

California Department of Transportation

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Governor's Office of Planning & Research

May 23, 2023

May 25 2023

STATE CLEARING HOUSE

David Ruby
Planning Manager
Tuolumne County Community
Development Department
2 South Green Street Sonora, CA
95370

**TUO- All- Countywide Tuolumne
Broadband Infrastructure SCH
20230500017**

Dear Mr. Ruby,

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the Tuolumne County Broadband Project Notice of Preparation (NOP) and Initial Study (IS).

The County is proposing to expand access to broadband technology throughout the County, including the unincorporated areas and the one incorporated City of Sonora. Location and installation of fiber optic cable by a variety of potential methods (e.g., underground, and aerial installation) would be evaluated at a programmatic level in the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the County as a whole.

The proposed project area would be located within Tuolumne County limits. Tuolumne County encompasses approximately 2,274 total square miles, or 1,455,360 acres. The area in which future broadband infrastructure could be implemented includes all unincorporated areas of the County and the incorporated City of Sonora; it excludes federal lands, private roads, and state highway rights-of-way. The County has jurisdiction over a total of approximately 610 miles of County-maintained roads. It is envisioned that the vast majority of the future broadband infrastructure would be installed within existing County maintained road rights-of-way (ROW), public utility easements (PUE), and/or overhead public utility easements of record throughout the County.

The exact alignments of future broadband are unknown at this time and would be planned based on such considerations as construction feasibility, local preference, and locations of sensitive environmental resources.

Caltrans has the following comments:

Please ensure coordination with Caltrans' Broadband Middle Mile efforts and consider where feasible, if instead of construction, review for lease opportunities to reduce environmental impacts.

Environmental

If any construction related activities will encroach into Caltrans Right of Way (ROW), the project proponent must apply for an Encroachment Permit to the Caltrans District 10 Encroachment Permit Office. All California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documentation, with supporting technical studies, must be submitted with the Encroachment Permit Application. These studies will include an analysis of potential impacts to any cultural sites, historic properties, biological resources, hazardous waste locations, scenic highways, and/or other environmental resources within Caltrans Right of Way, at the project site(s).

Efforts encompass county wide activity that anticipates heavy ground disturbance that has potential to impact biological resources known to this area. The Draft IS describes that a Programmatic EIR will further analyze, in detail, the impacts to biological resources. Caltrans will need to review the Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) to ensure all impacts anticipated to occur within Caltrans ROW is appropriately analyzed. If there are impacts to any Special Status Species (plant, fish, or wildlife) because of this project, we will need to review their correspondence with United States Fish and Wildlife (USFWS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS), and/or California Department Fish and Wildlife Services (CDFW). According to the Draft IS, there are anticipated impacts to protected "Waters". If there are any impacts to federally and state protected Waters, Caltrans will need to see all correspondence with the permitting agencies (i.e., USACE, Water Board, and/or CDFW).

Evidence of consultation with local Native American tribes and interested parties will need to be presented within the technical documents for approval of encroachment in the Caltrans ROW. Caltrans should be sent all cultural studies and given an opportunity to provide feedback regarding the identification, consultation, evaluation, and treatment of any resources in our ROW. Appropriate indigenous communities should be contacted under Assembly Bill (AB) 52 for precontact resources/culturally sensitive areas within Caltrans ROW, if guidance on this is required, contact Caltrans. All cultural resources within Caltrans ROW need to be identified and protection measures need to be fully addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) and Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR).

Hydrology

The developer needs to ensure that the existing State drainage facilities will not be significantly impacted by the project. If historical undeveloped topography shows drainage from this site flowed into the State Right-of-Way, it may continue to do so with the conditions that peak flows may not be increased from the pre-construction quantity and the site runoff be treated to meet present storm water quality standards. If historical undeveloped topography shows drainage from this site did not flow into the State Right-of-Way, then it will not be allowed to flow into the State ROW at this time.

We request to review the pre- and post-construction runoff calculations and drainage plans to understand flow patterns. We would also like to review the floodplain study. Additional review will be done once drainage plans, floodplain study, and calculations are submitted.

Traffic Operations

Once the location is determined, the applicant will need to apply for an encroachment permit if there will be encroachment within the state right of way.

If any future project activities encroach into Caltrans ROW, the project proponent must submit an application for an Encroachment Permit to the Caltrans District 10 Encroachment Permit Office. Appropriate environmental studies must be submitted with this application. These studies will analyze potential impacts to any cultural sites, biological resources, hazardous waste locations, and/or other resources within Caltrans ROW at the project site(s). For more information, please visit the Caltrans Website at: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/ep/applications>

Please contact David Karnes at (209) 986-9830 (david.karnes@dot.ca.gov), or me at (209) 483-7234 (Gregoria.Ponce@dot.ca.gov) if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Gregoria Ponce'

Gregoria Ponce', Chief
Office of Rural Planning

cc: State Clearinghouse (SCH)