

This Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (Final EIR/EA) was prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations, Section 14000 et seq.) and the U.S. Department of Transportation National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations (23 Code of Federal Regulations 771). The City of Elk Grove is the CEQA lead agency for the environmental review of the Sheldon Road/SR 99 Interchange Improvement Project (proposed project), while the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is the NEPA lead agency. As required by CEQA and NEPA Guidelines, this Final EIR/EA assesses the expected environmental impacts resulting from approval, construction, and operation of the proposed Sheldon Road/SR 99 Interchange Improvement Project, and identifies feasible means of minimizing potential adverse environmental impacts.

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE FINAL EIR/EA

This document, along with the Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (Recirculated Draft EIR/EA), represents the Final EIR/EA for the Sheldon Road/SR 99 Interchange Improvement Project. It has been prepared in accordance with Section 15132 of the State of California CEQA Guidelines, as amended, and in accordance with the requirements of NEPA. This Final EIR/EA incorporates information contained in the Recirculated Draft EIR/EA by reference.

The City of Elk Grove will consider the Final EIR/EA in its capacity as Lead Agency before it approves, denies, or recommends changes to the proposed project. The findings of fact and any statement of overriding consideration would be made after the City has considered the information contained in this Final EIR/EA. Likewise, the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) is adopted at the time the findings are adopted and would also be included in the public record.

As required by this Section 15132 of the Guidelines, a Final EIR shall consist of the following:

- The Draft EIR or a revision of the Draft EIR [a Recirculated Draft EIR/EA was prepared for this project].
- Comments and recommendations received on the Draft EIR either verbatim or in summary.
- A list of persons, organizations and public agencies commenting on the Draft EIR.
- The responses of the Lead Agency to significant environmental points raised in the review and consultation process.
- Other information deemed necessary by the Lead Agency.

The evaluation and response to public comments is an important part of the CEQA process as it allows the following:

- The opportunity to review and comment on the methods of analysis contained within the Draft EIR;

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- The ability to detect any omissions, which may have occurred during preparation of the Draft EIR;
- The ability to check for accuracy of the analysis contained within the Draft EIR; and
- The ability to share expertise and the ability to discover public concerns.

Section 771.119 (g) of the U.S. Department of Transportation NEPA regulations states:

If no significant impacts are identified, the applicant shall furnish the administration a copy of the revised environmental assessment (EA), as appropriate; copies of any comments received and responses thereto; and recommend a finding of no significant impact.

This document contains the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for this project that FHWA intends to sign in accordance with NEPA, after the City of Elk Grove certifies the final joint document in accordance with CEQA.

CERTIFICATION OF THE FINAL EIR/PROJECT CONSIDERATION

The City of Elk Grove will review and consider the Final EIR. If the City finds that the Final EIR is "adequate and complete", the City may certify the Final EIR at a public hearing. The rule of adequacy generally holds that the EIR can be certified if: 1) it shows a good faith effort at full disclosure of environmental information; and 2) provides sufficient analysis to allow decisions to be made regarding the project in contemplation of its environmental consequences.

Upon review and consideration of the Final EIR, the City may take action to approve, revise, or reject the project. A decision to approve the project would be accompanied by written findings in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15091 and Section 15093. Public Resources Code Section 21081.6 also requires lead agencies to adopt a reporting and mitigation monitoring and reporting program to describe measures that have been adopted or made a condition of project approval in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment.

1.2 EIR/EA PROCESS

The Sheldon Road/SR 99 Interchange Improvement project was originally proposed by Sacramento County, the original lead agency and decision-making body for this project. The City of Elk Grove is now the lead agency for the proposed project for the purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and FHWA is the lead agency for the purposes of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Caltrans' initial Preliminary Environmental Analysis Report (PEAR) dated January 18, 1990 identified several potentially significant impacts of the proposed project, including: biological, socioeconomic, water, hazardous waste, and land use impacts. After several years of re-designs and delays, Caltrans initiated preparation of the Project Study Report (PSR) for the project in March 1998. Another PEAR was also completed as an attachment to the PSR completed in March of 1998 and identified the same impacts mentioned above.

Several alternatives were reviewed and rejected in the initial PSR document. As part of the process for new developments in the area of the proposed project, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors reviewed the proposed configurations of the new interchange and made revisions. The County of Sacramento (County) and developers debated the issue of access control for highway commercial land usage, which resulted in the County's approval of accessing Sheldon Road on the east side of the interchange.

During the review process, the City of Elk Grove incorporated in July 2000. As a result, the City of Elk Grove gained jurisdiction over the project and as defined by Section 15050 of the CEQA Guidelines, the City of Elk Grove became the "Lead Agency" responsible for preparing the EIR for the project. A Notice of Preparation (NOP) was prepared and circulated by the City of Elk Grove on January 17, 2001 for the required 30-day review period. The City of Elk Grove prepared and circulated a draft EIR dated March 2002, but it was not finalized due to the changes in the project alternatives and the presence of endangered species. This EIR evaluated the impacts associated with the proposed Sheldon Road/SR 99 Interchange Improvement project.

In 2002, the City of Elk Grove elected to pursue federal funding for the project. This triggered the need for an Environmental Assessment pursuant to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The City determined that a joint Recirculated EIR and (first circulation) EA document was appropriate to examine the potential environmental impacts of the Sheldon Road/SR 99 Interchange Improvement project, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) became the project "Lead Agency" under NEPA. As the federal agency with primary responsibility for complying with NEPA, FHWA has discretionary approval authority and the responsibility to consider the environmental effects of the project, as described in the Recirculated Draft EIR/EA prepared for the project.

The Recirculated Draft EIR/EA was prepared and circulated for a 45-day public review period, pursuant to CEQA Section 15105 (a), beginning on January 14, 2005. The City of Elk Grove held a public meeting to receive comments on the adequacy of the Recirculated Draft EIR/EA on January 20, 2005. The 45-day public review period for the Recirculated Draft EIR/EA ended on February 28, 2005.

1.3 CONTENTS OF THE FINAL EIR/EA

As discussed above, the primary intent of the Final EIR/EA is to provide a forum to raise and address comments pertaining to the analysis contained within the Recirculated Draft EIR/EA, and to aid the decision-making bodies in selecting a preferred project design alternative. The lead agencies have reviewed each comment and prepared a response to each comment related to the adequacy of the draft joint document. Pursuant to Section 15088 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the City of Elk Grove, as the Lead Agency for this project, has reviewed and addressed all comments received on the Recirculated Draft EIR/EA prepared for the Sheldon Road/SR 99 Interchange Improvement Project. Included within the Final EIR/EA are written comments that were submitted during the required public review period. Responses to oral testimony received at the Public Meeting of January 20, 2005 are also incorporated. These comments are included in the interest of providing a complete public record for this project.

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In order to adequately address the comments provided by interested agencies and the public in an organized manner, this Final EIR/EA has been prepared in the following sections:

Executive Summary, summarizes alternatives considered in the Recirculated Draft EIR/EA and summarizes impacts from each design alternative (Alternative 2A and Alternative 3A), as well as the “No Build” option.

Section 1.0, Introduction, provides a description of the purpose of the Final EIR/EA, a brief history of the EIR/EA process, and describes the contents of the Final EIR/EA.

Section 2.0, Preferred Alternative, provides a description of the Preferred Alternative for the project, and presents a summary of other alternatives considered but rejected.

Section 3.0, Comments and Responses, on the Recirculated Draft EIR/EA, provides a list of commenters, topical responses, copies of written comments (coded for reference), a transcript of verbal comments (also coded for reference) and the responses to those written and verbal comments.

Section 4.0, Errata/Edits to the Recirculated Draft EIR/EA, consists of text changes made to the Recirculated Draft EIR/EA as a result of comments raised during the public review process.

Section 5.0, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, summarizes mitigation measures to be implemented during project implementation, and provides a framework for the monitoring, enforcement, and verification of the mitigation.

Section 6.0, Additional Federal Information, summarizes additional information on conformity with certain Federal air quality conformity and consultation requirements with federal agencies.

Section 7.0, Report Preparers, lists the names and titles of persons involved in preparation of the Final EIR/EA.

Appendices, includes technical data used in the preparation of this document.