

## 6.0 CEQA Considerations

CEQA requires consideration and discussion of environmental impacts of a proposed project based on changes to the existing physical conditions in the affected area as they exist at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is published (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2). Although the Tier 1 action is the adoption of a preferred route that will not result in any physical impacts to the environment, the CEQA analysis considers the potential physical impacts associated with future construction. This analysis will overstate the actual impacts likely to occur, because the actual right-of-way of the future transportation facility to be built within the HCLE Corridor will be smaller than the 150 to 300 meter (500 to 1,000 ft) bandwidths of the alternatives. As such, the areas permanently impacted by the project will be one-third to one-half the size of the areas evaluated in this EIS/EIR. More detailed Tier 2 environmental studies will evaluate various alignment locations within the preferred route and identify potentially significant impacts with more certainty.

For each of the topics analyzed in Chapter 4.0, the following discussions evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the proposed CETAP alternatives addressing the questions in the Environmental Checklist contained in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. In addition, discussions are provided regarding the CEQA requirements for analysis of potential growth inducing effects of the proposed project, as well as the Environmentally Superior Alternative.

### 6.1 Land Use

#### 6.1.1 Physically Divide an Established Community?

The No Build Alternative would not physically divide an established community. Expanding an existing road or constructing a new highway may affect communities and neighborhoods in ways other than direct property acquisition and displacements. The proposed project could divide neighborhoods, separate resident children from schools, or fragment edges of cohesive groups of people, and adversely affect how a community or neighborhood functions. The HCLE Corridor contains four communities that may be affected by one of the alternatives, as previously identified in Table 3.C. The HCLE Corridor contains several areas that could be impacted in this way, as illustrated in Figure 4.3.2.

- C Residents around Lake Mathews, particularly south and southeast of the Lake, have expressed concern that widening El Sobrante Road/Cajalco Road (Alternatives 1a, 1b, H1, H3) would divide their rural neighborhood that extends northeast of Lake Mathews across Cajalco Road (as shown in photo A of Figure 4.3.2).
- C Alternatives 4 and 5 both include segments of SR-74 that, if improved, could divide existing rural communities and neighborhoods (photo B of Figure 4.3.2). SR-74 east of I-215 (Alternative 4 variations) runs through the middle of the unincorporated communities of Homeland and Green Acres. Substantial widening of the highway would effectively divide the towns and their small business districts in half. The northern alternative option moves the separation out of the middle of the communities' main streets but would still isolate a segment of the residents of these rural communities.

- C The community of Menifee, which straddles Newport Road and surrounds Menifee Lake Country Club, would be bisected by both Alternative 6 variations (photo C of Figure 4.3.2). Newport Road currently is designed with some elements of a parkway, and golfers can cross between holes in underpasses without disrupting play. Alternative 6a also would isolate community facilities (City Hall, library) from the residents of Canyon Lake.
- C SR-74 south of Ethanac Road (Alternatives 4a, 4c, 5a, 5c) presently serves an area of unincorporated Riverside County that could be divided by a substantial widening of the existing highway (photo D in Figure 4.3.2).

Alternatives 4, 5, and 6 (and their variations) have significant impacts with regard to physically dividing existing communities. In addition, Alternatives 1a, 1b, H1, and H3 would intensify the existing land use separations that occur along El Sobrante/Cajalco Road and have potentially significant impacts with regard to physically dividing existing communities.

### **6.1.2 Conflict with Any Applicable Land Use Plan, Policy, or Regulation of an Agency with Jurisdiction over the Project (Including, but Not Limited to, the General Plan, Specific Plan, Local Coastal Program, or Zoning Ordinance) Adopted for the Purpose of Avoiding or Mitigating an Environmental Effect?**

The HCLE Build Alternatives would not create a conflict with applicable land use plans because the CETAP corridors are acknowledged in the new Riverside County General Plan. The applicable Area Plan policies support accommodating the CETAP corridor improvements as described in Section 4.1. An amendment to the new Riverside County General Plan will be required to reflect the selected HCLE Corridor alternative.

The HCLE Build Alternatives are inconsistent with the General Plan Circulation Elements of the Cities of Lake Elsinore, Corona, Riverside, Perris, Hemet, San Jacinto, and Canyon Lake, since these routes are not shown in the city plans. Following adoption of a preferred alternative, RCTC will request the cities to amend their General Plans to incorporate the adopted route if it traverses any of these cities. This EIS/EIR is intended to provide the supporting CEQA documentation necessary for these General Plan Amendments.

The No Build Alternatives are inconsistent with the new County General Plan that supports improved mobility in the study area.

### **6.1.3 Conflict with Any Applicable Habitat Conservation Plan or Natural Community Conservation Plan.**

The Build Alternatives do not conflict with the Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan because the CETAP and MSHCP plans have been planned in conjunction with one another by RCTC and the County of Riverside, in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game.

## 6.2 Farmland

Would the project:

### 6.2.1 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?

As discussed in Section 4.2.2 of this EIS/EIR, the implementation and construction of alternatives within the HCLE Corridor study area will convert designated farmland (Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance) to non-agricultural uses. Every alternative within the HCLE Corridor would include hundreds of hectares of potentially affected designated farmland, although the types and area vary considerably among alternatives. Implementation of the mitigation measures listed in Section 4.2.4 of this EIS/EIR will minimize impacts related to designated farmland. However, impacts to designated farmland will remain significant after implementation of the Potential Mitigation Measures to be Considered in Tier 2.

### 6.2.2 Conflict with Existing Zoning for Agricultural Use, or a Williamson Act Contract?

Potential impacts to existing zoning for agricultural use and Williamson Act contracts will be analyzed in Tier 2 environmental studies for the selected HCLE Corridor alternative.

### 6.2.3 Involve Other Changes in the Existing Environment Which, Due to Their Location or Nature, Could Result in Conversion of Farmland, to Non-Agricultural Use?

The analysis in this EIS/EIR focuses on potential impacts to farmland within each alternative within the HCLE Corridor study area. While the implementation of a HCLE alternative may facilitate or hasten the trend of converting agricultural lands to other uses, the trend itself is the result of growth pressures that caused the need for the proposed project. Implementation of a HCLE alternative will not result in significant impacts related to other changes in the existing environment that could result in the conversion of farmland to other uses.

## 6.3 Socioeconomics

Would the project:

### 6.3.1 Induce Substantial 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)?

The study area for the proposed project, and 1990 and 2000 census tracts included in the analysis, is illustrated in Figure 3.3.1 of this EIS/EIR. The study area comprises