

## 4.2 Farmland

### 4.2.1 Methodology for Impact Evaluation

Evaluating potential impacts to farmlands designated as Prime, Unique, or Farmlands of Statewide or Local Importance (hereinafter referred to as “designated” farmlands) required several data gathering and analysis activities. The assessment of alternatives began with a review of aerial photographs (June, 2000) and maps of the project study area. Vehicle and pedestrian surveys were conducted to gain a broad perspective of the region, to evaluate specific areas, and to check information gathered from secondary sources. Secondary sources of information included the 1997 economic census and the 1997 agricultural census. Information was also gathered from local and State agencies, including community planning departments, the Riverside County planning and finance departments, and the California Department of Conservation.

The information gathered from maps and aerial photographs, site visits, censuses, and agencies was evaluated in spreadsheets, figures, and GIS analysis to describe the potential impacts to designated farmlands from each alternative. The affected area for each alternative is the 150 to 300 m (500 to 1,000 ft) previously described in Chapter 2. All farmland resources within the bandwidth area are considered to be potentially affected. Precise determination of impacts will be made in Tier 2 for the selected alternative based on more detailed engineering.

### 4.2.2 Impacts

The study area includes thousands of hectares (acres) of designated farmlands used for orchards and grain crops, raising livestock and poultry, grazing, and dairy operations. Every alternative in the HCLE Corridor would affect farmland, although the types and area vary considerably among alternatives (see previous Figure 3.2.1). The areas reported in this analysis overstate the actual impacts likely to occur: first, because the actual right-of-way will be smaller than the 150 and 300 m (500 and 1,000 ft) ultimate right-of-way; and second, because of ongoing conversion of agricultural land in the area.

The federal process to assess farmland impacts is guided by the provisions of the Farmland Protection Policy Act, which calls for completing Form AD-1066. The process is an iterative one, with both the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS, formerly the Soil Conservation Service, or SCS) and Caltrans, acting for FHWA, completing various portions of the form. After Caltrans receives the form back from NRCS with a score for each of the alternatives’ relative value, Caltrans will assign point values by applying the site assessment criteria. If a threshold score is reached, Caltrans will consider alternatives to avoid converting the farmland. Form AD 1006 will be prepared for the selected route in the Tier 2 level environmental studies.

#### 4.2.2.1 No Build Alternative (General Plan Build Out)

The No Build Alternative (General Plan Build Out) will not impact the farmlands identified within the HCLE Corridor alternatives. Portions of these farmlands would be affected through road widening or other improvements necessary to implement the County and City General Plan roadways and other land uses.