

**Appendix I**    *Wetlands Only Practicable  
Alternative Finding*

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# Wetlands Only Practicable Alternative Finding

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Pursuant to: Executive Order 11990 – Protection of Wetlands

Alternatives:

The Preferred Alternative for the Highway 101 HOV Lane Widening and Improvements Project is the Build Alternative with Option B for the State Route 116 (SR 116) interchange. This facility consists of widening Highway 101 for approximately 10.3 km (6.4 mi) from its current four lanes to six lanes by adding one HOV lane in each direction from Old Redwood Highway to the Rohnert Park Expressway. The project would also provide auxiliary lanes, interchange modifications and ramp improvements and a climbing lane in the northbound direction over the Cotati Grade. Most of these improvements can be accommodated within the existing right-of-way; however, some improvements would require acquisition of additional right-of-way. Acquisition of additional right-of-way would be required primarily at Old Redwood Highway-Petaluma Boulevard North and SR 116 interchanges; at the Pepper Road southbound on-ramp; and at one spot location to accommodate embankment widening just north of Pepper Road.

Interchange Option B would involve regrading the mainline to meet current vertical alignment and clearance standards, and would entail replacing the existing SR 116 bridge structure and reconstruction of the ramps to accommodate the raised profile. The Highway 101 mainline profile would be raised up to 3 m (10 ft) above the existing highway over a distance of 900 m (2,950 ft) to provide standard stopping sight distance on the mainline, and at SR 116, the existing structures would be placed and raised approximately 1.4 m (6 ft) to provide standard vertical clearance and falsework clearance during construction over SR 116. Approximately 200 m of Redwood Drive would be realigned to accommodate the southbound off-ramp realignment. Three retaining walls would be required under this option to minimize right-of-way and sensitive habitat impacts.

Five jurisdictional wetland areas are within the project corridor. These wetlands are identified in Table I-1, Wetland Impacts under the Preferred Alternative, and shown on project plans in Appendix G of the EA/FEIR. Caltrans and SCTA reviewed various alignment alternatives in an attempt to minimize impacts to wetlands. Because the project involves the widening of an existing roadway, opportunities to avoid wetlands that run along or are traversed by the roadway are limited. It is not possible to entirely avoid impacts to wetlands, given their locations with respect to the location of the existing roadway and interchange. Most project alternatives and design concepts that were considered and withdrawn from consideration early in the design process would have had equal or greater impacts to wetlands.

Although the SR 116 Interchange Option B of the Build Alternative would affect greater amounts of wetlands (the differences are extremely small, see Section 3.15.2.4 for an analysis of each option), it is more prudent than Interchange Option A. Interchange Option A would retain existing nonstandard features and deficiencies such as less than standard mainline stopping sight distance and nonstandard vertical clearance. In addition, Option A bridge spans would not accommodate ADA-compliant Class II bike lanes and sidewalks.

No impacts to wetlands would occur under the No-Build Alternative, except for the effects of routine maintenance, but the No-Build Alternative would not meet the project purpose and need. Without the capacity and operational improvements represented by the HOV lanes and related facilities, traffic congestion and travel delay would continue to worsen over time and future travel demand would not be able to be served.

Table I-1 shows effects to wetlands under the Preferred Alternative.

| <b>Table I-1: Wetland Impacts under the Preferred Alternative</b> |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
|   | <b>Location</b>   | <b>Acres</b>                           |   |
|   |   | <b>Permanently Affected by Project</b> | <b>Temporarily Affected by Project (Construction Phase)</b> |
| <b>Wetlands</b>   | <i>Ditches near Old Redwood Highway</i>                   | 0.4204                                 | 0.1440  |
|   | <i>Seasonal Wetlands North of Denman Flat</i>             | 0.1041                                 | 0.1812  |
|   | <i>West Railroad Avenue</i>                               | 0.0000                                 | 0.0003  |
|   | <i>Headwaters and Tributaries to Laguna de Santa Rosa</i> | 0.0024                                 | 0.0024  |
|   | <i>Ditches near SR 116</i>                                | 0.1089                                 | 0.0330  |
| <b>Total Wetlands</b>   |   | <b>0.6358</b>                          | <b>0.3609</b>   |

**Measures to Minimize Harm:**

The project has been designed to minimize impacts to wetlands within the project corridor. Mitigation measures will be implemented for both permanent and temporary (construction phase) impacts of the project to ensure no net loss of wetlands. During project construction, all wetland areas adjacent to the project will be designated as Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA). All wetland areas temporarily disturbed by construction will be fully restored following construction activities. Proposed project impacts to jurisdictional areas will be compensated by purchase of mitigation credits in an USACE-approved wetland mitigation bank.

**Finding:**

Based on the considerations reported above, it is determined that there is no practicable alternative to the proposed new construction in wetlands and that the proposed project includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands that may result from such use.