

Chowchilla Capital Preventive Maintenance (CAPM) Project

On State Route 233 in the City of Chowchilla
from Avenue 24½ to State Route 99

06-MAD-233-PM-1.80/3.88

Project ID Number 0619000224

State Clearinghouse Number 2024040506

Initial Study with Negative Declaration

Volume 1 of 2



Prepared by the
State of California Department of Transportation

May 2024



General Information About This Document

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The Initial Study circulated to the public for review and comment for 30 days between April 15, 2024, and May 15, 2024. Comments received during this period are included in Appendix E.

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Rehabilitate pavement and upgrade Transportation Management System (TMS) elements, construct Complete Streets elements and broadband on State Route 233 in Madera County in the City of Chowchilla from Avenue 24½ to State Route 99

INITIAL STUDY with Negative Declaration

Submitted Pursuant to: (State) Division 13, California Public Resources Code

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Transportation
and
Responsible Agency: California Transportation Commission



Javier Almaguer
Office Chief, Environmental
California Department of Transportation
CEQA Lead Agency

June 05, 2024

Date

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Negative Declaration

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

State Clearinghouse Number: 2024040506

District-County-Route-Post Mile: 06-MAD-233-PM 1.80-3.88

EA/Project Number: EA 06-0W860 and Project ID Number 0619000224

Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to improve State Route 233 in Madera County in the City of Chowchilla from Avenue 24½ to State Route 99. Improvements would rehabilitate pavement and upgrade Transportation Management System (TMS) elements, including signals, roadside signs and guardrail, and construct Complete Streets elements, including bike lanes, Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant (ADA) curb ramps, bulb-outs, parking bays, enhanced visibility crosswalks, flashing beacons, lighting, sidewalks, and broadband.

Determination

An Initial Study has been prepared by Caltrans District 6. On the basis of this study, it is determined that the proposed action will have no effect on aesthetics, agriculture and forestry resources, air quality, biology, energy, geology and soils, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, tribal cultural resources, utilities and service systems, and wildfire.

In addition, the proposed project would have less than significant effects on cultural resources, greenhouse gas emissions, hazardous waste and transportation.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Javier Almaguer'.

Javier Almaguer
Office Chief, Environmental
California Department of Transportation
CEQA Lead Agency

June 05, 2024

Date

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Chapter 1 Proposed Project

1.1 Introduction

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) will improve State Route 233 in Madera County in the City of Chowchilla from Avenue 24½ to State Route 99. Improvements will rehabilitate the pavement and upgrade Transportation Management System (TMS) elements, including signals, roadside signs and guardrail, and construct Complete Streets elements, including bike lanes, Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant (ADA) curb ramps, bulb-outs, parking bays, enhanced visibility crosswalks, flashing beacons, lighting, sidewalks, and broadband. The improvements are shown in the project plans in Appendix C.

This project is a result of the Caltrans Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan, which requires curb ramps to comply with federal law. A list of locations has been identified where curb ramps are missing or are not to current standards. A missing curb ramp is defined as an intersection corner, mid-block crossing, or alley location where pedestrians may cross that may have been improved but has no curb ramp or pad. Complete Streets improvements will also be made to improve pedestrian mobility.

State Route 233 runs through the City of Chowchilla, connecting to State Route 99 to the east and State Route 152 to the west. State Route 233 is an important part of the City of Chowchilla transportation system because it serves as the main street through the community and sees heavy pedestrian use. Resurfacing the pavement, installing curb ramps to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, and making Complete Streets improvements will bring a higher level of accessibility to the community.

1.2 Purpose and Need

The purpose and need sections discuss the reasons for the project and justify its development.

1.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this project is to improve the ride quality within the project limits, extend the life of the existing pavement, and improve pedestrian mobility and accessibility on State Route 233 through the City of Chowchilla. The project will also ensure that the curb ramps are built according to current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. Broadband will improve Traffic Management System infrastructure.

1.2.2 Need

The project is needed to repair the distressed pavement and to improve mobility and pedestrian accessibility for the public by resurfacing the highway, updating curb ramps to current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, and making Complete Streets improvements. Broadband is needed to improve Traffic Management System technology.

1.3 Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) will improve State Route 233 in Madera County in the City of Chowchilla from Avenue 24½ to State Route 99. Improvements will rehabilitate pavement and upgrade Transportation Management System (TMS) elements, including signals, roadside signs and guardrail, and construct Complete Streets elements, including bike lanes (see Appendix D), Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant (ADA) curb ramps, bulb-outs (see Appendix D), parking bays, enhanced visibility crosswalks (see Appendix D), flashing beacons (see Appendix D), lighting, sidewalks, and broadband. See Figures 1-1 and 1-2 for vicinity and location maps, respectively.

Figure 1-1 Project Vicinity Map

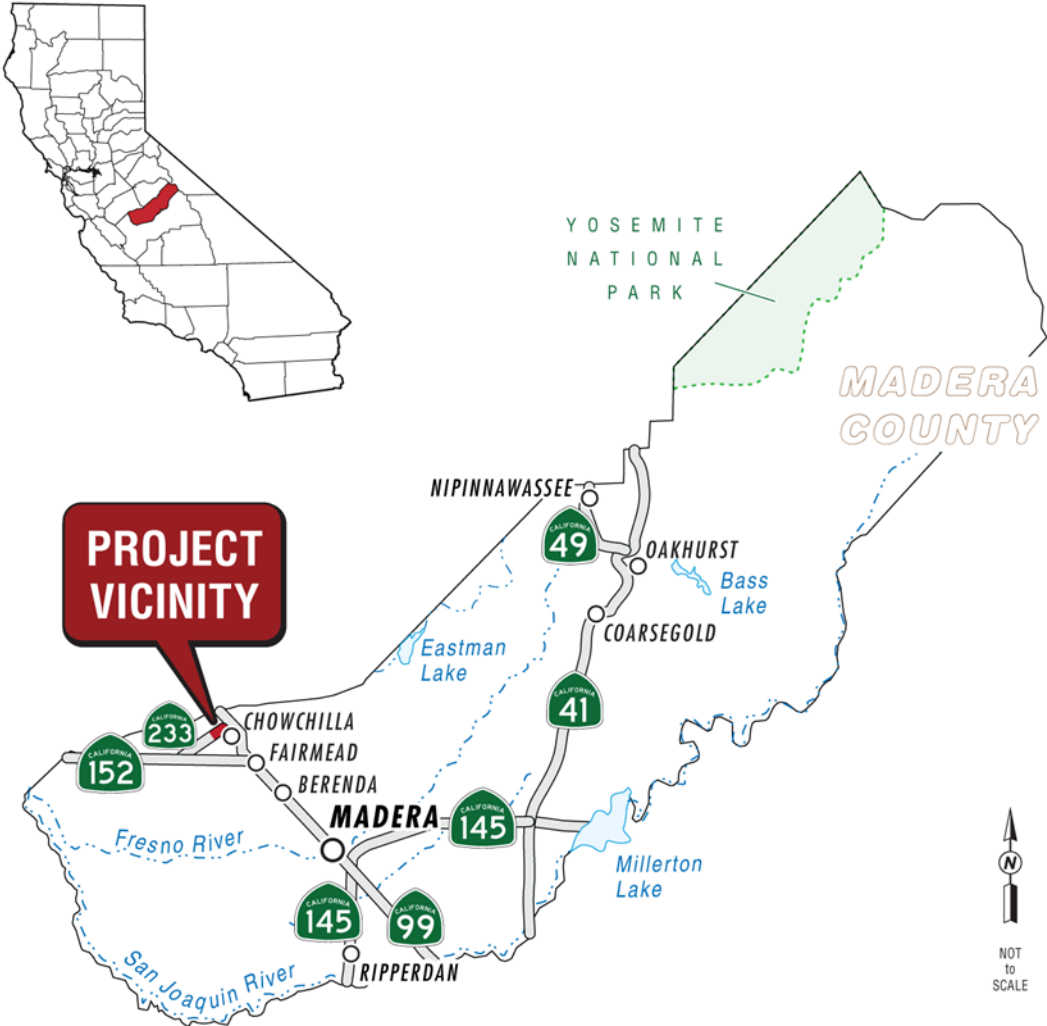
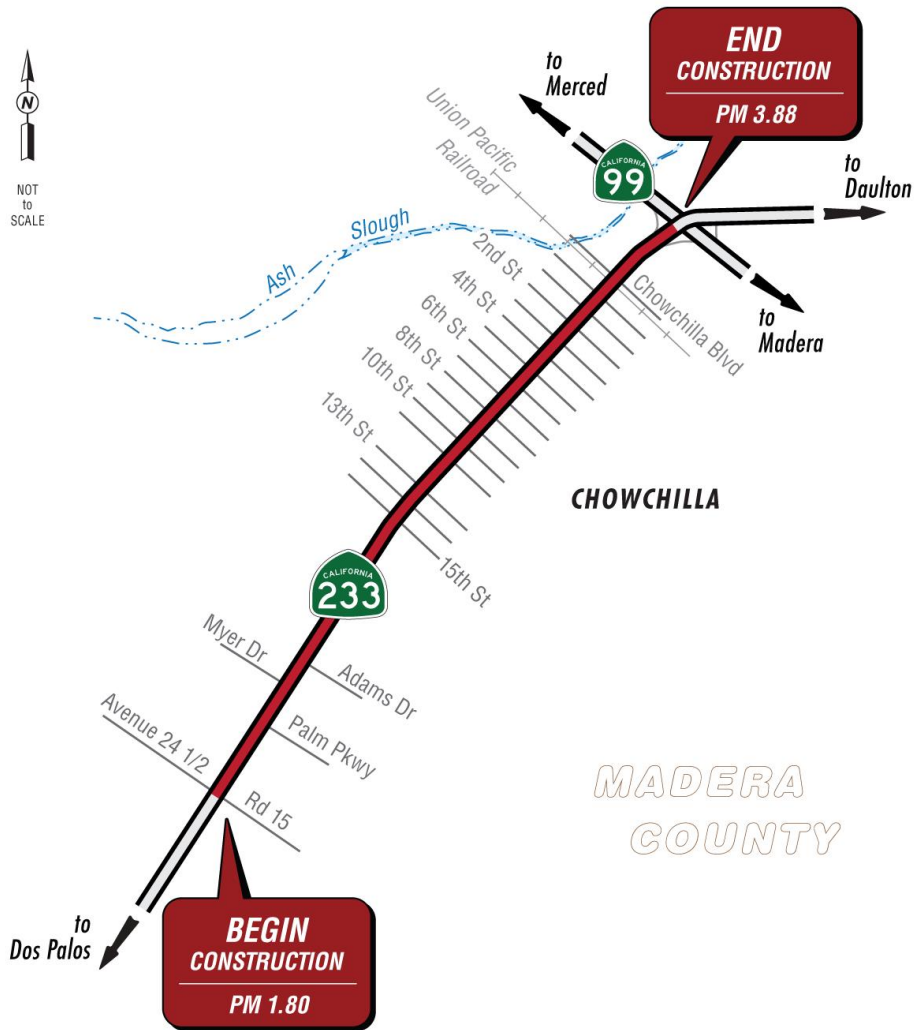


Figure 1-2 Project Location Map



1.4 Project Alternatives

A Build Alternative and a No-Build Alternative are being considered for this project.

1.4.1 Build Alternative

The Build Alternative will improve State Route 233 in Madera County in the City of Chowchilla from Avenue 24½ to State Route 99. Improvements will rehabilitate pavement and upgrade Transportation Management System (TMS) elements, including signals, roadside signs and guardrail, and construct Complete Streets elements, including bike lanes, Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant (ADA) curb ramps, bulb-outs, parking bays, enhanced visibility crosswalks, lighting, sidewalks, flashing beacons and broadband. Construction is anticipated to start in early 2027.

This project contains a number of standardized measures that are used on most, if not all, Caltrans projects and were not developed in response to any specific environmental impact resulting from the proposed project. These measures are listed in this chapter under Section 1.5 under “Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in All Build Alternatives.”

1.4.2 No-Build (No-Action) Alternative

The No-Build (No-Action) Alternative would leave State Route 233 as it is, with distressed pavement and missing curb ramps or with curb ramps that do not meet the current standards. In addition, no Transportation Management System elements or Complete Streets elements would be added, and broadband would not be installed. This alternative would not meet the purpose and need of the project and would not address the deteriorating pavement condition and accessibility issues for the public. Also, the Transportation Management System infrastructure would remain the same.

1.5 Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in All Build Alternatives

Air Quality—To effectively reduce and control emission impacts during construction, Caltrans Standard Specifications, Section 14-9.02, “Air Pollution Control,” and Section 10-5, “Dust Control,” would be included in the bid package.

Biology—Section 14-6.03B “Bird Protection.” A preconstruction field survey will be required to identify any nesting birds within the action area and/or project footprint (February 1 to September 30). Before ground disturbance, the contractor, all employees of the contractor, subcontractors, and

subcontractors' employees will attend a Worker Environmental Awareness Training (WEAT) conducted by a Caltrans-approved biologist.

Hazardous Waste—Applicable Standard Special Provisions to be included in the bid package may include but would not be limited to: Standard Special Provisions Section 7-1.02K(6)(j)(ii) Lead Compliance Plan; Standard Special Provisions Section 7-1.02K (6)(j)(iii) Ground Disturbance of Unregulated Materials.

Noise—Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-8.02 “Noise Control,” which pertains to controlling and monitoring noise resulting from work activities, would be included in the bid package. Noise levels are not to exceed 86 decibels at 50 feet from the job site from 9:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.

1.6 Discussion of the NEPA Categorical Exclusion

This document contains information regarding compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and other state laws and regulations. Separate environmental documentation, supporting a Categorical Exclusion determination, has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. When needed for clarity, or as required by CEQA, this document may contain references to federal laws and/or regulations (CEQA, for example, requires consideration of adverse effects on species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species by the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—that is, species protected by the Federal Endangered Species Act).

1.7 Permits and Approvals Needed

No permits, licenses, agreements, or certifications are required for project construction.

Chapter 2 CEQA Evaluation

2.1 CEQA Environmental Checklist

This checklist identifies physical, biological, social, and economic factors that might be affected by the project. Potential impact determinations include Significant and Unavoidable Impact, Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated, Less Than Significant Impact, and No Impact. In many cases, background studies performed in connection with a project will indicate that there are no impacts to a particular resource. A “No Impact” answer reflects this determination. The questions in this checklist are intended to encourage the thoughtful assessment of impacts and do not represent thresholds of significance.

Project features, which can include both design elements of the project and standardized measures that are applied to all or most Caltrans projects, such as Best Management Practices and measures included in the Standard Plans and Specifications or as Standard Special Provisions, are considered to be an integral part of the project and have been considered prior to any significance determinations documented below.

“No Impact” determinations in each section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project as well as the appropriate technical report (bound separately in Volume 2), and no further discussion is included in this document.

2.1.1 Aesthetics

Considering the information in the Visual Assessment Memorandum dated January 2024, the following significance determinations have been made:

Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Aesthetics
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	No Impact
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	No Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Aesthetics
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 a publicly accessible vantage point.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	No Impact
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	No Impact

2.1.2 Agriculture 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 the forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board.

The project would not convert prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of statewide importance to nonagricultural use or conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract. There are no forest lands or timberlands within the project area that could be impacted.

Considering the information from the City of Chowchilla 2040 General Plan, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Agriculture and Forest Resources
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	No Impact
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	No Impact
c) Conflict with existing zoning, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g))?	No Impact
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	No Impact
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 forest land to non-forest use?	No Impact

2.1.3 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.

Considering the information in the Air Quality Memorandum dated October 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Air Quality
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	No Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Air Quality
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?	No Impact
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	No Impact
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	No Impact

2.1.4 Biological Resources

Considering the information in the Biology Memorandum dated October 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Biological Resources
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, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries?	No Impact
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?	No Impact
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?	No Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Biological Resources
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?	No Impact
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	No Impact
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?	No Impact

2.1.5 Cultural Resources

Considering the information in the Cultural Memorandum dated February 2024, and considering that the project will require a temporary construction easement from a public park, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Cultural Resources
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	Less Than Significant Impact
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	No Impact
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	No Impact

Affected Environment

A cultural resources screened undertaking memorandum was completed for the project in February 2024. Research concluded there are no previously recorded archaeological resources within the vicinity of the project. In addition, it was also determined that the project will not affect any historical resources.

Veterans Memorial Park sits within the project limits on the north side of State Route 233 between North 6th Street and North 7th Street. It is a public park

that is owned by the City of Chowchilla. The park features meandering sidewalks around and through the site and beneath shade trees. Various community gatherings and special events are held at this park. Because it is a publicly owned park that is open to the public for park and recreational activities and is important to the community, the park is classified as a U.S. Department of Transportation Act Section 4(f) property and is a protected resource. There are no other 4(f) resources within the limits of the project.

Environmental Consequences

The Chowchilla Capital Preventive Maintenance (CAPM) project will upgrade Americans with Disabilities Act ramps within the project limits, including ramps at the southeast corner of Veterans Memorial Park. A temporary construction easement at the corner will be needed to construct new ramps. No permanent right-of-way will need to be acquired. The temporary construction easement will total approximately 239 square feet. The easement area will be returned to its original condition after the ramps are constructed, and the easement area would be returned to the City.

It has been determined that the proposed Americans with Disabilities Act ramp upgrades at Veterans Memorial Park are de minimis with no adverse effect because they will not impact the features, attributes, or activities qualifying the park for protection under Section 4(f). The improvements also represent a betterment to the park by bringing the ramps up to current standard. There are no other 4(f) resources within the limits of the project that would be affected. The Section 4(f) de minimis determination is detailed in Appendix A.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

There are no avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures for cultural resources.

2.1.6 Energy

Construction activities will cause a temporary increase in energy consumption, but the increase would not be significant. The project will resurface the pavement, construct curb ramps and Complete Streets improvements, and will not increase capacity on State Route 223. Considering these reasons and guidance from the Caltrans Standard Environmental Reference Chapter 13- Energy and the Energy Memorandum dated November 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Energy
a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during project construction or operation?	No Impact
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	No Impact

2.1.7 Geology and Soils

Considering the information in the California Geological Survey webpage, Faulting in California, the California Department of Conservation Map Data Viewer webpage, and the Paleontological Identification Report dated December 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils
a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) 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? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42. 	No Impact
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	No Impact
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	No Impact
iv) Landslides?	No Impact
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	No Impact
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 onsite or offsite landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?	No Impact
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?	No Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?	No Impact
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	No Impact

2.1.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Considering the information in the Air Quality Memorandum dated October 2023 and the Greenhouse Gas analysis dated November 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Greenhouse Gas Emissions
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	Less Than Significant Impact
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	No Impact

Affected Environment

This project will rehabilitate pavement and upgrade Transportation Management System (TMS) elements, roadside signs, and guardrail, and construct Complete Streets elements, including bike lanes, Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant (ADA) curb ramps, bulb-outs, parking bays, enhanced visibility crosswalks, lighting, sidewalks, flashing beacons and broadband on State Route 233 in Madera County in the City of Chowchilla from Avenue 24½ to State Route 99. State Route 233 is an important community component in the City of Chowchilla and sees heavy vehicular and pedestrian use. Improving the pavement, updating the curb ramps to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, and adding Complete Streets improvements would preserve the pavement and improve the ride quality while also bringing a higher level of accessibility to the community.

Environmental Consequences

Greenhouse gas emissions impacts of non-capacity-increasing projects like the Chowchilla Capital Preventive Maintenance project are considered less than significant under CEQA because there will be no increase in operational

emissions. However, construction equipment, material processing, and delivery may generate short-term greenhouse gas emissions during construction. Carbon dioxide emissions generated from construction equipment were estimated using the Caltrans Construction Emissions Tool (CALCET 2021 v.1.0). The estimated emissions would be 262 tons of carbon dioxide over 140 working days.

While some construction greenhouse gas emissions will be unavoidable, implementing standard conditions or Best Management Practices designed to reduce or eliminate emissions as part of the project will reduce impacts to less than significant.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Measures to reduce project-level greenhouse gas emissions may include the following:

- Limit idling to 5 minutes for delivery and dump trucks and other diesel-powered equipment.
- Use solar-powered equipment, if feasible (for example, signal boards).
- Obtain improved fuel efficiency with construction equipment by maintaining equipment in proper working condition, using the right-sized equipment for the job, and using equipment with new technologies when possible.
- If feasible, recycle nonhazardous waste and excess materials to reduce disposal offsite.
- Use Caltrans' Standard Specifications Section 14-9.02 "Air Pollution Control," requiring contractors to comply with air pollution control rules, ordinances, regulations, and statutes.
- Use Caltrans' Standard Specifications Section 10-5 "Dust Control," requiring contractors to comply with air pollution control rules, ordinances, regulations, and statutes.

2.1.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Considering the information in the Hazardous Waste Initial Site Assessment dated November 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	No Impact
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?	No Impact
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within 0.25 mile of an existing or proposed school?	No Impact
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?	Less Than Significant Impact
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within 2 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?	No Impact
f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	No Impact
g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?	No Impact

Affected Environment

The Cortese List is a compilation of contaminated and potentially contaminated hazardous waste or material sites. The Cortese List was reviewed as part of the initial screening for this project. This list, or a property’s presence on the list, has a bearing on a project’s local permitting process as well as compliance status with the California Environmental Quality Act.

The project will require permanent easements and/or right-of-way acquisitions and temporary construction easements from various parcels along State Route 233. The exact number of acquisitions and easements will be determined once the project plans are finalized.

Five of the parcels requiring permanent easements and temporary construction easements were identified on the Cortese List as being previously occupied by businesses that had leaking underground storage tanks. The properties are all located along State Route 233 and are shown in Table 2.1. Upgrading traffic signals and Americans with Disabilities Act curb ramps at the intersection of State Route 233 and Chowchilla Boulevard will be constructed later in a separate Minor A Project. The work that will be done at this intersection is being environmentally cleared under this initial study.

Table 2.1 Cortese Sites Requiring Permanent Easements and Temporary Construction Easements

Site Name	Location	Status	Closure Date
Aquino's Texaco	125 Chowchilla Boulevard (East corner with State Route 233)	Leaking Underground Storage Tank, Case Closed	August 1992
Hollister Trucking	128 Chowchilla Boulevard (West corner with State Route 233)	Leaking Underground Storage Tank, Case Closed	October 1996
Marsh's Shell	48 Robertson Boulevard (North corner of 1st/State Route 233)	Leaking Underground Storage Tank, Case Closed	April 1992
Beacon Station Number 366	107 Robertson Boulevard (South corner of 1st/State Route 233)	Leaking Underground Storage Tank, Case Closed	November 1994
Jiffy Mart	1505 Robertson Boulevard (South corner of 15th/State Route 233)	Leaking Underground Storage Tank, Case Closed	May 2013

Several other leaking underground storage tank cases and a Clean-up Program site were also identified in the area but are not anticipated to be impacted by the project. Those sites are shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Additional Cortese Sites Within the Project Area

Site Name	Location	Status	Closure Date
Aquino's Exxon	441 Robertson Boulevard (East corner of 5th/State Route 233)	Leaking Underground Storage Tank, Case Closed	October 2015
Circle K Mini- Mart	1104 Robertson Boulevard (West corner of 11th/State Route 233)	Leaking Underground Storage Tank, Case Closed	December 2023
Pistorresi Chevrolet	442 Robertson Boulevard (North corner of 5th/State Route 233)	Leaking Underground Storage Tank, Case Closed	January 2021
Chowchilla Cleaners	143 North 4th Street	Open – PCE contaminated groundwater	Ongoing remediation
Chowchilla Tire and Wheel	235 Robertson Boulevard (East corner of 3 rd /State Route 233)	Open Leaking Underground Storage Tank Case	Remediation pending
Exxon Mini Mart	130 Robertson Boulevard	Leaking Underground Storage Tank, Case Closed	April 2014

Environmental Consequences

Although the leaking underground storage tank cases identified in Table 2.1 received closure from the California State Water Resources Control Board, low levels of contamination may remain in soils and/or groundwater below these locations. However, if present, the contamination on these properties is documented to be at concentrations below regulatory thresholds. Small permanent easements and temporary construction easements are required from these Cortese List properties; however, no excavations are planned at these locations, so the hazardous waste risks are considered low, and impacts to the project are not expected. No other known hazardous waste sites identified in Table 2.2 will be impacted by the project based on the current project description.

An aerially deposited lead survey was conducted by Geocon Consultants, Inc. on behalf of Caltrans in 2009 within the project area. The survey was conducted along State Route 233 between Palm Parkway and Washington Road. Total lead was detected at a maximum concentration of 97 milligrams per kilogram. The 95 percent Upper Confidence Level for total lead was calculated at 37.8 milligrams per kilogram for the upper 2 feet of the soil profile. Soluble lead was detected at concentrations ranging from 0.95 milligrams per liter to 7.8 milligrams per liter in the same soil profile. Based on the reported concentrations, near surface soils within this highway segment are considered a non-hazardous, unregulated material and may be reused on site or relinquished to the contractor for offsite disposal.

The results of the aerially deposited lead survey included only lead concentrations for a limited portion of the project area. As a result, this data is

deemed insufficient because it does not provide enough data points for a statistical analysis to be performed. However, excess soils requiring offsite disposal are not anticipated and, as a result, a project-specific aerially deposited lead study will not be required. A lead compliance plan developed by a Certified Industrial Hygienist would be required.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

- A lead compliance plan developed by a Certified Industrial Hygienist is required for ground-disturbing activities, as stated in Caltrans’ Standard Special Provisions Section 7-1.02K(6)(j)(iii) Earth Material Containing Lead. A lead compliance plan for soil disturbance is required before starting construction activities.
- If yellow striping would be removed separately, Standard Special Provisions Section 14-11.12 would be required for proper management of hazardous waste residue and a lead compliance plan is required.
- Include Standard Special Provisions Section 36-4 and/or Section 84-9.03B for work involving residue from grinding and cold-planing that contains lead from paint and thermoplastic and addresses the need for a lead compliance plan. One lead compliance plan may address soil and paint/marketing materials.
- Standard Special Provisions Section 14-11.14 Treated Wood Waste will be required to address handling and disposal of any potential wood waste generated during the project (signposts, guardrail posts, etc.).
- If applicable to the project scope, any upgrade/installation of electrical systems requires Revised Standard Specifications Section 14-11.15 to dispose of electrical equipment requiring special handling. Standard Special Provisions Section 87-21.03D will address the removal of electrical equipment designated as hazardous waste (electrical vehicle sensor nodes).

2.1.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

Considering the information in the Water Quality Memorandum dated November 2023 and the Hydraulics Recommendation Memorandum dated December 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hydrology and Water Quality
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface water or groundwater quality?	No Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hydrology and Water Quality
b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	No Impact
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: (i) result in substantial erosion or siltation onsite or offsite;	No Impact
(ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding onsite or offsite;	No Impact
(iii) 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	No Impact
(iv) impede or redirect flood flows?	No Impact
d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	No Impact
e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	No Impact

2.1.11 Land Use and Planning

The project will not physically divide an established community and will not conflict with the City of Chowchilla 2040 General Plan or any other policy or regulation meant to avoid or mitigate an environmental effect. Considering this information, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Land Use and Planning
a) Physically divide an established community?	No Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Land Use and Planning
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?	No Impact

2.1.12 Mineral Resources

Considering the information in the City of Chowchilla and Madera County General Plans, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Mineral Resources
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?	No Impact
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?	No Impact

2.1.13 Noise

Considering the information in the Noise Memorandum dated October 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project result in:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Noise
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?	No Impact
b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	No Impact
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 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	No Impact

2.1.14 Population and Housing

Considering the scope of the project and that it requires only minimal right-of-way acquisition, permanent easements and/or temporary construction easements, and a review of the U.S. Census data on February 1, 2024 showing the project area is composed of a low-income minority population, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Population and Housing
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)?	No Impact
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	No Impact

2.1.15 Public Services

Considering the project will not trigger the need for new or modified public services, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Public Services
a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, 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: Fire protection?	No Impact
Police protection?	No Impact
Schools?	No Impact
Parks?	No Impact

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Public Services
Other public facilities?	No Impact

2.1.16 Recreation

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Recreation
a) Would the project 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?	No Impact
b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	No Impact

2.1.17 Transportation

The project will resurface the highway, upgrade Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant ramps to current standards, and install Complete Streets elements and broadband infrastructure. The project is exempt from vehicle miles traveled analysis under Senate Bill 743 because the project will not lead to a substantial or measurable increase in roadway capacity, according to the California Governor’s Office of Planning and Research, 2018 Technical Advisory. There will be a loss of street parking along State Route 233 due to the addition of bike lanes and bulb-outs. In addition to existing off-street parking, parking bays will also be added on both the north and south sides of the route to help offset the loss in street parking. Considering this information, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Transportation
a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	Less Than Significant Impact
b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	No Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Transportation
c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	No Impact
d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	No Impact

Affected Environment

The project runs along State Route 233, which goes through the City of Chowchilla, connecting to State Route 99 to the east and State Route 152 to the west. The project limits are from Avenue 24½ to State Route 99. Through this segment, the route is a conventional four-lane undivided highway that transitions to two lanes at the east and west ends of the project. State Route 233 is an important part of the City of Chowchilla transportation system because it serves as the main street through the community and experiences both heavy vehicle and pedestrian use. The project area along the route is composed mostly of commercial and residential development.

Environmental Consequences

State Route 233 within the project limits will remain a four-lane conventional undivided highway. Bulb-outs will be constructed at various intersections extending the sidewalks into the roadway to narrow the roadway and provide additional pedestrian space and visibility at those locations. By increasing the space available for pedestrians and narrowing the roadway, bulb-outs will create safer conditions for pedestrians by shortening crossing distances at crosswalks, improving visibility, and encouraging drivers to slow down. Improving pedestrian safety and upgrading Americans with Disabilities Act ramps to current standards will also improve the route by providing equal access for all persons and bring a higher level of accessibility to the community.

In addition to the project's Americans with Disabilities Act ramp upgrades and adding bulb-outs at various intersections, bike lanes will also be added along both the north and south sides of the route. As a result of adding bulb-outs and bike lanes, some of the on-street parking will be removed at various locations. On-street parking will remain in its current locations where removal can be avoided.

The proposed street plans identifying bulb-outs, bike lanes and parking bays are provided in Appendix C.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Parking bays will be constructed along both sides of State Route 233 to minimize the loss of on-street parking while still providing for the addition of bulb-outs and bike lanes along the route.

2.1.18 Tribal Cultural Resources

Considering the information in the Cultural Memorandum dated February 2024, the following significance determinations have been made:

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:

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Tribal Cultural Resources
a) 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	No Impact
b) 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 Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.	No Impact

2.1.19 Utilities and Service Systems

Considering the scope and location of the project, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Utilities and Service Systems
a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?	No Impact
b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	No Impact
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?	No Impact
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?	No Impact
e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	No Impact

2.1.20 Wildfire

The project is not within or near areas or lands that fall within a State Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Considering the information from the Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map for Madera County from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection dated June 15, 2023, the following significance determinations have been made:

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

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Wildfire
a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	No Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Wildfire
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?	No Impact
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?	No Impact
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?	No Impact

2.1.21 Mandatory Findings of Significance

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Mandatory Findings of Significance
a) Does the project 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?	No Impact
b) Does the project 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.)	No Impact

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Mandatory Findings of Significance
c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	No Impact

Appendix A Section 4(f) De Minimis Determination

This section of the document discusses de minimis impact determinations under Section 4(f). Section 6009(a) of the Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act-Legacy for Users amended Section 4(f) legislation at 23 U.S. Code 138 and 49 U.S. Code 303 to simplify the processing and approval of projects that have only de minimis impacts on lands protected by Section 4(f). This amendment provides that once the U.S. Department of Transportation determines that a transportation use of Section 4(f) property, after consideration of any impact avoidance, minimization, and mitigation or enhancement measures, results in a de minimis impact on that property, an analysis of avoidance alternatives is not required, and the Section 4(f) evaluation process is complete. The Federal Highway Administration's final rule on Section 4(f) de minimis findings is codified in 23 Code of Federal Regulations Sections 774.3 and 774.17.

Responsibility for compliance with Section 4(f) has been assigned to Caltrans pursuant to 23 U.S. Code 326 and 327, including de minimis impact determinations, as well as coordination with those agencies that have jurisdiction over a Section 4(f) resource that may be affected by a project action.

A "use" of a Section 4(f) property: 23 Code of Federal Regulations 774.17 defines "use" in three ways:

1. When land from a Section 4(f) resource is permanently incorporated into a transportation facility or project (actual use);
2. When there is a temporary occupancy of Section 4(f) resource that does not meet the five criteria of temporary use; and,
3. When there is constructive use of the Section 4(f) resource.

There is one Section 4(f) resource present in the project area that would require the use of the resource: Veterans Memorial Park.

Veterans Memorial Park: De Minimis Determination

Description of Resource

Veterans Memorial Park is a community park that is owned and operated by the City of Chowchilla. It is centrally located on the north side of the City of Chowchilla's main street, State Route 233, between North 6th Street and North 7th Street. The park features meandering sidewalks around and through the site and beneath shade trees. Various community gatherings and special events are held at the park. In addition to on-street parking spaces, amenities include a playground, park benches, horseshoe courts, restrooms and two park pavilions that can be used for public and private gatherings. The

park is a recreational resource, and this preliminary de minimis determination is being evaluated for that aspect.

Proposed Use

This Chowchilla Capital Preventive Maintenance project is a result of the Caltrans Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan, which requires curb ramps to comply with federal law. A list of locations has been identified where curb ramps are missing or are not to current standards. To achieve the Americans with Disabilities Act design standard, the ramp at the southeast corner of Veterans Memorial Park on State Route 233 at North 6th Street will need to be reconstructed. A sliver of property at the corner will be needed for a temporary construction easement to construct two new ramps on both State Route 233 and North 6th Street. The temporary construction easement will total approximately 239 square feet. No permanent right-of-way will need to be acquired. The temporary construction easement area will be returned to its original condition and given back to the City upon completion of the project.

It has been determined that the proposed Americans with Disabilities Act ramp upgrades at Veterans Memorial Park will result in a de minimis with no adverse effect because the upgrades will not impact the features, attributes, or activities qualifying the park for protection under Section 4(f). The improvements also represent a betterment to the park by bringing the ramps up to current standard.

Coordination

Coordination with the City of Chowchilla has been ongoing. Caltrans, as assigned by the Federal Highway Administration, requested formal written concurrence from the City in the de minimis determination as part of the final environmental document. The city provided their concurrence on May 16, 2024. The concurrence was added to this final initial study since it was after the draft initial study was circulated for comment.

In addition to coordination with the City, a public notice was published in The Merced Sun-Star newspaper, and property owners along State Route 233 were sent individual notices regarding the project. During the public comment period, an in-person open house public meeting was held on April 24, 2024, and an on-line virtual public meeting was held on April 30, 2024, to present the project and gather public input. No comments were received during these meetings.

Appendix B Title VI Policy Statement

CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

GAVIN NEWSOM, GOVERNOR

California Department of Transportation

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
P.O. BOX 942873, MS-49 | SACRAMENTO, CA 94273-0001
(916) 654-6130 | FAX (916) 653-5776 TTY 711
www.dot.ca.gov



September 2022

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT

The California Department of Transportation, under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, ensures “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

Caltrans will make every effort to ensure nondiscrimination in all of its services, programs and activities, whether they are federally funded or not, and that services and benefits are fairly distributed to all people, regardless of race, color, or national origin. In addition, Caltrans will facilitate meaningful participation in the transportation planning process in a non-discriminatory manner.

Related federal statutes, remedies, and state law further those protections to include sex, disability, religion, sexual orientation, and age.

For information or guidance on how to file a complaint, or obtain more information regarding Title VI, please contact the Title VI Branch Manager at (916) 639-6392 or visit the following web page: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/civil-rights/title-vi>.

To obtain this information in an alternate format such as Braille or in a language other than English, please contact the California Department of Transportation, Office of Civil Rights, at PO Box 942874, MS-79, Sacramento, CA 94274-0001; (916) 879-6768 (TTY 711); or at Title.VI@dot.ca.gov.

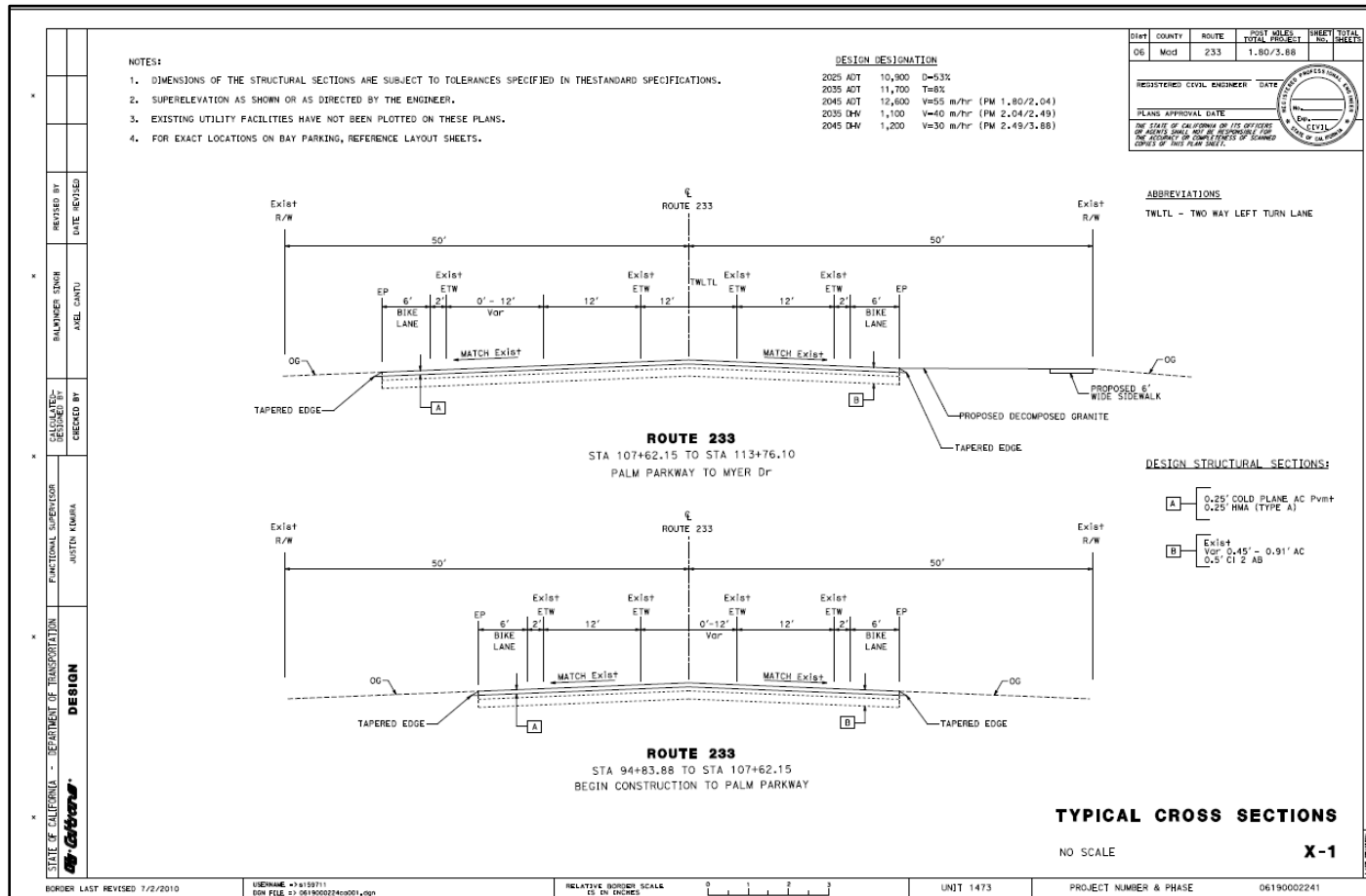
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Tavares', is written over a horizontal line.

TONY TAVARES
Director

“Provide a safe and reliable transportation network that serves all people and respects the environment”

Appendix C Project Plans

Typical Cross Sections



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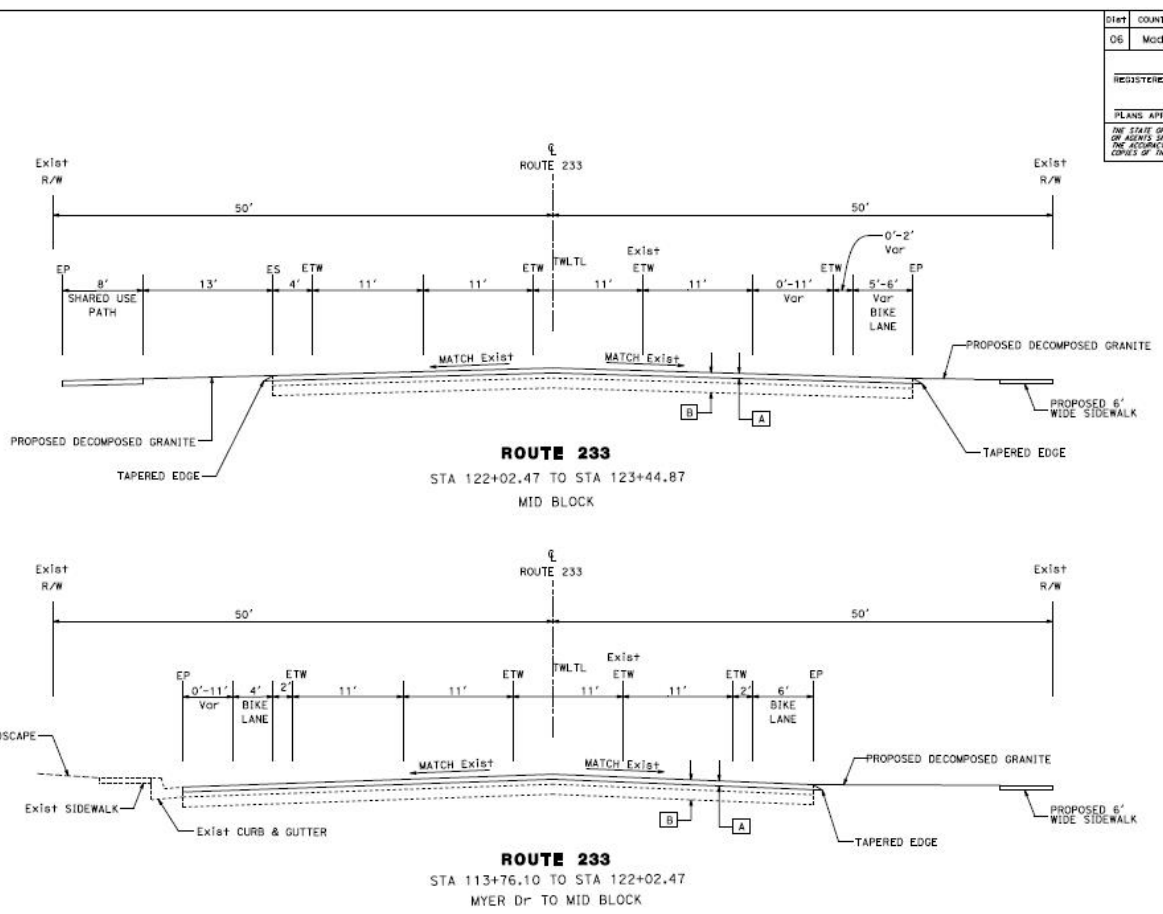
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PROJECT NUMBER & PHASE: 06190002241

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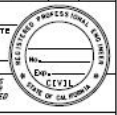


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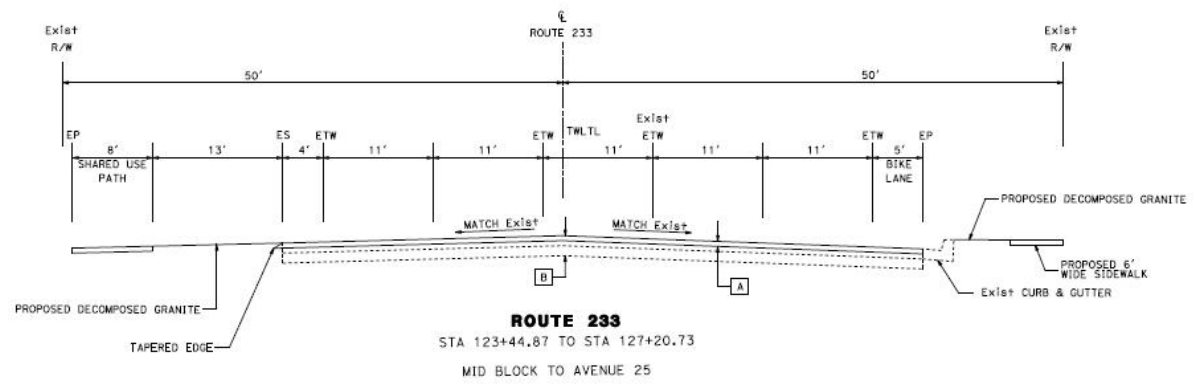
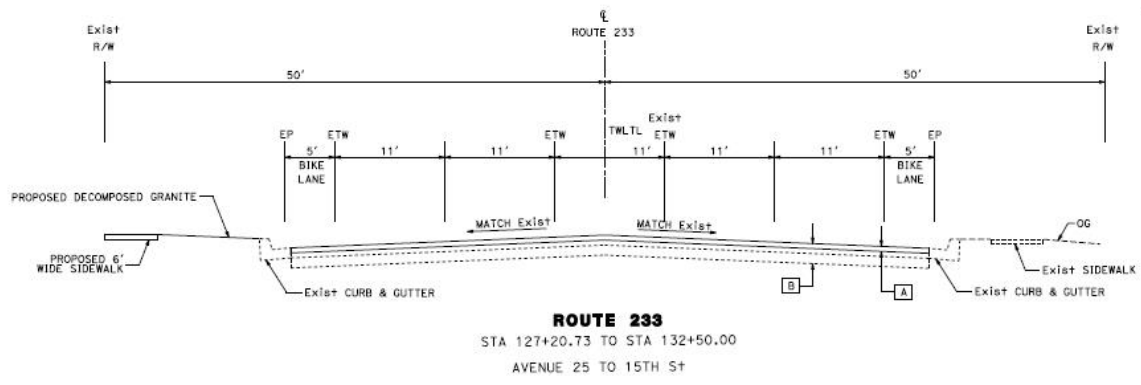
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Caltrans	JUSTIN KOMRA	AXEL CANTU	DATE REVISION
DESIGN	CHECKED BY	BALWINDER SINGH	REVISOR

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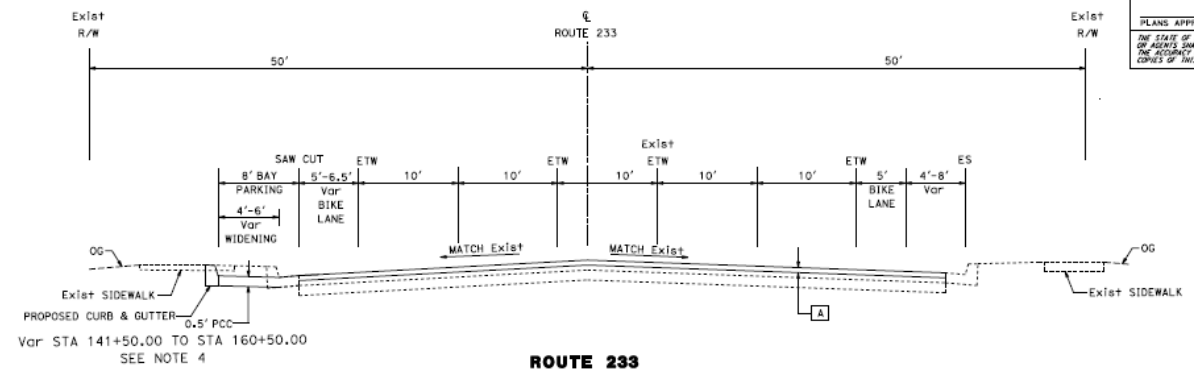


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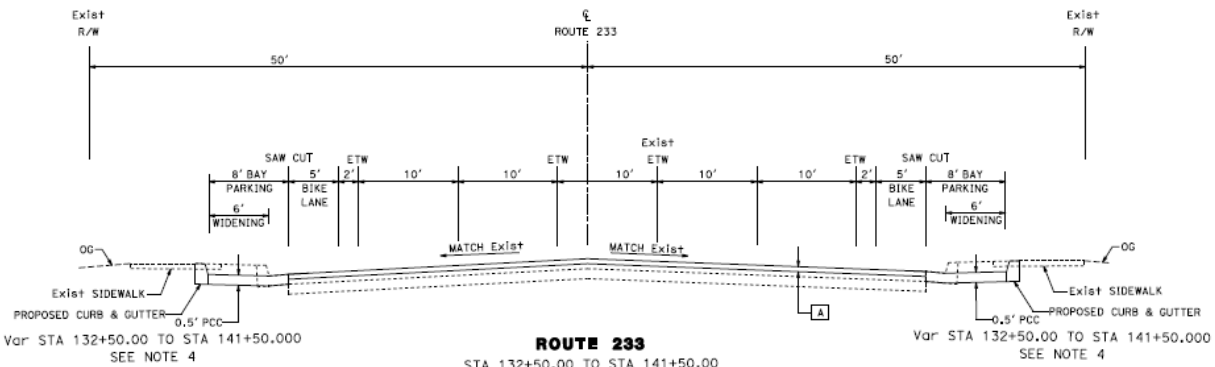
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REVISOR	DATE REVISION	



ROUTE 233
STA 141+50.00 TO STA 160+50.00
13TH ST TO 7TH ST



ROUTE 233
STA 132+50.00 TO STA 141+50.00
15TH ST TO 13TH ST

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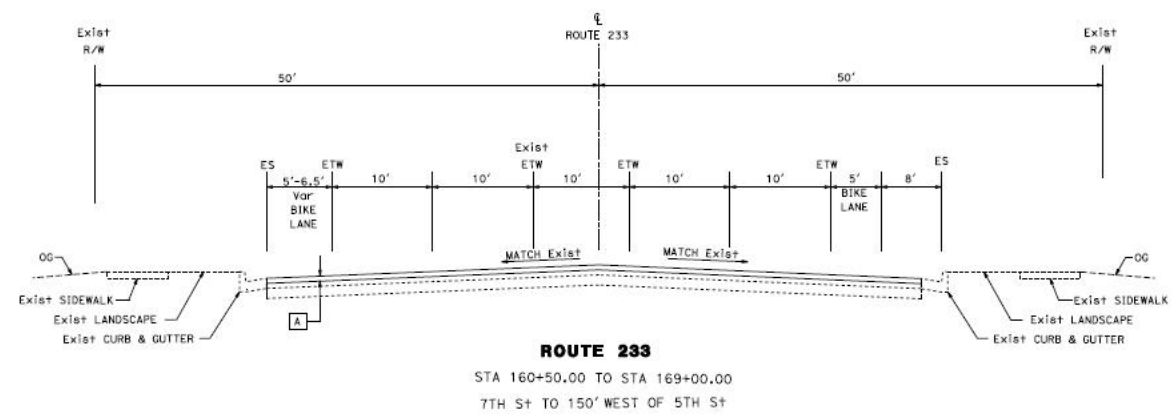
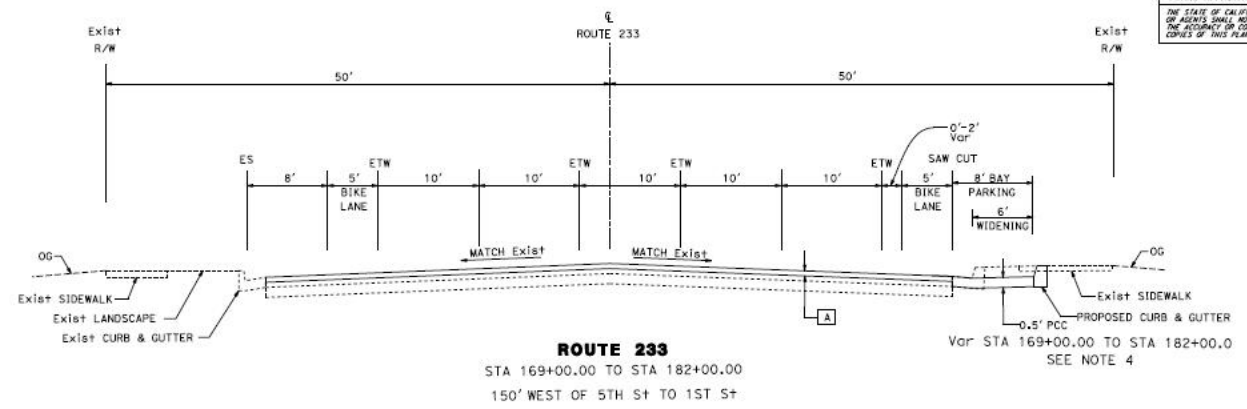
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Caltrans
 FUNCTIONAL SUPERVISOR
 JUSTIN KUBRA
 DESIGN

REVISOR BY
 BALWINDER SINGH
 AXEL GANTU
 CHECKED BY

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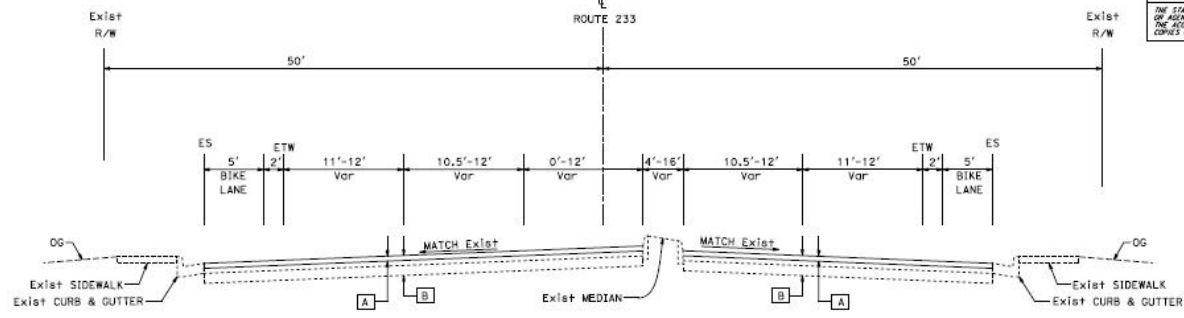
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UNIT 1473

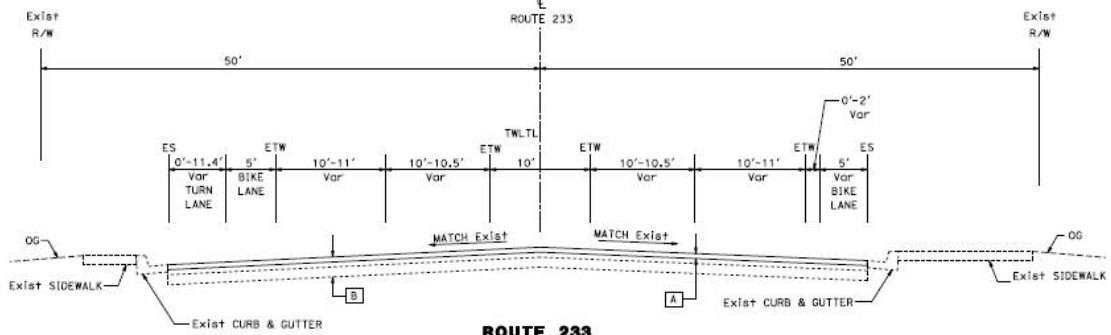
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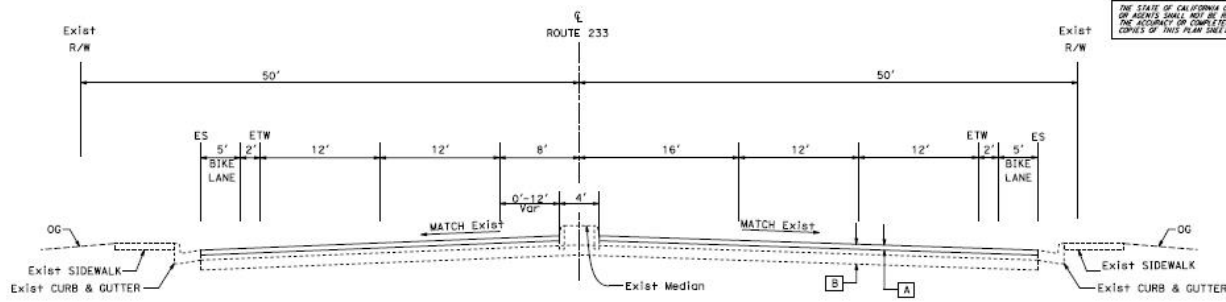
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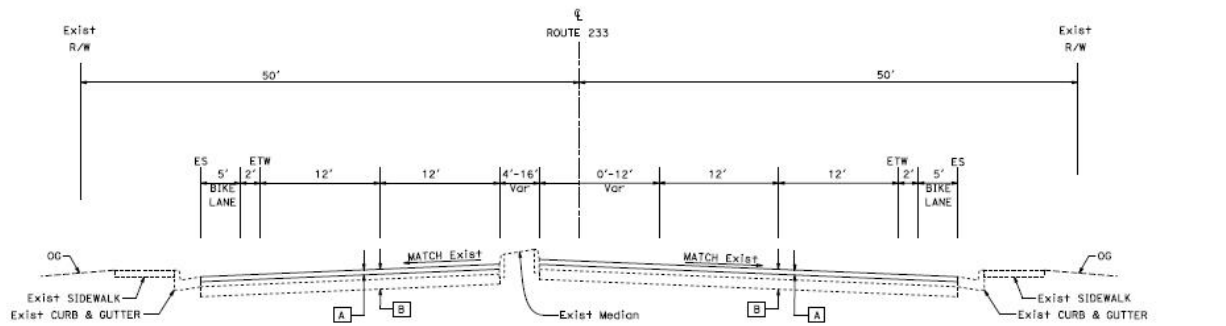
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PLANS APPROVAL DATE				STATE OF CALIFORNIA	



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ROUTE 233
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TYPICAL CROSS SECTIONS
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UNIT 1473

PROJECT NUMBER & PHASE

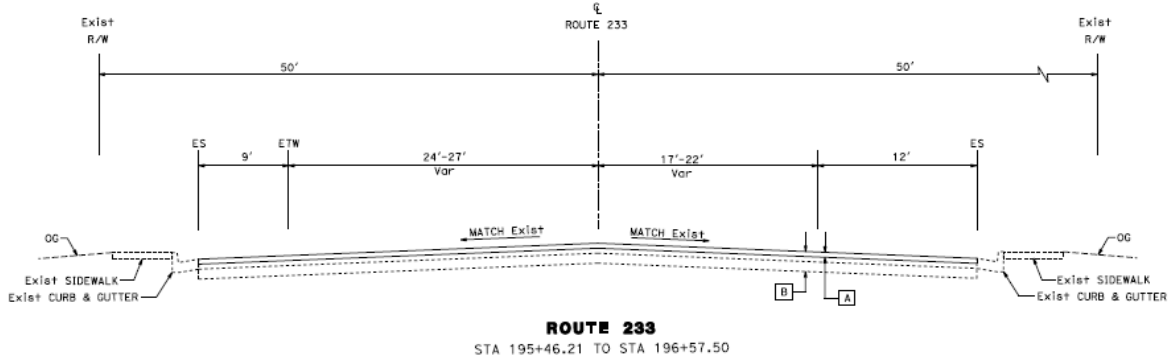
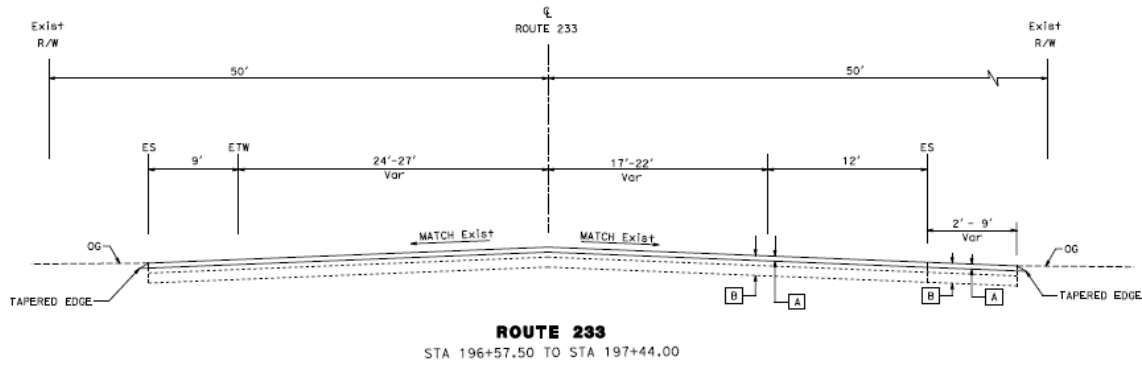
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DIST	COUNTY	ROUTE	POST MILES TOTAL PROJECT	SHEET NO.	TOTAL SHEETS
06	Mod	233	1.80/3.88		

REGISTERED CIVIL ENGINEER DATE _____

PLANS APPROVAL DATE _____

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA AND ITS OFFICERS
DO HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE ENGINEER HAS
THE NECESSARY QUALIFICATIONS AND IS
RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACCURACY AND COMPLETENESS OF SCANNED
COPIES OF THIS PLAN SHEET.



TYPICAL CROSS SECTIONS
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Caltrans
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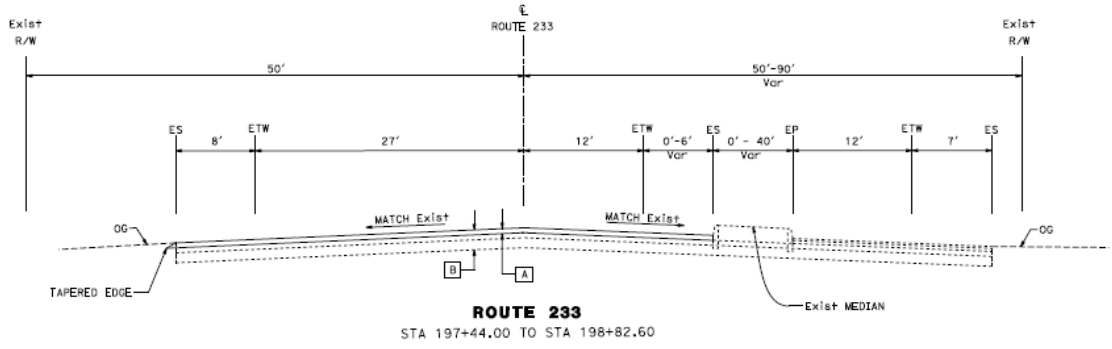
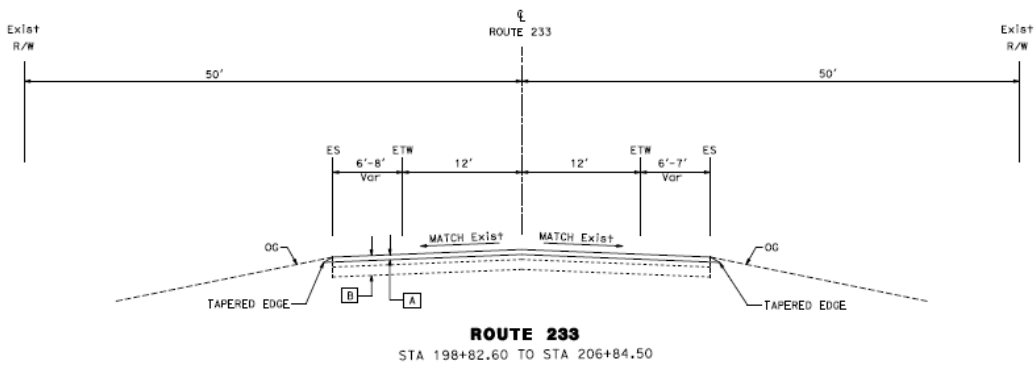
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UNIT 1473

PROJECT NUMBER & PHASE 06190002241

FUNCTIONAL SUPERVISOR JUSTIN KIMURA
 DESIGNED BY BALWINDER SINGH
 CHECKED BY AXEL SANTU
 REVISIONS: [Table with columns for REVISION NO., DATE, and DESCRIPTION]



DIST	COUNTY	ROUTE	POST MILES TOTAL PROJECT	SHEET NO.	TOTAL SHEETS
06	Mod	233	1.80/3.88		
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TYPICAL CROSS SECTIONS
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Improvement Plans



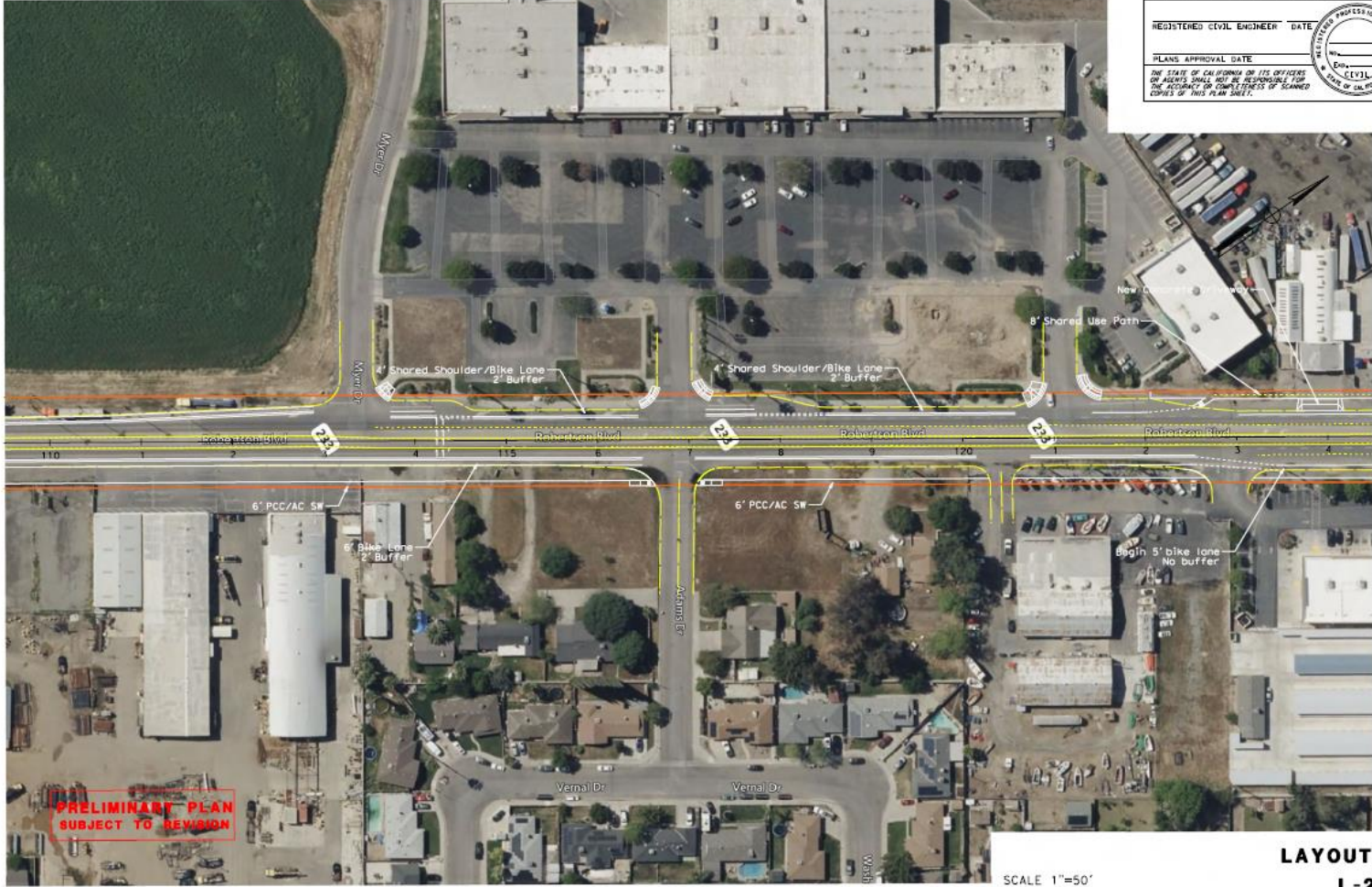
STATE OF CALIFORNIA - DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Caltrans

FUNCTIONAL SUPERVISOR
 JUSTIN KIMURA

CALCULATED/DESIGNED BY
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REGISTERED CIVIL ENGINEER DATE

PLANS APPROVAL DATE

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L-2**

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA - DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION	FUNCTIONAL SUPERVISOR	AKEL CANTU	REVISED BY
Caltrans	JUSTIN KIMBA	CHECKED BY	DATE REVISED



DIST	COUNTY	ROUTE	POST MILES TOTAL PROJECT	SHEET TOTAL SHEETS
06	Mod	233	1.8/3.88	3 / ???

REGISTERED CIVIL ENGINEER DATE

PLANS APPROVAL DATE

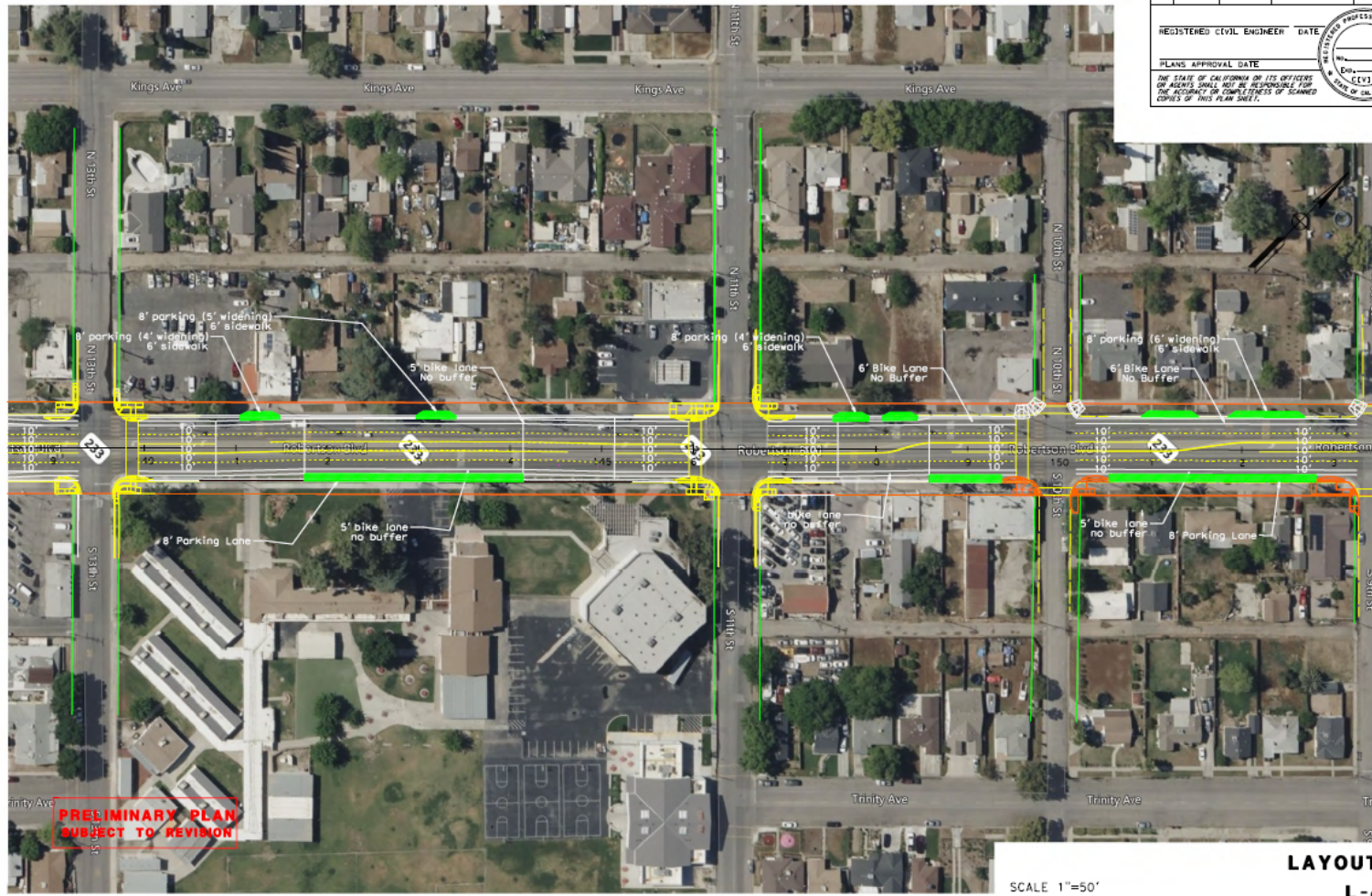
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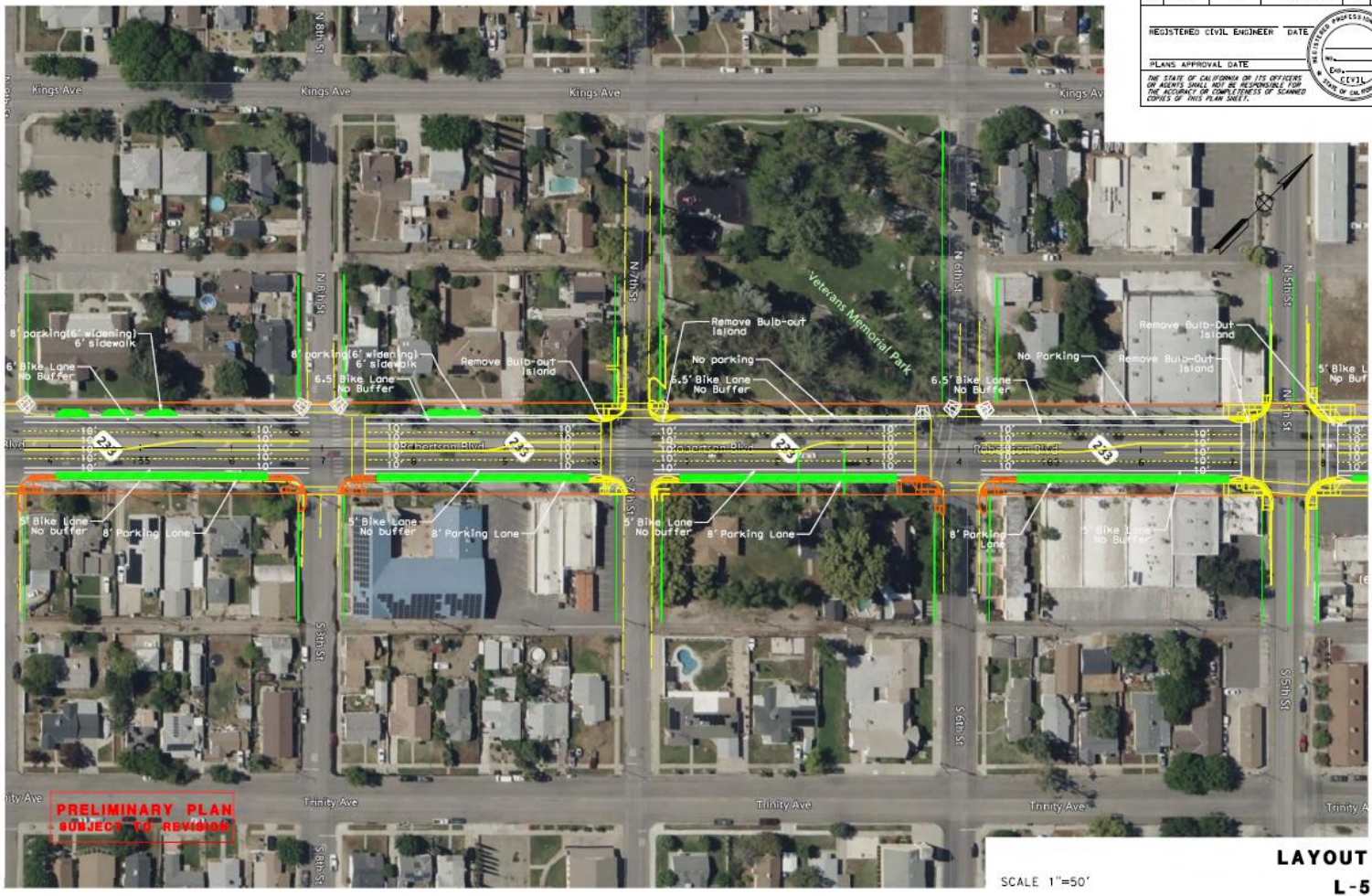
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	JUSTIN KOMURA	ANSEL CANTU	ANSEL CANTU
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REGISTERED CIVIL ENGINEER DATE _____

PLANS APPROVAL DATE _____

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA - DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Caltrans

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UNIT 1473

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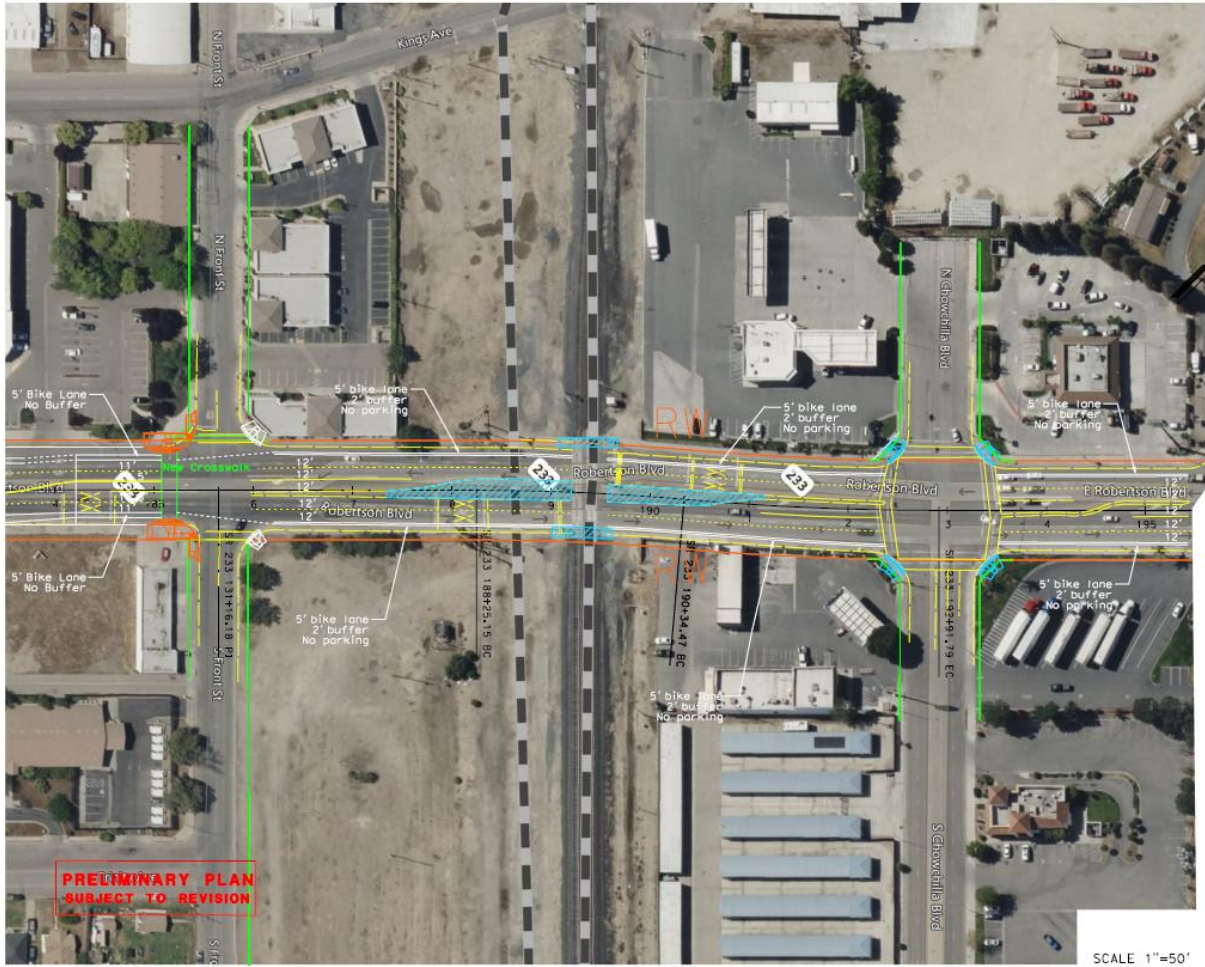
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 THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA OR ITS OFFICERS OR AGENTS SHALL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF SCANNED COPIES OF THIS PLAN SHEET.



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DATE PLOTTED => DATE
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STATE OF CALIFORNIA - DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION	FUNCTIONAL SUPERVISOR	AXEL CANTU	REVISED BY
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REGISTERED CIVIL ENGINEER DATE

PLANS APPROVAL DATE

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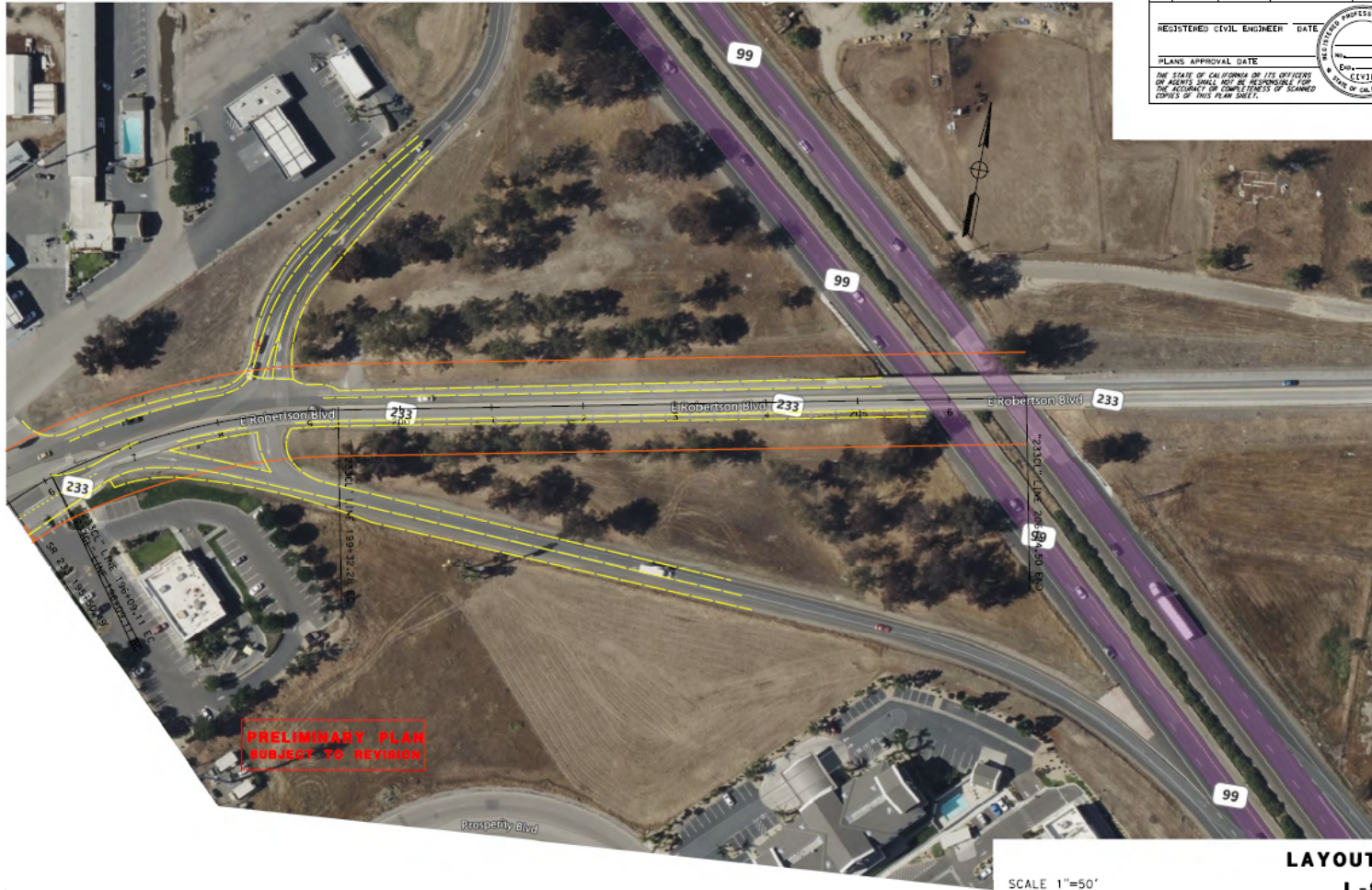
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PLANS APPROVAL DATE				STATE OF CALIFORNIA	



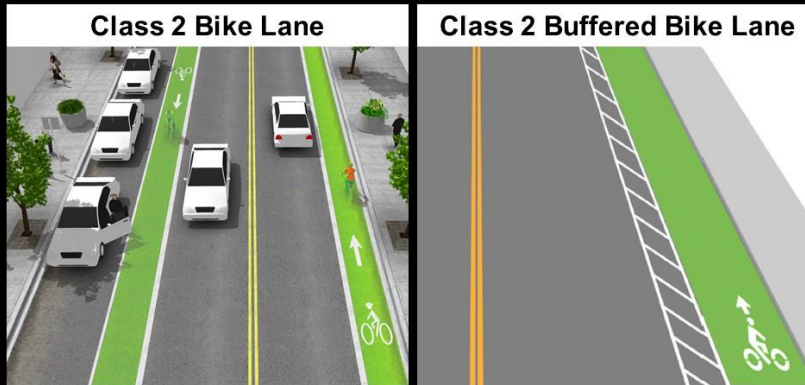
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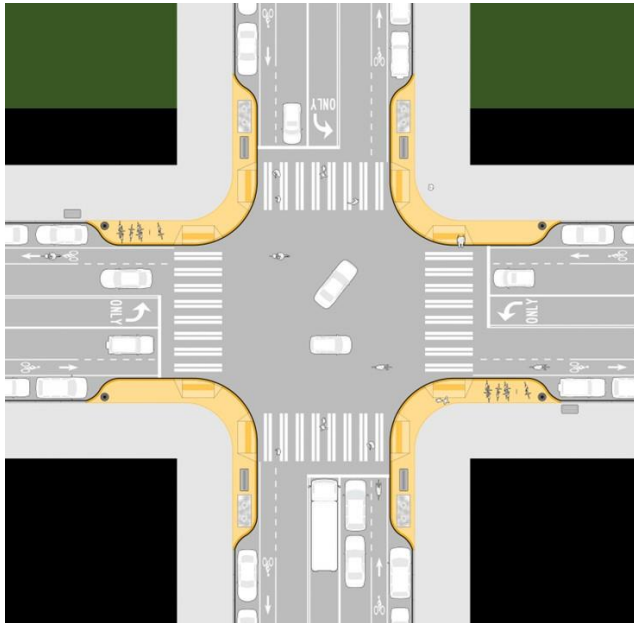
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Appendix D Bike Lanes, Bulb-outs, Enhanced Visibility Crosswalks, Flashing Beacons

Bike Lanes



Bike Lanes would be installed on both sides of the highway. They would transition from Class 2 Bike Lanes to Class 2 Buffered Bike Lanes at both ends of the project. The bike lanes would be colored green and would delineate the right of way assigned to bicyclists versus motorists and would provide for more predictable movements by each. Installing bike lanes would be accomplished by reducing lane widths and prohibiting or reconfiguring parking along the street. Street parking would remain in some locations while being prohibited in other areas. Parking bays would be constructed along the route to help off-set any loss in street parking.



Bulb-outs

Bulb-outs would be constructed at various intersections. They would extend the sidewalks into the roadway to narrow the roadway and provide additional pedestrian space and visibility at those locations. By increasing the space available for pedestrians and narrowing the roadway, bulb-outs would create safer conditions for pedestrians by shortening crossing distances at crosswalks, improving visibility, and encouraging drivers to slow down.

Enhanced Visibility Crosswalks



Enhanced-visibility crosswalks would be installed at every intersection where there is an existing crosswalk or proposed new crosswalk. They use patterns that are visible to both the driver and pedestrian from farther away compared to traditional transverse line crosswalks. They provide a visual cue for traffic to slow down and notify drivers of crossing pedestrians, bicyclists, wheelchair, and transit users thus improving safety and helping to prevent an increase in accidents.

Flashing Beacons



Rapid-flashing beacons with yellow indicators are effective at alerting drivers to pedestrians, thereby improving safety at crosswalks. Having the device active only when a pedestrian is present contributes to that effectiveness.

Appendix E Comment Letters and Responses

This appendix contains the comments received during the public circulation and comment period from April 15 to May 15, 2024, retyped for readability. One comment letter was received. A Caltrans response follows each comment presented. A copy of the original comment letter can be found in Volume 2 Technical Studies of this document.

Comment Letter from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife

May 15, 2024

Trais Norris
California Department of Transportation
2015 West Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, California 93726

Subject: Chowchilla CAPM (EA 06-0W860) (Project)
Initial Study with Proposed Negative Declaration
State Clearinghouse No. 2024040506

Dear Trais Norris:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife received an Initial Study with Proposed Negative Declaration from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for the above referenced Project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act and California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations regarding those activities involved in the Project that may affect California fish and wildlife. Likewise, California Department of Fish and Wildlife appreciates the opportunity to provide comments regarding those aspects of the Project that California Department of Fish and Wildlife, by law, may be required to carry out or approve through the exercise of its own regulatory authority under the Fish and Game Code.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife Role

California Department of Fish and Wildlife is California's Trustee Agency for fish and wildlife resources and holds those resources in trust by statute for all the people of the State (Fish & G. Code, §711.7, subd. (a) & 1802; Pub. Resources Code, §21070; California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines §15386, subd. (a)). California Department of Fish and Wildlife, in its trustee capacity, has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species (Id., §1802). Similarly, for purposes of California Environmental Quality Act, California Department of Fish and Wildlife is charged by law to provide, as available, fish and wildlife expertise during public agency environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife is also submitting comments as a Responsible Agency under California Environmental Quality Act (Pub. Resources Code, §21069; California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, §15381). California Department of Fish and Wildlife expects that it may need to exercise regulatory authority as provided by the Fish and Game Code. As proposed, for example, the Project may be subject to California Department of Fish and Wildlife lake and streambed alteration regulatory authority (Fish & G. Code, §1600 et seq.). Likewise, to the extent implementation of the Project as proposed may result in “take” as defined by State law of any species protected under the California Endangered Species Act (Fish & G. Code, §2050 et seq.), related authorization as provided by the Fish and Game Code may be required.

In this role, California Department of Fish and Wildlife is responsible for providing, as available, fish and wildlife expertise during public agency environmental review efforts (e.g., California Environmental Quality Act), focusing specifically on project activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources. California Department of Fish and Wildlife provides recommendations to identify potential impacts and possible measures to avoid or reduce those impacts.

Bird Protection: California Department of Fish and Wildlife has jurisdiction over actions with potential to result in the disturbance or destruction of active nest sites or the unauthorized take of birds. Fish and Game Code sections that protect birds, their eggs and nests include, sections 3503 (regarding unlawful take, possession or needless destruction of the nest or eggs of any bird), 3503.5 (regarding the take, possession or destruction of any birds-of-prey or their nests or eggs), and 3513 (regarding unlawful take of any migratory nongame bird).

Unlisted Species: Species of plants and animals need not be officially listed as Endangered, Rare, or Threatened on any State or Federal list to be considered Endangered, Rare, or Threatened under California Environmental Quality Act. If a species can be shown to meet the criteria for Endangered, Rare, or Threatened, as specified in the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, section 15380, California Department of Fish and Wildlife recommends it be fully considered in the environmental analysis for the Project.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Proponent: Caltrans

Objective: The Project will rehabilitate pavement and upgrade Transportation Management System elements, roadside signs, guardrail, add Class 2 bike lanes, install Americans with Disabilities Act ramps, install bulb-outs, install

enhanced visibility crosswalks, install sidewalks, install flashing beacons and broadband.

Location: The proposed project is located on State Route 233, from Avenue 24 ½ to State Route 99, between postmiles 1.8 and 3.88 within the City of Chowchilla

Timeframe: Project construction is estimated to occur in early 2027.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

California Department of Fish and Wildlife offers the following comments and recommendations to assist Caltrans in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the Project's significant, or potentially significant, direct and indirect impacts on fish and wildlife resources. Editorial comments or other suggestions may also be included to improve the document.

Based on the Project location and proposed Project activities in the Initial Study, California Department of Fish and Wildlife is concerned regarding potential impacts to special-status species, including but not limited to, the State threatened Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*).

Swainson's hawk:

The Project site is within the known geographic range of Swainson's hawk and there are historical occurrences documented within 2 miles of the Project site (California Department of Fish and Wildlife 2024). Swainson's hawk are known to breed within the Central Valley of California and prefer to nest and forage in alfalfa, fallow fields, field crops, and grassland habitats with a sufficient source of small mammals (CDFG 1994). Based on aerial imagery, there are trees and structures located within the vicinity of the Project area that may provide suitable nesting habitat. Therefore, California Department of Fish and Wildlife recommends that a qualified biologist conduct surveys for nesting Swainson's hawk following the entire survey methodology developed by the Swainson's hawk Technical Advisory Committee (2000) as part of the fish and wildlife technical studies conducted in support of the Initial Study. Depending on the time between the initial survey efforts conducted in support of the Negative Declaration and project construction, California Department of Fish and Wildlife recommends that additional surveys, following the survey methodology developed by the Swainson's hawk Technical Advisory Committee, be repeated the survey season immediately prior to construction. If Project-specific activities will take place during the Swainson's hawk nesting season (i.e., March 1 through September 15), and active Swainson's hawk nests are present, California Department of Fish and Wildlife recommends a minimum ½-mile no-disturbance buffer be delineated and maintained around each nest, regardless of whether it was detected by surveys or observed incidentally.

These buffers would remain in place until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified biologist has determined that the birds have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest or parental care for survival, to prevent nest abandonment and other take of Swainson's hawk as a result of Project activities. California Department of Fish and Wildlife also recommends that in the event an active Swainson's hawk nest is detected, and a ½-mile no-disturbance buffer is not feasible, consultation with California Department of Fish and Wildlife is warranted to discuss how to implement the project and avoid take. If take cannot be avoided, take authorization through the acquisition of an Incidental Take Permit, pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081, subdivision (b) is necessary to comply with California Endangered Species Act.

ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

California Environmental Quality Act requires that information developed in environmental impact reports and negative declarations be incorporated into a database which may be used to make subsequent or supplemental environmental determinations (Pub. Resources Code, § 21003, subd. (e)). Accordingly, please report any special-status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to California Natural Diversity Database. The California Natural Diversity Database field survey form can be found at the following link:

<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Submitting-Data>. The completed form can be mailed electronically to California Natural Diversity Database at the following email address: CNDDDB@wildlife.ca.gov. The types of information reported to California Natural Diversity Database can be found at the following link: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Plants-and-Animals>.

FILING FEES

If it is determined that the Project has the potential to impact fish and wildlife resources, an assessment of filing fees will be necessary. Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Payment of the fee is required in order for the underlying project approval to be operative, vested, and final (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 14, §753.5; Fish and Game Code, §711.4; Pub. Resources Code, §21089).

CONCLUSION

California Department of Fish and Wildlife appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Project to assist Caltrans in identifying and mitigating the Project's impacts on fish and wildlife resources.

More information on survey and monitoring protocols for sensitive species can be found at California Department of Fish and Wildlife website (<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Survey-Protocols>). If you have any questions, please contact Grant Piepkorn, Environmental Scientist, at the address provided on this letterhead, by telephone at (559) 807-1459, or by electronic mail at Grant.Piepkorn@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Julie A. Vance

References

California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2024. Biogeographic information and observation system (BIOS). <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/BIOS>. Accessed 6 May 2024.

Swainson's Hawk Technical Advisory Committee. 2000. Recommended timing and methodology for Swainson's hawk nesting surveys in California's Central Valley. Swainson's Hawk Technical Advisory Committee.

Comment 1:

Swainson's hawk:

The Project site is within the known geographic range of Swainson's hawk and there are historical occurrences documented within 2 miles of the Project site (California Department of Fish and Wildlife 2024). Swainson's hawk are known to breed within the Central Valley of California and prefer to nest and forage in alfalfa, fallow fields, field crops, and grassland habitats with a sufficient source of small mammals (CDFG 1994). Based on aerial imagery, there are trees and structures located within the vicinity of the Project area that may provide suitable nesting habitat. Therefore, California Department of Fish and Wildlife recommends that a qualified biologist conduct surveys for nesting Swainson's hawk following the entire survey methodology developed by the Swainson's hawk Technical Advisory Committee (2000) as part of the fish and wildlife technical studies conducted in support of the Initial Study. Depending on the time between the initial survey efforts conducted in support of the Negative Declaration and project construction, California Department of Fish and Wildlife recommends that additional surveys, following the survey methodology developed by the Swainson's hawk Technical Advisory Committee, be repeated the survey season immediately prior to construction. If Project-specific activities will take place during the Swainson's hawk nesting season (i.e., March 1 through September 15), and active Swainson's hawk nests are present, California Department of Fish and Wildlife recommends a minimum ½-mile no-disturbance buffer be delineated and maintained around each nest, regardless of whether it was detected by surveys or observed incidentally.

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Caltrans Response to Comment 1:

A qualified Caltrans biologist will conduct protocol-level Swainson's hawk surveys in accordance with the Swainson's hawk Technical Advisory Committee the season prior to construction and an additional preconstruction survey for Swainson's hawk no more than 30 days prior to the start of

construction. Surveys will follow the entire survey methodology developed by the Swainson's hawk Technical Advisory Committee (2000). Caltrans will also require a minimum 250-foot no-disturbance buffer around active nests of passerines and a minimum 500-foot no-disturbance buffer around active nests of raptors.

List of Technical Studies Bound Separately (Volume 2)

Visual Assessment Memorandum – January 2024

Air Quality Memorandum – October 2023

Biology Memorandum – October 2023

Cultural Memorandum – February 2024

Energy Memorandum – November 2023

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Study – November 2023

Hazardous Waste Initial Site Assessment – November 2023

Water Quality Memorandum – November 2023

Hydraulics Recommendation Memorandum – December 2023

Noise Memorandum – October 2022

Paleontology Identification Report – December 2023

To obtain a copy of one or more of these technical studies/reports or the Initial Study, please send your request to:

Trais Norris
District 6 Environmental Division
California Department of Transportation
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100, Fresno, California 93726

Or send your request via email to: trais.norris@dot.ca.gov
Or call Trais Norris at: 559-320-6045

Please provide the following information in your request:

Project title: Chowchilla Capital Preventive Maintenance (CAPM)

General location information: City of Chowchilla

District number-county code-route-post mile: 06-MAD-233-PM 1.80 - 3.88

EA/Project ID number: 06-0W860/0619000224