

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FINDINGS FOR
CENTENNIAL CORRIDOR PROJECT**

BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA

DISTRICT 6 - KER - 58 - PM T31.7 to PM R55.6

DISTRICT 6 - KER - 99 - PM 21.2 to PM 26.2

The following information is presented to comply with State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (Title 14 California Code of Regulations, Chapter 3, Section 15901) and the Department of Transportation and California Transportation Commission Environmental Regulations (Title 21, California Code of Regulations, Chapter 11, Section 1501). Reference is made to the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the project, which is the basic source for the information.

The following effects have been identified in the FEIR as resulting from the project. Effects found not to be significant have not been included.

Visual/Aesthetics

Adverse Environmental Effects

The project will add a major new transportation corridor in the Westpark community of Bakersfield. Removal of existing residential, commercial, and industrial structures and construction of elevated structures such as sound walls, retaining walls and an above-grade freeway will create a significant permanent change to the visual character and quality of the community and its surroundings. Long-term visual impacts on key viewpoints range from moderately low to moderately high after project implementation.

Findings:

Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project, which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the FEIR.

Statement of Facts:

Mitigation measures V-1 through V-5 have been made conditions of approval and included in the Environmental Commitments Record. Landscaping and aesthetic treatment of freeway elements (such as bridges) will be implemented to soften the addition of new transportation corridor infrastructure, reduce visual impacts, and improve visual appeal to the residential, open space, and commercial areas

along the proposed corridor and its vicinity. These measures are also intended to reduce the visual impacts of the proposed project for community residents, commercial employees, recreational users, and motorists traveling along commercial corridors near the proposed project. These measures include preserving as many mature trees as possible, implementing a tree replacement plan and designing infiltration basins to include buffer areas and/or plant screens to shield the public views where possible. Even with these mitigation measures, visual impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.

Community Impacts

Adverse Environmental Effects

Construction of the project will result in land use conversion and division of the existing Westpark neighborhood. The new corridor will segment and isolate portions of the neighborhood and will alter circulation patterns due to the changes to the internal roadway network, such as the permanent closure of 11 local streets. In addition to the displacement of 310 residential units, construction of the proposed corridor will result in increased noise impacts within the Westpark neighborhood, and will cause disruptions in local neighborhood access. In addition, these substantial residential and commercial property acquisitions will cause significant community cohesiveness impacts to the Westpark community.

Findings:

Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project, which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the FEIR.

Statement of Facts:

Mitigation measures C-1 through C-3 would be implemented to reduce impacts to the Westpark community. The measure include providing an aesthetic design theme that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood; preparation of a relocation analysis as part of the Final Relocation Impact Report by Caltrans, in coordination with the city of Bakersfield; and, close coordination with the Kern County Department of Human Services to prepare a special publication for the residents of the Centennial Corridor project area that will identify the variety of social service providers available from metropolitan Bakersfield and Kern County public and private community-based organizations, including local religious institutions.

Standard Conditions SC-CI-1 through SC-CI-4, SC-R-1, and mitigation measures R-1 and C-1 through C-3 have been made conditions of approval and are included in the Environmental Commitments Record. Standard Conditions SC-

CI-1 through SC-CI-4 would minimize construction impacts on community impacts by scheduling street closures during nighttime hours; maintaining business access during business hours; enabling close coordination with emergency service providers; and implementing access plans for highly sensitive land uses such as police and fire stations, public facilities, transit stations, hospitals, and schools.

Standard Condition SC-R-1 would require Caltrans, in coordination with the city of Bakersfield, to implement all property acquisition and relocation activities in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (Uniform Act) of 1970 (Public Law 91-646, 84 Stat. 1894). If, however, displaced residents are required to relocate outside of their immediate neighborhood or sub-community, existing supportive family and community relationships may be severed for those leaving, as well as for those remaining behind. Neighbors, friends, and family, often provide emotional support that cannot be easily replicated. These characteristics of a cohesive community cannot be completely mitigated and are unavoidable. Mitigation measure R-1 would help to reduce impacts to businesses and residents by implementing programs and policies to minimize the relocation effects on children, minorities, people with special needs, and businesses.

Design refinements have been incorporated into the proposed project to enhance non-motorized circulation and community cohesion within the general area of the Preferred Alternative B alignment. Excess right-of-way would be used to construct a sidewalk/bikeway to connect La Mirada Drive to portions of the Westpark neighborhood between Joseph Drive, McDonald Way, Stockdale Highway, and Stine Road. This proposed feature would upgrade bicyclist and pedestrian access to Centennial Park and other places of interest via La Mirada Drive.

To address concerns made during the public review of the draft environmental document regarding bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, preliminary design plans for Alternative B now include a two-way bicycle and pedestrian pathway to run parallel to the project alignment connecting California Avenue to Commerce Drive. As part of this change, an approximately 100-foot-long bridge over the Carrier Canal would be constructed to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians. This multi-use pathway and bridge structure enhancement will provide a direct link to the Kern River Parkway Bike Trail for its users. Incorporation of this connection into the project design would enhance local non-motorized circulation because the proposed modification would provide an additional connection between California Avenue and Commerce Drive.

Despite measures required by the Uniform Relocation Act to mitigate for residential and business displacements and incorporation of design refinements to enhance community cohesion, no available reasonable mitigation measures

would reduce all community impacts in their entirety. Impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.

Land Use and Planning

Adverse Environmental Effects

Implementation of the project will not be able to fully meet all the goals outlined in the *Metropolitan Bakersfield 2010 General Plan (2002, update 2007)*. The remaining inconsistencies pertain to issues such as minimizing impacts from truck traffic on noise-sensitive use areas, such as the Westpark neighborhood, which would also be divided as a result of the project. The project would also allow in-fill development that is incompatible with the character of the existing surrounding neighborhood.

Findings:

Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project, which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the FEIR.

Statement of Facts:

Alternative B, the selected alternative, has been designed to minimize inconsistencies with state, regional, and local plans and programs to the greatest extent feasible. Design refinements to avoid or minimize impacts to existing land uses related both to temporary construction use and/or permanent acquisition of properties would be incorporated in the final engineering design of the project, to the extent practical. If the project would result in noise impacts on adjacent land uses, the impacts would be abated through sound walls, when feasible and reasonable. Property acquisitions would be provided fair and just compensation under the Uniform Relocation Act of 1987, as amended. Remaining land parcels would be reconfigured to restore functional areas and neighborhoods in accordance with the planning standards set forth by the city of Bakersfield Planning Department. During final design, efforts would be made to further minimize construction and permanent impacts to existing and planned land uses. However, these impacts cannot be fully mitigated; they would remain significant and unavoidable.

Noise

Adverse Environmental Effects

With construction of Alternative B, 484 outdoor use areas, such as schools, and recreational areas, would be impacted by traffic noise. There are 49 frequent outdoor use areas west of State Route 99 that would have more than a 12-

decibel noise increase and 21 frequent outdoor use areas along State Route 58 and State Route 99 that would have more than a 5-decibel noise increase.

Findings:

Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project, which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the FEIR.

Statement of Facts:

A total of 25 sound walls will be constructed to abate traffic noise covering the entire project corridor as described in Mitigation Measure N-1 of the FEIR. A total of 10 sound walls would be constructed west of State Route 99: S509, S518, S530, S519, S529, S536, S544, S552, S537, and S555. Sound wall S676 would be constructed to provide noise abatement along State Route 99. A total of 14 sound walls would be constructed east of State Route 99, along State Route 58: S194, S106, S45, S68, S71A, S93, S107, S119, S108, S147, S144, S165, S164 and S184. Sound walls will range in height from 8 to 16 feet at these 25 locations for the project, for a total length of 30,696 feet, and would reduce noise levels by at least 5 decibels.

Future predicted traffic noise levels with the recommended abatement measures for the Preferred Alternative B would range from 54 to 75 decibels. There would be 11 affected frequent outdoor use areas for which noise abatement is not recommended, and 58 frequent outdoor use areas would still be affected even with the recommended sound walls. Therefore, even with mitigation measures implemented, traffic noise impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.