

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

meetings with the NEPA/404 agencies, resulting in the identification of a suite of alternatives in order to examine options for avoiding impacts to aquatic and biological resources. Preliminary agreement on the alternatives to be evaluated was received from the NEPA/404 agencies July, 2001/August, 2001. Appendix A of this EIS/EIR, Coordination and Consultation, contains letters providing the NEPA/404 agencies' final written concurrence on the alternatives to be evaluated (received from the NEPA/404 agencies in May, 2002). The final selection of an alternative will not be made until after considering public comments received on the Draft EIS and its related public hearings. A Final EIS will be made available for public review and comment. Following this review of the Final EIS, a Record of Decision (ROD) will be made by FHWA. For CEQA Compliance, the RCTC will certify the Final EIR, adopt findings as required under CEQA, and issue a Notice of Determination (NOD).

This Tier 1 EIS/EIR provides environmental documentation to support a route location decision to select one alternative within the HCLE Corridor. As a result of the route location, local agencies will be able to preserve the right-of-way for future transportation improvements. As open space and agricultural lands in western Riverside County continue to undergo rapid development, the siting of future transportation improvements and preservation of right-way are critical to meeting future transportation needs in the study area.