



County of Fresno

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

EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

APPLICANT: Fresno County Design Division

APPLICATION NOS.: Initial Study No. 7906

DESCRIPTION: The project proposes to replace an existing bridge with deteriorated foundations, with a new bridge that meets current structural and geometric standards of, the County of Fresno, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).

LOCATION: The project site is located on S. El Dorado Avenue, approximately one half-mile south of Phelps Avenue and approximately seven (7) miles east of the City of Coalinga.

I. AESTHETICS

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

- A. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista; or
- B. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway; or
- C. In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage points.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

No scenic vistas were identified in the analysis. The project will require the removal of one tree, and perhaps others along with some vegetation along the creek embankment within the area of potential effect, however, tree and vegetation removal will be minimal and only include what is required for construction and staging. Once construction is complete the new bridge will be very similar in dimensions and appearance as the existing bridge, and no permanent structures are proposed that would obstruct views from the roadway or surrounding property. Based on these factors the project would have a less than significant impact on scenic resources.

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

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

No new lighting is proposed with this project.

II. AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

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

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

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is located in an agricultural area; however, the project site is on land classified as grazing land and nonagricultural and natural vegetation. The land northeast and southeast of the bridge on the east side of El Dorado is classified as Prime Farmland in the 2016 Fresno County Important Farmlands Map, however the project Area of Potential Effect (APE) including the proposed staging areas will be primarily limited to the land immediately surrounding the bridge, and although one of the staging areas may be located on Prime Farmland, it would be immediately adjacent to the roadway, and no Prime Farmland will be permanently converted to nonagricultural uses as a result of the project. Both of project staging areas will be located on parcels northwest and southeast of the bridge which are subject to Williamson Act Contract No. 1908; however, no conflicts with Williamson Act restrictions are anticipated.

III. AIR QUALITY

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

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

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project will not conflict with or obstruction implementation of any applicable air quality plan.

- B. Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project is not anticipated to result in exceedance of any threshold of significance for criterial pollutants, established by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

- C. Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

- D. Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is located in a very sparsely populated area, and as such there are few sensitive receptors in the vicinity. The nearest receptors appear to be a single-family dwelling/caretaker's residence or converted office located approximately one-half mile north of the bridge, and a cluster of four single family dwellings located approximately one mile south of the project site. Demolition of the existing bridge and construction of the replacement bridge will create short term emissions of pollutants into the air, however, given the limited scope and duration of project demolition and construction, and its distance from any identified receptors, it is not anticipated to expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations, or expose a substantial number of people to odor causing emissions.

IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

- A. Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

A Biological Assessment (BA) was prepared for the project by Caltrans, dated January 2023. The BA determined that there is potential for two federally endangered species to occur in the project action area, the San Joaquin Kit Fox and the Blunt Nosed Leopard Lizard. During biological surveys of the area conducted in May 2021, no signs of Kit Fox dens were observed.

To avoid and/or minimize potential impacts on special-status plant species, the following measures would be implemented:

- a. Within a year prior to construction, a qualified biologist would conduct a preconstruction plant survey within the construction area. Surveys would be conducted during the appropriate blooming period (typically March to July) for species with potential to be in the construction area, to the extent feasible.
- b. If a special-status plant species is found during the pre-construction survey, high visibility ESA protective fencing would be installed around the special-status plants to prevent construction staff or equipment from entering this area. ESA protective fencing would be installed by or under the supervision of the Project Biologist. No access or activities, including equipment use or foot traffic, would be permitted within the ESA. The ESA protective fencing buffer would be species specific, with a minimum buffer radius based on the guidance from a qualified biologist. All excluded areas with ESA protective fencing would be monitored to determine whether exclusion measures were successful and to identify any outstanding concerns. Exclusionary measures would be monitored throughout construction to ensure they are functioning correctly and would be removed following construction.
- c. All project-related vehicle traffic would be restricted to established roads and construction areas, which include equipment staging, storage, parking, and stockpile areas.

To mitigate for impacts on special-status plants, the following measure will be implemented: a. If it is determined that special-status plants will be directly impacted by the project, a species-specific mitigation plan will be prepared by a qualified biologist. The plan may include one or more of the following: plant relocation, seed collection and dispersal, on or off-site restoration, or payment into an agency-approved mitigation bank. The plan will be implemented prior to the completion of the project. Additionally, if absence of plants cannot be confirmed, stockpiling existing topsoil and redistributing on site after construction would be considered.

To avoid and/or minimize potential impacts on special-status invertebrate species, the following measures would be implemented:

- a. Within 48 hours prior to construction, a qualified biologist would survey all areas where vegetation removal would be conducted to confirm the presence/absence of the Morrison's blister beetle.

b. If a special-status invertebrate is identified within the BSA, all efforts would be taken to avoid the nest and invertebrate, and an appropriate buffer would be installed as determined by a qualified biologist. If avoidance cannot be accomplished, any invertebrates would be safely relocated by a qualified biologist.

c. If a special-status invertebrate is identified within the BSA, areas temporarily impacted during construction would be restored using native species using one or more of the food plant genera, including *Gilia tricolor* and *Linanthus liniflorus*, for the Morrison's blister beetle if appropriate for the region.

To avoid potential impacts on special-status bird species, the following measures would be implemented:

a. Vegetation removal would be conducted outside the nesting bird breeding season (February 1 - September 30), where feasible.

b. In the event that vegetation removal and tree trimming must be conducted during the nesting season, nesting bird surveys would be completed within 300 feet of the construction area by a qualified biologist no more than 48 hours prior to trimming or clearing activities to determine if nesting birds are within the affected vegetation. Nesting bird surveys would be repeated if trimming or removal activities are suspended for three days or more.

c. If nesting birds are found within 300 feet of the construction area, appropriate buffers consisting of orange flagging/fencing or similar (typically 300 feet for birds and 500 feet for raptors) would be installed and maintained until nesting activity has ended. A reduced buffer can be established if determined appropriate by qualified biologist and approved by the wildlife agencies.

d. If construction activities are conducted during the breeding season for burrowing owls (typically February 1 through September 1), a qualified biologist would perform a focused survey for burrows and burrowing owls within the BSA no more than 30 days and no fewer than 14 days prior to the start of construction activities. Surveys would be conducted in accordance with the California Burrowing Owl Consortium's April 1993 Burrowing Owl Survey Protocol and Mitigation Guidelines.

e. Prior to breeding season for burrowing owl (typically February 1 through September 1), a qualified biologist may implement a burrow exclusion and/or closure plan to prevent active nests from becoming established prior to construction. If determined necessary, a plan would be implemented before breeding behavior is exhibited and after the burrow is confirmed empty by site surveillance and/or scoping.

f. If occupied burrows or burrowing habitat (including debris piles) are observed within 500 feet of the construction area, a 165-foot buffer would be installed and maintained during the non-breeding season (typically October 1 through January 31), or a 655-foot buffer during the breeding season (typically February 1 through September 30). The buffer size may be modified, under direction of a qualified biologist, if it's determined that construction activities would not likely have an adverse effect on the owls. Work

within the buffer area would only be resumed once a qualified biologist confirms that the burrow is no longer occupied.

g. If occupied burrows cannot be avoided, passive on-site relocation techniques to encourage owls to move to alternative burrows outside the project area would be implemented during the non-breeding season, as directed by a qualified biologist and under consultation with the CDFW. No occupied burrows would be disturbed during the nesting period, unless a qualified biologist, in coordination with the CDFW, determines that juveniles are capable of foraging and surviving independently.

h. Focused surveys for Swainson's hawk would be conducted according to the Recommended Timing and Methodology for Swainson's Hawk Nesting Surveys in California's Central Valley for two survey periods prior to project initiation. Three surveys would be conducted during each survey period to determine if Swainson's hawks are nesting within 600 feet of the BSA.

i. If construction is scheduled to begin during Swainson's hawk nesting season (typically February 1 to September 30), pre-construction surveys would be completed by a qualified biologist no more than 48 hours prior to construction to determine if Swainson's hawks are nesting within 600 feet of the BSA. Surveys would be repeated if construction activities are suspended for five days or more.

j. If any nesting Swainson's hawks are found in the BSA, appropriate buffers (typically 600 feet) would be installed and maintained, under direction of a qualified biologist, until the nest(s) are no longer active.

To avoid and/or minimize impacts on special-status bat species, the following measures would be implemented:

a. Tree removal and trimming, if any, would be conducted outside of the recognized bat maternity season (approximately April 1–September 15), and non-active season (November 1 – February 28) season for bats where feasible.

b. Prior to construction, a qualified bat biologist would conduct a habitat assessment within the project area. Any trees that are determined to provide potentially suitable habitat would be marked "habitat trees" by the qualified biologist. The contractor must contact the County prior to any planned removal of trees marked "habitat trees."

c. During the summer months (June 1 to August 31) prior to construction, visual and acoustic surveys would be conducted for at least two nights at all identified roosting habitat to assess the presence of roosting bats. If presence of a roost is detected, a count and species analysis would be completed to help assess the type of colony and usage.

d. If the presence or absence of bats cannot be confirmed in potential roosting habitat, a qualified biologist would be onsite during tree removal/trimming or disturbance of this area. If the biologist determines that bats are being disturbed during this work, work would be suspended until bats have left the vicinity on their own or can be safely

excluded under direction of the biologist. Work would resume only once all bats have left the site and/or approval to resume work is given by a qualified biologist.

e. No less than a month prior to construction, and outside of the recognized bat maternity season (April 1–September 15), bats would be safely evicted from roosts impacted by the project under the direction of a qualified biologist. Exclusionary devices would be installed where feasible on the bridge and in trees to prevent bats from returning and roosting in these areas. Roosts that would not be impacted by the project would be left undisturbed.

f. All removal of trees with potential bat habitat would be conducted using a 2-step process over two consecutive days under the supervision of a qualified biologist. On the first day, any trees that do not contain crevice or cavity roosting habitat, as determined by a qualified biologist, would be trimmed or removed (only if necessary for project construction). In addition, limited trimming of trees (branches and small limbs with no potential roosting features) would be completed. Construction crews would only use hand tools (i.e. chainsaws or similar). On the calendar day immediately following the trimming, all of trees that were or similar). On the calendar day immediately following the trimming, all of trees that were previously trimmed would be removed (only if necessary for project construction).

g. In the event that a maternal colony of bats is found, no work would be conducted within 100 feet of the maternal roosting site until the maternal season is finished or the bats have left the site, or as otherwise directed by a qualified biologist. The site would be designated as a sensitive area and protected as such until the bats have left the site. No activities would be authorized adjacent to the roosting site. Combustion equipment, such as generators, pumps, and vehicles, would not to be parked nor operated under or adjacent to the roosting site. Construction personnel would not be authorized to enter areas beneath the colony, especially during the evening exodus (typically between 15 minutes prior to sunset and one hour following sunset).

To avoid potential impacts on the blunt-nosed leopard lizard (BNLL) and San Joaquin Kit Fox (SJFK), the following measures would be implemented per the CDFW survey and monitoring guidelines:

a. Worker Environmental Awareness Training for the leopard lizard and kit fox would be given to all personnel working on site and would include the ecology of the species, the sensitivity of the species to anthropogenic activities, legal protection afforded to the species, penalties for violations of federal and state laws, reporting requirements, and project features designed to reduce impacts on the species. This training would be conducted by a qualified biologist who is knowledgeable in the biology of the leopard lizard and kit fox.

b. Pre-construction surveys for the kit fox would be conducted by a qualified biologist no fewer than 14 days and no more than 30 days prior to the beginning of ground disturbance and/or construction activities. Surveys would identify kit fox habitat features in the project area and evaluated use by kit fox. Surveys would be repeated if construction activities are suspended for 5 days or more. The status of all dens would

be determined and mapped. If any dens are discovered, avoidance of the dens would follow the Standardized Recommendations for Protection of the Endangered San Joaquin Kit Fox Prior to or During Ground Disturbance (USFWS 2011). If a natal/pupping den is discovered in the project area or within 200 feet of the project area, the Service would be notified by Caltrans and, under no circumstances, would the den be disturbed or destroyed without an Incidental Take Statement for endangered species.

c. To prevent inadvertent entrapment of leopard lizard and kit fox or other animals during construction activities, all excavated, steep-walled holes or trenches more than six inches deep would be covered at the end of each working day by plywood or similar materials. If the trenches cannot be closed, one or more escape ramps constructed of earthen-fill or wooden planks would be installed. Before such holes or trenches are filled, they would be thoroughly inspected for trapped animals. If a leopard lizard or kit fox are discovered, project activities in the immediate vicinity will stop, and the animals would be allowed to move on their own. If they are unable to leave or escape voluntarily, the qualified biologist would notify the Service for further guidance.

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

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

The Biological Study Area (BSA) shall require a qualified biologist to complete a pre-construction surveys no more than 48 hours prior to construction to determine the presence or absence of special-status reptile species in the project area.

A qualified biologist would complete pre-construction surveys no more than 48 hours prior to construction to determine the presence or absence of special-status reptile species in the project area. Surveys would be repeated if construction activities are suspended for five days or more. If these species are identified onsite, appropriate measures would be developed and implemented to avoid impacts on these wildlife species, in consultation with appropriate resource agencies as applicable. Measures may include relocation, limiting construction to avoid these species, or creating a species-specific mitigation plan.

Adult leopard lizard surveys would be conducted 12 days over the course of the 90-day adult optimal survey period (April 15-July 15), with a maximum of four survey days per week and eight survey days within any 30-day period. At least one survey session should be conducted every four consecutive days.

In addition to the 12 days of adult blunt-nosed leopard lizard surveys required for activities in this category, five additional survey days are required during the hatchling optimal survey period (August 15 to September 30), with at least two survey days conducted between August 15 and 30 and at least two survey days between September 15 and 30, for a total of 17 survey days overall within the same survey season/calendar year.

In addition to the 12 days of adult blunt-nosed leopard lizard surveys required for activities in this category, five additional survey days are required during the hatchling optimal survey period (August 15 to September 30), with at least two survey days conducted between August 15 and 30 and at least two survey days between September 15 and 30, for a total of 17 survey days overall within the same survey season/calendar year.

All burrows not directly impacted by the project would be avoided by a minimum 10-foot buffer. A 10-foot buffer would be maintained around burrows throughout project construction.

A survey for leopard lizard that covers and follows the methods in CDFW's guidelines would be conducted each month during project implementation.

A litter control program would be instituted in the project area. All workers would make sure their food scraps, paper wrappers, food containers, cans, bottles, and other trash from the project area are deposited in covered or closed trash containers. The trash containers would be removed from the project area at the end of each working day.

No pets or firearms (except for federal, state, or local law enforcement office and security personnel) would be permitted on construction sites to avoid harassment, killing, or injuring of listed species.

Use of rodenticides and herbicides in the project area would be prohibited.

A representative appointed by the County would be the contact source for any employee or contractor who might inadvertently injure or kill a leopard lizard or kit fox or finds a dead, injured, or trapped individual. The representative would be identified during the employee education program. The representative's name and phone number would be provided to the Service. Any contractor, employee, or agency personnel who inadvertently kills, injures, or notices an entrapped leopard lizard or kit fox would immediately report the incident to the representative. The representative would immediately contact CDFW and all project work would stop until the County, Caltrans, CDFW, and the Service identify the appropriate measures needed to continue work and avoid take, or the County obtains an Incidental Take Permit. A representative appointed by the County would be the contact source for any employee or contractor who might inadvertently injure or kill a San Joaquin kit fox or finds a dead, injured, or trapped individual. The representative would be identified during the employee education program. The representative's name and phone number would be provided to the USFWS. Any contractor, employee, or agency personnel who inadvertently kills, injures, or notices an entrapped San Joaquin kit fox would immediately report the incident to the representative. The representative would immediately contact CDFW and all project work would stop until the County, Caltrans, CDFW, and USFWS identify the appropriate measures needed to continue work and avoid take, or the County obtains an Incidental Take Permit.

- C. Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally-protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

A Natural Environment Study (NES) was prepared for the project by Caltrans, dated January 2023. No federally protected wetlands were identified in the Biological Study Area (BSA).

- D. Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The project would not interfere substantially with wildlife movement. Construction impacts would be temporary and limited in geographic scope.

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

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

No conflicts with applicable County General Plan policies were identified.

- F. Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state Habitat Conservation Plan?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The project will not conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state Habitat Conservation Plan.

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

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

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

The project site is in an area of moderate sensitivity for archaeological finds, and no historical, cultural or archaeological resources were identified in the analysis, however, in the event that previously unknown subsurface historical, cultural or archaeological resources are unearthed during ground disturbance associated with this project, the following mitigation measure has been included.

Mitigation Measure(s)

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

VI. ENERGY

Would the project:

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

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

This project does not have the potential to cause a wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during operation because the replacement bridge will be a part of the existing circulation system and will not have any functions which require the use of energy. Therefore, the potential for inefficient use of energy may only occur during demolition of the existing bridge and construction of its replacement, along with the associated modifications to the utility structures. Uses include fuel necessary to operate construction equipment, transportation of materials to the project site, and the daily round trips by employees.

The Environmental Protection Agency and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, on behalf of the U.S. Department of Transportation have issued final rules to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve fuel economy by regulating the minimum acceptable miles-per-gallon ratio and other improvements such as air conditioner performance. Since these regulations apply to the manufacture of vehicles, they will be phased in as consumers replace old vehicles, leading to a general increase in fuel efficiency. In addition, since this project will be constructed in coordination with

the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), it will be subject to those standards outlined in the Highway Design Manual, which include regulations for the conservation of materials and energy.

Compliance with these existing regulations will ensure that the project does not result in a wasteful or inefficient use of energy or nonrenewable resources during demolition, construction, and the reorganization of utility lines.

VII. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Would the project:

- A. Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:
1. Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Per the Earthquake Hazards Zone Application maintained by the California Department of Conservation, there are no known earthquake faults or ruptures of a known earthquake fault located on or near the project site.

2. Strong seismic ground shaking?
3. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Per Figure 9-5, the project sites are located in an area designated as having a 0%-20% peak horizontal ground acceleration during a probabilistic seismic hazard assuming a 10% probability in 50 years. The project is not likely to be negatively affected by strong seismic ground shaking or seismic-related ground failure as the surrounding area has been identified as being affected by a lower chance of reaching peak ground acceleration during a seismic hazard. The project would be constructed to current building code standards which would consider site conditions and seismic conditions.

4. Landslides?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

According to Figure 9-6 of the FCGPBR, the project sites are not located in an area identified as having a moderate or high landslide hazard.

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

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

A Water Quality Assessment Report dated January 2023 (WQAR), prepared by GPA Consulting, was developed for the project. The report includes discussion of the project, the physical setting of the project area, regulatory requirements, provides data on surface water and groundwater within the project area, describes existing water quality impairments and beneficial uses, identifies potential impacts/benefits associated with the project, and recommends avoidance and minimization measures.

Work within and around the creek is expected to complete the project. Work would not be conducted within flowing water. These construction activities may impact the creek and result in changes to soil erosion patterns; however, regulatory permits required by Section 404 Nationwide Permit, Section 401 Water Quality Certification, and California Department Fish and Wildlife Section 1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement would ensure that the project would not result in substantial soil erosion. Additionally, standard best management practices along with the water quality avoidance and minimization measures outlined in the WQAR would be implemented during construction to minimize adverse effects on water quality within the creek and surrounding areas. Therefore, a less than significant impact is seen as a result of the project.

- C. Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

No geologic unit or unstable soil was identified on the project site. The project will be constructed to current building and safety codes and would take into account site conditions.

- C. Be located on expansive soil as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Figure 7-1 of the Fresno County General Plan Background Report (FCGPBR), the project will not be sited on soils exhibiting moderately high to high expansion potential.

- D. Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water; or
- E. Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not require or propose the construction of a septic system or alternative wastewater disposal system. There were no paleontological resource or unique geologic feature identified on the project site.

VIII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Would the project:

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

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

A greenhouse gas (GHG) analysis was prepared for the project by Analytical Environmental Services, dated January 22, 2021. The GHG analysis concluded the project would generate greenhouse gases during its approximately nine-month long construction period, however, since the project entails replacement of an existing bridge, the new bridge would not result in an increase in traffic, and therefore not result in any increase in GHG emissions from vehicle traffic. The estimated GHG emissions resulting from construction of the new bridge, were based upon the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District's Road Construction Emission Model, Version 9.0.0 (RCEM). The modeling estimate was that the project would generate approximately 880.83 Metric tons of CO₂e during its construction. Once constructed the project would not contribute to an increase in GHG emissions.

VIII. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Would the project:

- A. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials; or
- B. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The prepared Initial Site Assessment (ISA) by Rincon Consultants, Inc. for this project conducted site visits to review current conditions and determine if there are any indicators for potential contamination. Based on the conclusions made in the ISA, there are three potential contaminants that would require additional measures be implemented during construction activities. The items of concern are lead-based paint,

asbestos, and treated wood. The identified of these three items will be addressed through mandatory requirements for testing, handling, and removal under the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Standard and Non-Standard Special Provisions (SSPs and NSSPs). Specific requirements for each of the three items are noted in the conclusion of the ISA and have been attached as Appendix D. With mandatory compliance of these measures, the project would not result in a significant hazard to the public and environment during construction/demolition activities related to the project. Upon completion of the construction of the project, operation of the use would not result in a significant hazard as there is no utilization of hazardous materials associated with the right-of-way.

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

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

There are no schools within a one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school.

- D. Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

According to the NEPAassist database, there are no listed hazardous materials sites within a 0.5-mile radius of the project sites.

- 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project sites are not located within an airport land use plan and not within two miles of a public airport or public use airport.

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

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

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Reviewing agencies and departments did not express concern with the project to indicate an impairment of implementation of an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. Additionally, no comments concerning risk due to wildland

fires were expressed by reviewing agencies and departments. Concerning the possible emergency response vehicles, two of the bridge sites are proposed to be realigned where the existing bridge will remain until the replacement bridge is completed. This will avoid lengthy detours and provide continuous right-of-way for this area. The other bridge will construct a temporary creek crossing area while the existing bridge is demolished and replaced.

X. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Would the project:

- A. Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality; or
- B. Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

A Water Quality Report (WQR) prepared by Jennifer Johnson, Senior Associate Biologist for GPA Consulting found that potential water quality effects from project-related construction activities could occur. Implementation of best management practices and compliance with regulatory requirements will minimize and reduce the projects impact on water quality. As recommended in the WQR, mitigation measures focusing on BMPs will be implemented to ensure short-term and long-term impacts to water quality impacts resulting from the project and would not be substantial. In addition to the recommended mitigation measures, the project is also expected to comply with regulatory requirements through permit and approval from responsible agencies including the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Regional Water Quality Control Board, and potential requirements from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. With these considerations, the project will not violate water quality standards or waste discharge requirements and would not decrease groundwater recharge or supplies.

- 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 result in substantial erosion or siltation on or off site?
 - 1. Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;
 - 2. Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite?
 - 3. 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

4. Impede or redirect flood flows?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The project will be constructed to current code and meet classification requirements under the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). Temporary impacts resulting from the rerouting of the water course should construction activity be needed within Little Dry Creek would be permitted through the applicable regulatory agency and would not result in significant impact. When construction and demolition is complete, the course alteration will be removed, and post-project conditions will not result in significant impact. This will ensure that no substantial erosion or siltation occurs, the rate of surface runoff will not result in flooding and would not impede or redirect flood flows.

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

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

Review of applicable FEMA FIRM Panels indicate that the subject site is subject to flooding from the 100-year storm event. The proposed bridge replacement and right-of-way realignment could result in pollutant risk during construction. Once construction is complete, the replacement is expected to meet current standards and is planned to better handle flooding during the 100-year storm event when compared to the existing functionally obsolete bridge. Mitigation measures as recommended in the prepared Water Quality Report (WQR) will require that equipment and vehicle storage and maintenance be located at least 60 feet from riparian habitat or water bodies to avoid spills and inundation risks that could potentially drain into the body of water. This will reduce its risk of pollutant release to a less than significant impact. There are no bodies of water to indicate increased risk due to tsunami or seiche events.

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

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

As noted in the previous sections, the project is subject to review and permit from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Regional Water Quality Control Board. Compliance through permit requirements of both regulatory agencies will ensure that the project does not conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan. The project does not utilize water resources to the extent that a groundwater management plan would be impacted.

* **Mitigation Measure(s)**

1. *The project will comply with the Construction General Permit by preparing and implementing a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) to address all*

construction-related activities, equipment, and materials that have the potential to impact water quality. The SWPPP will identify the sources of pollutants that may affect the quality of storm water and determine the site risk level, and will include BMPs to control the pollutants, such as sediment control, catch basin inlet protection, construction materials management and non-storm water BMPs. All work must conform to the Construction Site BMP requirements specified in the latest edition of the Storm Water Quality Handbooks: Construction Site Best Management Practices Manual to control and minimize the impacts of construction and construction related activities, material and pollutants on the watershed.

2. *The project will limit ground clearing/disturbing activities to just those areas necessary for completion of the project, thereby minimizing the potential for erosion.*
3. *The project will avoid work within the wetted portion of the streambed, to the extent feasible.*

XI. LAND USE AND PLANNING

Would the project:

- A. Physically divide an established community; or
- B. Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project intends to replace a bridge that has been determined to be functionally obsolete and replace it with a bridge that would be constructed to current standards. Construction of the replacement bridge would occur first with the existing bridge remaining to avoid traffic detour. Once the replacement bridge is constructed, the existing bridge will be demolished. The project would not physically divide an established community.

There were no land use plan, policy or regulation identified that would be in conflict with the project.

XII. MINERAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

- A. Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state; or
- B. Result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local General Plan, Specific Plan or other land use plan?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Per Figure 7-7 of the Fresno County General Plan Background Report, the project site could potentially be located in the vicinity of an identified mineral resource. However, the project site is located along public right-of-way and is not likely to result in the loss of availability of the known mineral resource. According to Figure 7-8 the project site is not located near a principal mineral producing location.

XIII. NOISE

Would the project result in:

- A. Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies; or
- B. Generation of excessive ground-borne vibration or ground-borne noise levels?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION
INCORPORATED:

Temporary increases in noise generation related to construction and demolition activities associated with the project would occur. The closest sensitive receptor from the bridge is located approximately seven miles east of the bridge site. The project will be subject to the regulations under the Fresno County Noise Ordinance. In consideration of nearby sensitive receptors and compliance of the project with the Fresno County Noise Ordinance, the project will have a less than significant impact. Mitigation measures as recommended in the Technical Noise Memorandum does would ensure that impacts on sensitive receptors would be mitigated to a less than significant impact.

* **Mitigation Measure(s)**

- 1. *Stationary construction equipment shall be placed so that emitted noise is directed away from the nearest sensitive receptor.*
 - 2. *Equipment staging areas shall be located the greatest distance feasible to create distance between construction-related noise sources and noise sensitive receptors.*
 - 3. *Construction activities associated with the proposed project shall be limited to the hours of 6:00 AM to 9:00 PM on weekdays and 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM on weekends.*
- 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 be residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels; or

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or airport land use plan, nor are they located within two miles of a public airport or public use airport. For reference, the closest airport, Fresno Yosemite International Airport is located approximately 22-miles southwest of the project site.

XIV. POPULATION AND HOUSING

Would the project:

- A. Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?; or
- B. Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project intends to demolish and replace three bridge sites that were determined to fall below current state and local design and safety standards. The project would not induce substantial unplanned population growth or displace a substantial number of people or housing.

XV. PUBLIC SERVICES

Would the project:

- A. Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically-altered governmental facilities, or the need for new or physically-altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services?
 - 1. Fire protection;
 - 2. Police protection;
 - 3. Schools;
 - 4. Parks; or
 - 5. Other public facilities?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project would not result in the requirement or provision of new or physically-altered governmental facilities. As noted, the project proposes to demolish and replace a bridge along El Dorado Road and would not result in the need for additional public services.

XVI. RECREATION

Would the project:

- A. Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated; or
- B. Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities, which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project proposes to demolish and replace three bridges along El Dorado Road. The project does not include or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities nor would it increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional recreational facilities.

XVI. TRANSPORTATION

Would the project:

- A. Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities; or
- B. Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?; or
- C. Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?; or
- D. Result in inadequate emergency access?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

As determined by the California Department of Transportation, the existing bridge site was classified as functionally obsolete or structurally deficient and requires replacement. The project does not propose an increase in lanes or capacity where Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) would increase. There are no identified programs, plans, ordinances, or policies that would be in conflict with the project. There were no design features identified as increasing hazards.

XVIII. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

- A. 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:
1. Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or
 2. A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

Under the provisions of Assembly Bill 52 (AB 52), participating California Native American Tribes were notified of the project and given the opportunity to enter into consultation with the County of Fresno. No request for consultation was received and no concerns were expressed by notified California Native American Tribes. Given the project scope, mitigation measures are proposed to be implemented to ensure proper procedure is in place, should a cultural resource be unearthed during project construction and demolition.

* **Mitigation Measure(s)**

1. See Section V. Cultural Resources, Mitigation Measure #1

XIX. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

Would the project:

- A. Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not 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.

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

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not require the use of water for operation and there would not have an impact on water supplies.

- C. Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not require provision of a wastewater treatment system or provider.

- D. Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals; or
- E. Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Reviewing Agencies and Departments did not express concern with the project to indicate solid waste generation in excess of State or local standards. The prepared Initial Site Assessment indicated possible hazardous substances within the solid waste produced from activities related to the bridge demolition. Management of the hazardous substances produced from bridge demolition solid waste would be handled and disposed of in accordance with local and state regulations.

XX. WILDFIRE

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

- A. Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Per the Fresno County Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map, the project is located within a State Responsibility Area (SRA) and is classified as moderate severity. The project would not substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evaluation plan. With consideration of the project scope, the project would not impair emergency response or evacuation and would have 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; or
- 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; or
- D. Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project would not exacerbate wildfire risks or expose people or structures to significant risks. The project would not result in substantial impacts to the environment that would exacerbate fire risk. Reviewing agencies and departments did not express concern with the project indicating an increased fire risk due to project construction.

XXI. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Would the project:

- A. Have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

The project has the potential to affect the environment through modification of habitat for wildlife species. As discussed in Section IV Biological Resources and reviewed in the prepared Natural Environment Study (NES), certain special-status species were identified as having habitat present in and near the project site. Mitigation measures for identified special-status species in the NES and by comment from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife are to be implemented so that project impacts would not negatively impact the species. With the recommended mitigation measures being implemented, a less than significant impact would occur.

- B. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

No cumulatively considerable impact was identified as a result of the analysis. Impacts related to Aesthetics, Agricultural and Forestry Resources, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Hydrology and Water Quality, and Tribal Cultural Resources were identified as being less than significant with implementation of mitigation measures and were not considered cumulative impacts.

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

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

No substantial adverse effects on human beings were identified as a result of the analysis.

CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

Based upon the Initial Study prepared for the El Dorado Ave Bridge Replacement Project, staff has concluded that the project will not have a significant effect on the environment. It has been determined that there would be no impacts to Energy, Land Use Planning, Mineral Resources, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation, Utilities and Service Systems, and Wildfire.

Potential impacts related to Air Quality, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, and Noise have been determined to be less than significant. Potential impacts relating to Aesthetics, Agricultural and Forestry Resources, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Hydrology and Water Quality, and Tribal Cultural Resources have determined to be less than significant with compliance with recommended mitigation measures.

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

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