

12th Street Interchange Modernization Project

Final ISMND and Response to Comments

City of Fortuna

April 01, 2025



12th Street Interchange Modernization Project

Prepared for:



City of Fortuna
P.O. Box 545
Fortuna, CA 95540

Prepared by:



GHD
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Eureka, CA 95501

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1. Purpose of the Response to Comment and Errata of the Initial Study/Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration

This document for the 12th Street Interchange Modernization Project (Project) consists of comments received during circulation of the Initial Study/Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration (ISMND) and the City of Fortuna (City) responses to comments. The ISMND identified likely environmental consequences associated with the Project, and recommended mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant impacts.

2. Environmental Review Process

The City, serving as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Lead Agency, prepared an ISMND for the Project. The ISMND was submitted to the Office of Planning and Research State Clearinghouse for review by state agencies, and to agencies with jurisdiction by law over resources affected by the Project on February 26, 2025. The public circulation period was from February 26, 2025, through March 28, 2025.

In accordance with the requirements of CEQA, the City provided a Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration (NOI) to the public, responsible agencies, trustee agencies, Humboldt County Clerk, and the State Clearinghouse. The City published the NOI in the North Coast Journal on February 27, 2025, and the NOI was posted at the Humboldt County Clerk's office for the 30-day public circulation period. The City posted the ISMND on its website within the "Public Notices" section at www.friendlyfortuna.com, as well as at the City office at 621 11th Street, Fortuna, CA 95540 throughout the 30-day public circulation period.

The City Council will hold a meeting at the Fortuna City Council Chambers on April 7, 2025, at 6:00 p.m., to consider adoption of the ISMND, including the comments received, and approval of the Project. Noticing and review periods required by CEQA have been satisfied. The ISMND was completed under the direction and supervision of the City with support from their consultant team and reflects the City's independent judgement and analysis of the potential environmental effects of the Project.

The contact person for the City is:

Brendan Byrd, Public Works Director
City of Fortuna
P.O. Box 545, Fortuna, CA 95540
Phone: (707) 725-1469
Email: bbyrd@ci.fortuna.ca.us

3. Comments and Responses

Two California state agencies, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (NCRWQCB) and the Great Redwood Trail Agency (GRTA), submitted formal comments on the Project during the public circulation period. The City received no other formal comments from the public or other agencies. The comment letters from the NCRWQCB and GRTA are enclosed below, and responses to comments received follow thereafter.

3.1 Comments and Responses

The City acknowledges comments expressed by the NCRWQCB and GRTA comment letters and looks forward to ongoing collaboration.

Response to Letter 1 Comment 1 – Ensure Conformity with Land Use Covenant Restrictions

This comment states that the Regional Water Boards regulate the future land use and future excavation work on the Pacific Lumber Company Fortuna Mill property (Referenced within the ISMND as the former Palco Lumber Mill) under the land use covenant (LUC). The LUC would require all excavation within the former Palco Lumber Mill be approved by the NCRWQCB, that a Health and Safety Plan must be implemented, and that the work must comply with the 2020 Soil and Groundwater Management Plan for the site. The comment asserts that the Project would not be prohibited by the LUC but recommends that the City make the restrictions conditions of approval. The City would adhere to the criteria listed in this comment and will include the LUC in the conditions of approval for the Project.

Response to Letter 2 Comment 1 – Great Redwood Trail Agency

This comment states that statement on page 1-3 that the “railroad corridor is owned in fee by the Great Redwood Trail Agency (GRTA)” should be removed as the railroad corridor is the GRTA right-of-way and under their control. The City has removed the referenced sentence of the ISMND page 1-3 via errata in Section 4.

From: Bauer, Heidi M.@Waterboards <Heidi.M.Bauer@Waterboards.ca.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 3, 2025 12:41 PM
To: Brendan Byrd <bbyrd@ci.fortuna.ca.us>; Andrea Hilton <andrea.hilton@ghd.com>
Cc: McLaughlin, Kelsey R.@Waterboards <Kelsey.McLaughlin@Waterboards.ca.gov>
Subject: Comment on 12th Street Interchange Modernization Project

You don't often get email from heidi.m.bauer@waterboards.ca.gov. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Mr. Byrd and Ms. Hilton, we reviewed the CEQA documents for this project and found that the project lies within one of our closed sites [The Pacific Lumber Company Fortuna Mill](#). This site was closed with land use covenant (LUC) which contains restrictions governing future land use and future excavation work on the property. The LUC is available here: [PALCO Fortuna_Recorded Covenant.pdf](#). The proposed use as an interchange is not prohibited in the LUC, but 1) all excavation work must be approved by the Regional Water Board in writing, 2) any excavation work shall be performed pursuant to an appropriate and fully implemented Health and Safety Plan and 3) all excavation work shall be performed in accordance with the January 20, 2020 [site specific Soil & Groundwater Management Plan](#) and [revised figure](#). We recommend making these conditions of approval prior to finalizing the project. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you.

Best,

Heidi

Heidi M. Bauer, P.G.
Senior Engineering Geologist
Site Cleanups Unit Supervisor
North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
5550 Skylane Blvd. Suite A
Santa Rosa, CA. 95403
heidi.m.bauer@waterboards.ca.gov
Office: (707) 570-3769



From: Bartee, Hannah@SCC <Hannah.Bartee@scc.ca.gov>
Sent: Friday, March 28, 2025 2:00 PM
To: Brendan E. Byrd <bbyrd@ci.fortuna.ca.us>; Elaine Hogan <elaine@thegreatredwoodtrail.org>
Cc: Shari Meads <smeads@ci.fortuna.ca.us>; Amy Nilsen <anilsen@ci.fortuna.ca.us>
Subject: Re: Public Review CEQA Document - 12th Street Interchange Project

Hi Brendan,

Thank you for sharing the notice for the public review of CEQA for the 12th St. project. Our primary requested edit and comment at this time is the following:

On page 1-3 (PDF page 8), please remove this sentence: "The railroad corridor is owned in fee by the GRTA." The railroad corridor is the GRTA right-of-way and under our control. Under railbanking, the right-of-way (whether fee or easement) can be used for trail as an interim use. We appreciate the other areas of the document where the potential for a return to active rail (assumed under railbanking) has been acknowledged.

Thank you,
Hannah

Hannah Bartee (she/her)
Project Manager, Great Redwood Trail
State Coastal Conservancy | www.scc.ca.gov
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1000, Oakland, CA 94612
Phone: (341) 699-7426
Email: hannah.bartee@scc.ca.gov

 [Book time to meet with me](#)

4. Errata

The purpose of this errata is to document revisions to the ISMND that are intended to clarify project details since it was submitted to the Office of Planning and Research State Clearinghouse on February 26, 2025, and publicly circulated between February 26, 2025, through March 28, 2025.

The errata include excerpts of text from the ISMND that are proposed for modification and does not include the entire ISMND. Specifically, the entire subsection that contains the text proposed for modification is copied into the errata, and newly proposed text in the errata is **underlined and bolded**, deleted text from the original ISMND is stricken with ~~single strikethrough~~, and unchanged text remains in normal font. Only the subsections of the original ISMND that are proposed for modification are copied into the errata

1.5 - Project Location

The proposed Project includes improvements to the U.S. Hwy 101 interchange at 12th Street in Fortuna, Humboldt County, CA (Appendix A – Figure 1). The proposed Project Area is approximately 22 acres and located within Caltrans and the City of Fortuna rights-of-way (Appendix A – Figure 2). Roads within the Project Area includes the 12th Street U.S. 101 northbound off- and on-ramps, the southern terminus of 12th Street to approximately 117 12th Street, the northern terminus of Riverwalk Drive to Dinsmore Drive, the western terminus of Newburg Road to 1498 Newburg Road, approximately 120 feet of Meadowbrook Land and Sunnybrook Drive from Newburg Road, and Pond Street. The Project Area borders the Clendenen's Cider Works on the north and the former Palco Lumber Mill to the southeast.

In October 2022, the federal Surface Transportation Board authorized the rail corridor within the Project Area to be railbanked. The railbanked right-of-way must be used in a manner consistent with full restoration of potential future railroad use. The Project requires encroachment on Great Redwood Trail Agency (GRTA) property and use of a railbanked railroad corridor planned for the Great Redwood Trail (GRT). ~~The railroad corridor is owned in fee by the GRTA.~~ Project activities within the GRTA right-of-way would require an encroachment permit from the GRTA.

The Project Area is bordered by Strongs Creek to the southwest and Rohner Creek to the north; however, neither creek is inside the Project Area.



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