

- C Extension of Newport Road westward to Domenigoni Parkway as a four-lane arterial to complete an east-west connection at the southern end of this corridor. However, facilities parallel to it, such as SR-74 between I-215 and Hemet, continue to operate at LOS F1 in year 2020.

## 1.6 Project Purpose

A copy of the statement of purpose and need as agreed to by the agencies participating in the NEPA/404 Memorandum of Understanding is provided in Appendix C of this EIS/EIR. The purpose of the proposed action in the HCLE Corridor is:

“to provide multimodal transportation improvements that will help alleviate future traffic demands and congestion and improve the east-west movement of people and goods across western Riverside County.”<sup>1</sup>

It is anticipated that the selected CETAP alternative for the HCLE Corridor will reduce travel time between Hemet and Corona/Lake Elsinore in the future compared to future conditions without implementation of the proposed action. In addition, it is anticipated that the selected alternative will reduce future traffic volume and congestion on SR-91 and SR-60/I-215 in the City of Riverside and improve average study area traffic speed.

The intent of this Draft EIS/EIR is to fulfill the Tier 1 NEPA requirement of FHWA to support the commitment of federal funds to the CETAP planning effort. The Tier 2 level environmental documentation will address FHWA’s NEPA requirements for approving connections to the interstate highway system and approving federal funds for project construction.

## 1.7 Regional Planning Context

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), adopted by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) in 2001, provides a blue print for future transportation improvements in its six county region.<sup>2</sup> The RTP policies for western Riverside County reflect the goal to implement regional transportation improvements. These improvements are intended to satisfy future traffic demand in western Riverside County and achieve SCAG’s long-range transportation planning goals to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality within the region. The RTP is updated every three years.

The RTP, developed in accordance with established federal requirements and policies, sets forth a multimodal, financially feasible planning strategy for southern California, including Riverside County. In addition, the RTP presents transportation policies and improvements necessary for achieving mobility goals to year 2025, taking projected population growth and economic factors into account.

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<sup>1</sup> Purpose and Need Statement for the Riverside County Integrated Project, Winchester to Temecula Corridor, July 13, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> The SCAG region includes the counties of Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Imperial.

The RTP may be amended to substitute new or revised transportation improvements, in any location, to better accomplish future mobility goals. The alternative ultimately selected through the RCIP/CETAP process to achieve the above stated purpose will be included as a specific transportation route in the RTP. Currently, the CETAP corridors are included in the 2001 RTP as generalized major transportation studies, with no specific alternative or route being identified.

The transportation model used to generate travel forecasts for the HCLE Corridor was the RIVSAN model, a derivative of the SCAG regional forecasting model and developed by SCAG for purposes of analyzing the transportation network in western Riverside County and San Bernardino County. The RIVSAN model includes the same geographic region as the SCAG regional model and is based on the same socioeconomic data, but refined to look at the Riverside and San Bernardino Counties in greater detail.

The current horizon year for the RIVSAN model is 2025. RIVSAN uses projections of households and employment developed in a cooperative process by the State of California, SCAG, Western Riverside Council of Governments, and local jurisdictions. The demographic forecasts originate with the California State Department of Finance. These statewide projections are based on forecast trends in births, deaths, in-migration, and out-migration. An extensive process is then undertaken to allocate these projections to the SCAG region and then within the region by county and by local jurisdiction. SCAG uses information on existing land use, local general plans, and extensive discussions with local jurisdictions to generate forecasts at the city level and then at the Transportation Analysis Zone level.

The transportation studies for the CETAP program were conducted under the overall umbrella of the RCIP. One of the foundational documents to the RCIP, developed through extensive stakeholder input, is the Vision for Riverside County (County of Riverside, 2000). This document delineates a wide range of goals and objectives for the future of Riverside County. It contains several objectives relating to the importance of the creation of jobs in the County, supporting the economy, and improving the jobs/housing balance. The objectives also include building a strong economic base to support public facilities for County residents and allowing the County to support the acquisition of land to be reserved for threatened and endangered species. The vision was approved by the Board of Supervisors in January, 2000 and has guided the development of the County's General Plan within the RCIP process.

## 1.8 Proposed Action

The proposed action is the preservation of right-of-way for one multimodal transportation corridor. To address the project purpose, the selected CETAP alternative for the HCLE Corridor will reduce travel time between Hemet and Corona/Lake Elsinore in the future compared to future conditions without implementation of a corridor. In addition, it is anticipated that the selected alternative will reduce future traffic volume and congestion on SR-91 and SR-60/I-215 in the City of Riverside, and improve average study area speed.

The selection of the preferred alternative in the HCLE Corridor will be based on the application of the evaluation criteria provided in Appendix D. These criteria have been developed in cooperation between FHWA and federal resource agencies through the NEPA/404 integration process. The NEPA/404 integration process included a series of