



Mark Lancaster
Director of Transportation

COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE

TRANSPORTATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Mojahed Salama, P.E.
*Deputy for Transportation/Capital
Projects*

Russell Williams
*Deputy for
Transportation/Planning and
Development*

Transportation Department

Date: September 21, 2023

To: State Clearinghouse
Affected Agencies
Interested Organizations and Individuals

From: County of Riverside Transportation Department

Subject: Agency Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Chuckwalla Valley Road Bridge Replacement Project

Lead Agency:

County of Riverside Transportation Department
3525 14th Street
Riverside, California 92501

Contact:

Frances Segovia
Senior Transportation Planner
fsegovia@rivco.org
(951) 955-1646

The County of Riverside Transportation Department (County), in cooperation with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), is proposing to replace four (4) structurally deficient bridges along Chuckwalla Valley Road near Desert Center in Riverside County, California (Project). This Notice of Preparation (NOP) is to inform responsible and trustee agencies, interested parties, and the public that the County will be the Lead Agency pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Project. The County is requesting comments 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 Project. The project description, location, and the finding/determinations are provided below for your review. Please provide written comments on the scope of this EIR by 5:00 p.m. on October 24, 2023, at the address or email shown above to the attention of Frances Segovia, Senior Transportation Planner.

Project Title: Chuckwalla Valley Road Bridge Replacement Project over Aztec Ditch (Bridge No. 56C0102), Tarantula Ditch (Bridge No. 56C0103), Sutro Ditch (Bridge No. 56C0104), and Acari Ditch (Bridge No. 56C0108)

Project Location: The Project is situated southeast of Desert Center in Riverside County, California. Chuckwalla Valley Road is an approximately 16.75-mile stretch of a two-lane frontage road that parallels the Interstate 10 (I-10) freeway with Corn Springs Road to the west end and Ford Dry Lake Road on the east end (see **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**). Land use within the Project area is primarily rural open space. Although the road mostly serves vehicles accessing

local utilities and off-road recreation, the road occasionally experiences a heavier load when traffic is detoured from I-10 during temporary closures for maintenance, construction, or emergency incidents.

Project Description: The County, in cooperation with Caltrans, proposes to replace the following four (4) existing structurally deficient timber bridges along Chuckwalla Valley Road near Desert Center in Riverside County, California:

- Chuckwalla Valley Road Bridge over Aztec Ditch (Br. No. 56C0102) (Federal Aid Project No. BRLO-5956(239))
- Chuckwalla Valley Road Bridge over Tarantula Ditch (Br. No. 56C0103) (Federal Aid Project No. BRLO-5956(227))
- Chuckwalla Valley Road Bridge over Sutro Ditch (Br. No. 56C0104) (Federal Aid Project No. BRLO-5956(226))
- Chuckwalla Valley Road Bridge over Acari Ditch (Br. No. 56C0108) (Federal Aid Project No. BRLO-5956(225))

The four bridges are listed in the federal Eligible Bridge List as "Structurally Deficient" with a low Sufficiency Rating between 39.3 and 49.2. A sufficiency rating is an overall rating of functional/geometric obsolescence, and its essentiality to the public. A low sufficiency rating may be due to structural defects, narrow lanes, low vertical clearance, or many other possible issues. A bridge is healthy when its Sufficiency Rating is more than 80.0. When the Sufficiency Rating falls below 50.0, bridge replacement shall be considered for public safety.

The proposed Project would replace the existing two-lane timber bridges with new two-lane modern bridges with a curb-to-curb roadway width of 32 feet at the same locations. The proposed roadway width for the bridge structures would consist of two 12-foot-wide travel lanes, one lane in each direction, and a 4-foot-wide shoulder on each side. Modern traffic barriers/railings meeting current Caltrans safety design standards would be constructed. The proposed bridges would be approximately 60 to 80 feet long depending on the channel hydraulic capacity and water surface freeboard requirements. Raising the elevation of the bridges is not anticipated. However, if raising the bridge elevation is found to be necessary to meet freeboard requirements, the total vertical increase is not anticipated to exceed one foot. Additionally, approach roadway improvements would be provided, and channel improvements would be constructed to avoid future scour problems. It is envisioned that the channel bottom will remain earthen.

Findings/Determination: CEQA Guidelines Section 15063 (b)(1) states that if there is substantial evidence that any aspect of the project, either individually or cumulatively, may cause a significant effect on the environment, regardless of whether the overall effect of the project is adverse or beneficial, the Lead Agency shall prepare an EIR. The County prepared an Initial Study for the Project, based on the findings, it was determined an EIR was required to further evaluate the Project's potentially significant environmental impacts on Biological Resources, Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources. The EIR would also evaluate whether there are feasible mitigation measures that may lessen such impacts. A copy of the Initial Study and supporting technical studies are available for review at the Project's website, <https://rcprojects.org/chuckwalla>.

NOP Review Period: The environmental determination in this NOP is subject to a 30-day public review period pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15082. This NOP is available for a 30-day public review period from **September 25, 2023, to October 24, 2023**. Please provide your written responses via email or mail to the contact below no later than **5:00 p.m. on October 24, 2023**.

Frances Segovia
Senior Transportation Planner
(951) 955-1646
fsegovia@rivco.org

**County of Riverside Transportation
Department**
Attn: Frances Segovia
3525 14th Street
Riverside, California 92501

The County looks forward to your input regarding the Project. If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact me at the above address or via email or phone.

Sincerely,

Frances Segovia

Frances Segovia
Senior Transportation Planner

Attachments:

Figure 1. Project Vicinity (Regional Location)

Figure 2. Project Location

Figure 1. Project Vicinity (Regional Location)



3525 14th Street · Riverside, CA 92501 · (951) 955-6800
P.O. Box 1090 · Riverside, CA 92502-1090 · FAX (951) 955-3164

Figure 2. Project Location



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