

Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS
CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

CTC Meeting: August 6, 2013

Reference No.: 2.2c.(4)
Action Item

From: STEVEN KECK
Acting Chief Financial Officer

Prepared by: Katrina Pierce
Division Chief
Environmental Analysis

Subject: **APPROVAL OF PROJECT FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION OF FUNDING**
04-SCI-152; PM 0.14/5.20
RESOLUTION E-13-66

RECOMMENDATION:

The California Department of Transportation (Department) recommends that the California Transportation Commission (Commission), as a responsible agency, approve the attached Resolutions E-13-66.

ISSUE:

The attached resolution proposes to approve for future consideration of funding the following project for which a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) has been completed:

- State Route 152 (SR 152) in Santa Clara County. Construct roadway improvements at five locations along portions of SR-152 near the city of Gilroy. (PPNO 0483J)

This project in Santa Clara County will construct roadway improvements in five locations on State Route 152 near the city of Gilroy. The project is programmed in the 2012 State Highway Operation and Protection Program. The total estimated cost is \$37,141,000 for capital and support. Construction is estimated to begin in Fiscal Year 2013-14. The scope, as described for the preferred alternative, is consistent with the project scope programmed by the Commission in the 2012 State Highway Operation and Protection Program.

A copy of the FEIR including the addendum has been provided to Commission staff. An addendum to the original FEIR was prepared to address changes to the original project design. Resources that may be impacted by the project include: visual, water quality and stormwater runoff, hazardous waste, geology and soils, and biological resources. Potential impacts associated with the project can all be mitigated to below significance through proposed mitigation measures with the exception of visual impacts, which have been determined to be an unavoidable significant environmental effect. As a result, a Final Environmental Impact Report with addendum was prepared for the project.

Attachments

CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Resolution for Future Consideration of Funding

04-SCI-152, PM 0.14/5.20

Resolution E-13-66

- 1.1** **WHEREAS**, the California Department of Transportation (Department) has completed an Environmental Impact Report pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines for the following project:
- State Route 152 (SR 152) in Santa Clara County. Construct roadway improvements at five locations along portions of SR 152 near the city of Gilroy. (PPNO 0483J)
- 1.2** **WHEREAS**, the Department has certified that the Environmental Impact Report has been completed pursuant to CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines for its implementation; and
- 1.3** **WHEREAS**, the California Transportation Commission, as a responsible agency, has considered the information contained in the Final Environmental Impact Report.
- 1.4** **WHEREAS**, the project will have a significant effect on the environment.
- 1.5** **WHEREAS**, a Statement of Overriding Considerations was prepared; and
- 1.6** **WHEREAS**, Findings were made pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines; and
- 2.1** **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the California Transportation Commission does hereby support approval of the above referenced project to allow for consideration of funding.

FINDINGS

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FINDINGS FOR THE HECKER PASS SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The following information is presented to comply with State 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 EIR as resulting from the project. Effects found not to be significant have not been included.

Visual/Aesthetics

Adverse Environmental Effects

The introduction of the proposed retaining walls, with all recommended mitigation measures, would still have significant adverse impacts to the visual character and quality of the SR 152 scenic highway corridor. In all, up to approximately 0.75 mile (approximately 3,963 ft) of new retaining walls would be constructed in the corridor; approximately 1.6 miles of the highway overall would be affected by the project.

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 final EIR.

Statement of Facts

To address the potential impacts of visual intrusion from the new retaining walls, the following mitigation measures are recommended:

- Minimizing overall wall height to the greatest extent feasible.
- Using context-sensitive wall texture and color treatment, in consultation with local agencies, to reduce visual contrast and enhance compatibility of visual character to the greatest extent feasible.
- Staining of bottom, safety-barrier portion of walls to reduce overall color contrast and visual intrusion.

- If feasible, walls shall be gutterless and without chain-link safety fence in order to reduce visual contrast.
- Wherever feasible and consistent with safety, the use of crash cushions at retaining walls shall be avoided to reduce the visual contrast with the natural environment.

In addition to those measures, the following measures also apply to Location 4: To minimize the contrast in visual character and decline in visual quality as a result of Wall 4E as seen by park visitors, the Department will use context-sensitive wall color and texture treatment. Color shall be dark to minimize contrast and reflectivity; texture treatment such as stacked stone, carved rock or other similar treatment shall be used to articulate the wall surface and provide a more naturalistic, context-compatible visual character.

STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE HECKER PASS SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

The following information is presented to comply with State CEQA Guidelines (Title 14 California Code of Regulations, Chapter 3, Section 15903), 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 impacts have been identified as significant and not fully mitigable: The introduction of the proposed retaining walls, with all recommended mitigation measures, would still have significant adverse impacts to the visual character and quality of the SR 152 scenic highway corridor.

Overriding considerations that support approval of this recommended project are as follows:

This is a safety improvement project, of which the purpose is to reduce the number of cross-centerline and run-off-the road accidents along this highway corridor. The roadway currently has many deficiencies. The existing alignment has sharp turns, narrow shoulders in many locations, and steep embankments and vegetation adjacent to the shoulders of the roadway. Truck-trailers over 45 ft long have already been banned from SR 152 between Watsonville and Gilroy since 1986, based on, among other factors, the limited roadway width, winding alignment of the highway, and the number of truck-involved accidents. Adding to the available pullout areas would increase refuge opportunities for disabled vehicles. The inability of emergency response vehicles to use shoulders and bypass stalled traffic to reach disabled vehicles delays their response time.

A number of accidents on this segment of the highway have involved vehicles that cross the roadway centerline. The Department developed a list in 2004 of candidate major collision-reduction projects to the Headquarters of Traffic Safety program coordinator based on results from the Two- and Three-Lane Safety Monitoring program. Because a high number of cross-centerline accidents (CCAs) occurred within this portion of SR 152 during the study period, the Project was submitted and the District's recommendation was approved by District Headquarters on June 21, 2004. The study found that 29 of the 176 accidents involved vehicles that crossed the centerline. Constructing the improvements proposed as part of this project would create an upgraded facility that would be better able to assist out-of-control motorists from crossing the centerline and would reduce CCAs.

Improving safety along the present location of the highway cannot be accomplished without removal of vegetation, additional side slope grading, and construction of retaining walls and other slope stability measures.

This project had two alternatives, a build and no build. The build alternative was chosen as it meets the project's purpose and need. There was no public controversy, and the Department received comments supporting the build alternative, but none supporting the no build alternative.