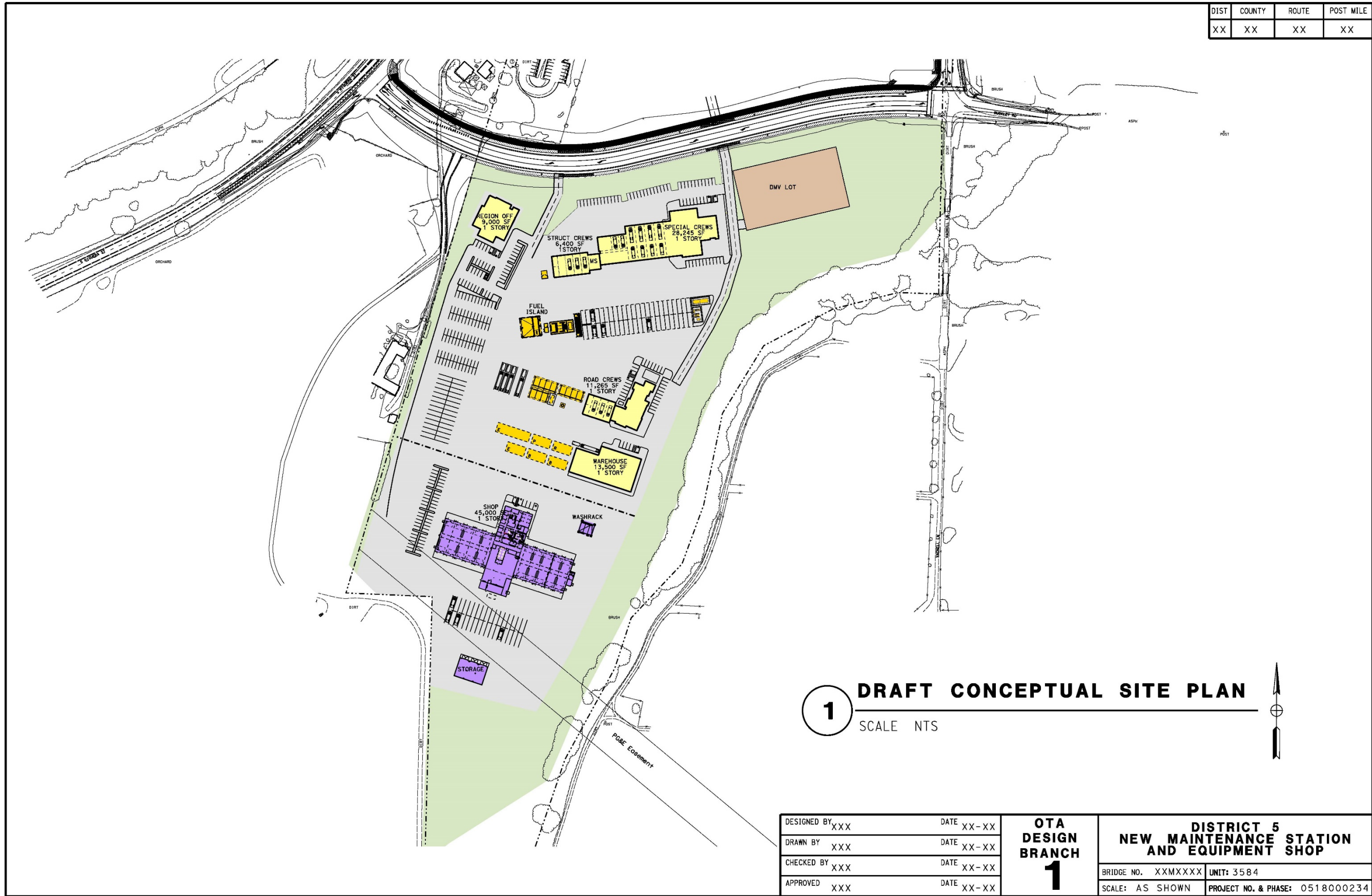


Figure 3: Conceptual Site Plan

STATE OF CALIFORNIA - DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION - DIVISION OF STRUCTURES



DIST	COUNTY	ROUTE	POST MILE
XX	XX	XX	XX

1 DRAFT CONCEPTUAL SITE PLAN
SCALE NTS

DESIGNED BY XXX	DATE XX-XX
DRAWN BY XXX	DATE XX-XX
CHECKED BY XXX	DATE XX-XX
APPROVED XXX	DATE XX-XX

**OTA
DESIGN
BRANCH
1**

DISTRICT 5 NEW MAINTENANCE STATION AND EQUIPMENT SHOP	
BRIDGE NO. XXMXXXX	UNIT: 3584
SCALE: AS SHOWN	PROJECT NO. & PHASE: 0518000234

STRUCTURES DESIGN ADVANCE PLANNING STUDY SHEET (ENGLISH) (REV. 08-09-10)

FILE => 05-1K680_Conceptual_Site_a01.dgn

CONTRACT NO.: 05-1K680

USERNAME => 8150234 DATE PLOTTED => 17-MAR-2022 TIME PLOTTED => 17:05