

**NEPA/SECTION 404 INTEGRATION PROCESS
ALTERNATIVES RECOMMENDED TO BE CARRIED FORWARD INTO THE
CEQA/NEPA PROCESS FOR THE CETAP BANNING/BEAUMONT TO TEMECULA
CORRIDOR (WINCHESTER TO TEMECULA STUDY AREA)
For The
RIVERSIDE COUNTY INTEGRATED PROJECT**

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND OF THE RECOMMENDATION

This memorandum represents the recommendation being forwarded by the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) and County Board of Supervisors for the set of transportation alternatives to carry forward for full environmental documentation in the CEQA/NEPA (California Environmental Quality Act/National Environmental Policy Act) process for one of the CETAP transportation corridors currently under consideration: the Banning/Beaumont to Temecula Corridor (Winchester to Temecula Study Area). The recommendations were originally developed by the CETAP Advisory Committee at their meeting on November 7, 2000. The recommendations were approved by the RCTC Commissioners at their meeting on November 8. The expectation is that an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) will be prepared sufficient to reserve right-of-way for a future multimodal transportation facility within this corridor.

It is requested that Caltrans, FHWA/FTA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Army Corps of Engineers, and the Environmental Protection Agency provide their concurrence on these initial alternatives as the ones to be carried forward into full environmental documentation in the EIR/EIS for each corridor. It is recognized that the agencies may wish to suggest modifications, additions, or deletions of some of these alternatives. The recommendations made by the CETAP Advisory Committee, the RCTC, and the Board of Supervisors were made with the understanding that they would undergo further review by the agencies involved in the NEPA/404 process. However, it should also be recognized that the recommendations were based on an extensive base of information and public input, and have the unanimous support of the 29 member RCTC Commission. Specifically, the sources of input include:

- Data and analyses documented in Working Paper 7a, previously provided to the agencies at our meeting of October 12, 2000 at the Corps of Engineers offices in Los Angeles and included in the NEPA/404 submittal package. Working Paper 7a defines each of the alternatives in detail (both those which are recommended for elimination and those recommended to carry forward), and provides an evaluation of the alternatives at a screening level. The intent of the working paper was to provide enough information to help screen down the number of alternatives to those which should be carried forward into the environmental process.
- Overlays of the transportation corridors with the RCIP land use plans and MSHCP alternatives.
- Input from other members of the RCIP consulting team, including those involved with the General Plan and the MSHCP.
- Input from the CETAP Advisory Committee members, from various discussions and from alternative evaluation sheets turned in by committee members.

- Two sets of public meetings held as part of the RCIP, with at least 8 meetings held in Western Riverside County in Summer, 1999 and 8 additional meetings held in winter, 2000.
- Input from the public at three public meetings specifically held on CETAP alternatives: October 30, 2000 in Lake Elsinore, November 2, 2000 in Perris, and November 6, 2000 in Temecula. Summaries of comments received at these three public meetings are provided in the NEPA/404 submittal package.
- Input from agency staff and officials involved in the CETAP program, including Federal and state agency input received at prior meetings.

There are several reasons for trying to eliminate, prior to entering the CEQA/NEPA process, any alternatives that essentially have no likelihood of being implemented in the future, including:

- More effort can then be spent on evaluating and refining the alternatives that have higher probability of implementation
- There will be fewer uncertainties in the development of the RCIP land use plans and the MSHCP. More transportation alternatives means that the land use plans and the MSHCP will have to take into account additional contingencies.

By the same token, we should not leave out alternatives that should legitimately be studied as possibly addressing the defined Purpose and Need. The intent of the corridors element of CETAP is that the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA) for each corridor be envisioned as a major multimodal facility. The environmental document for each corridor will provide environmental clearance for the preservation of right-of-way for the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative in each corridor. Those alternatives recommended for elimination in this paper are deemed not to be practicable as major, multimodal transportation facilities, as intended by CETAP, and therefore should not be carried forward further. It should also be understood that those alternatives recommended to be carried forward have not necessarily been deemed to be practicable. The determination of the practicability of these alternatives will be made as part of the development of the EIR/EIS. The outcome of that process will be the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative.

RECAP OF THE OVERALL TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY

The recommendations on alternatives to carry forward must be viewed in the context of the total CETAP transportation program. The pursuit of transportation projects in the corridors must be related to the overall direction of the transportation program and for the vision for Riverside County, adopted by the Board of Supervisors in March, 2000. The following elements of an overall transportation strategy were previously outlined as part of the CETAP program, and are important to reemphasize:

- Place significant investment in attracting jobs to Riverside County – This is a win-win scenario for virtually every aspect of the vision, including transportation.
- Recognize that even with a significant shift in jobs to Riverside County, a reshaping of development patterns within the County, or a substantial investment in transit, keeping highway traffic moving will be a daunting challenge. Maintaining mobility on the County's highway system and on linkages to other counties is critical to the County's economy and to making the County an enjoyable place to live. This will require a serious effort of improving and expanding freeway systems and developing a supporting arterial system that provides access for shorter trips, and preserves mobility on the freeways for longer trips.

- Provide a transit “spine network” that can develop and grow with the County. If higher capacity transit options are not currently viable in certain corridors, at least retain the flexibility to incorporate these types of transit options into strategic corridors at a later date. The corridors that may be considered for this transit “spine network” include: existing Metrolink lines from Riverside to Orange County, commuter rail extension on the San Jacinto Branch line to Moreno Valley, Perris, and Hemet/San Jacinto, connections to the San Jacinto Branch line along the SR-79 corridor and/or I-215 corridor to Temecula, a transit corridor along I-15 between Temecula and Ontario and to San Diego, and a corridor from Banning/Beaumont and the Coachella Valley to Riverside. The form of transit (express bus, commuter rail, light rail, etc.) would be determined at the time when such service becomes viable and could involve a phasing in over time to higher grade service. (note: the RCIP Transit and Land Use Subcommittee is now structuring a more detailed framework for the provision of transit services)
- Work with Orange, Los Angeles, and San Bernardino counties to improve feeder services at their end of the Metrolink lines, to allow for greater opportunity for County residents to use Metrolink.
- As much as the market permits, provide for cluster development along transit corridors and in nodes of development that can be served by transit. Provide incentives to the development community that promote more compact development along corridors and in potential station areas (both Metrolink and other future transit station areas) that are along the “spine network.”
- Continue to reinforce transportation options that promote efficient use of the system: carpooling, vanpooling, telecommuting, and advanced transportation technologies.
- Preserve and expand opportunities for a network of bikeways, pathways, and equestrian trails as the transportation system is developed.
- Design corridors to reinforce the character of the communities through which they pass.
- Where transportation facilities must traverse wildlife areas, provide for effective treatment of wildlife crossings. Provide a set of standards that can be used county-wide, developed with full involvement of stakeholders.

ALTERNATIVES RECOMMENDED TO CARRY FORWARD

Exhibit 1 presents the alternatives recommended to be carried forward or eliminated in the Banning/Beaumont to Temecula Corridor (Winchester to Temecula Study Area), as adopted by the Riverside County Transportation Commission. The alternative number and description are provided in the left two columns. The third column identifies whether the alternative should be carried forward or eliminated. The last column briefly explains the basic rationale for elimination of an alternative or for carrying an alternative forward. The exhibit indicates which alternatives are recommended to be carried forward into the CEQA/NEPA process, with the goal of preserving right-of-way for construction of a major multimodal transportation facility. Exhibit 2 provides further explanation on the rationale for those alternatives recommended for elimination.

Additional background materials are included with this NEPA/404 submittal to facilitate agency review of the recommended alternatives:

- Working Paper 7a

- A brochure that was used at the CETAP public meetings to explain the initial alternatives that were analyzed
- A summary of comments obtained from the public meetings
- Color maps showing the alternatives for each of the two corridors, plus overlays of the alternative alignments with the MSCHP Alternative 1 (the most extensive of the habitat conservation alternatives) and land use Alternative 3 (the vision alternative) from the General Plan

It should be noted that each alternative will be assumed to be supported with appropriate demand management and operational improvements, such as ridesharing, park-and-ride facilities, Intelligent Transportation Systems, etc. The no-build alternative will also be included. The no-build alternative will assume only funded transportation improvements. The horizon year will be the current SCAG horizon year of 2020, but supplemental data will be provided to reflect longer term conditions, as data become available from SCAG and as the land use plans are brought forward through the RCIP. We anticipate analyzing the alternatives for a Riverside County buildout condition as well as the 2020 condition. The buildout data should be available by approximately February 2001. Data for the 2025 horizon year may or may not be available within the time frame of the preparation of the EIR/EIS.

**EXHIBIT 1. ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CETAP
BANNING/BEAUMONT TO TEMECULA CORRIDOR (WINCHESTER TO TEMECULA STUDY AREA),
AS APPROVED BY RCTC**

Alternative Number and Name	Description	RCTC Recommendation	Rationale
1. SR-79/ Scott Rd.	Build SR-79 as a freeway from Domenigoni Parkway south to Scott Road with connection to I-215 via Scott Road. The transit alignment would continue from Scott Road along current SR-79 into Temecula.	Carry Forward	One of major options to divert through traffic to I-215. Avoids most habitat impacts.
2. SR-79/ Clinton Keith	Build SR-79 as a freeway from Domenigoni Parkway south to Clinton Keith Road with connection to I-215 via Clinton Keith Road. The transit alignment would continue from Clinton Keith Road along current SR-79 into Temecula.	Carry Forward	Crosses a possible core reserve area for MSHCP. Clinton Keith Road may still be considered as part of General Plan circulation network.
3. SR-79/ Keller	Build SR-79 as a freeway from Domenigoni Parkway south to Keller Road with connection to I-215 via Keller Road. The transit alignment would continue from Keller Road along current SR-79 into Temecula.	Eliminate	Crosses a possible core reserve area for MSHCP. Keller Road may still be considered as part of General Plan circulation network, depending on traffic analysis.
4. SR-79/ Date	Build SR-79 as a freeway from Domenigoni Parkway south to Date Street with connection to I-15 via Date Street. The transit alignment could be included along Date Street or could continue along current SR-79 into Temecula.	Eliminate	However, continue to promote Date St. as an arterial street connecting SR-79/Murrieta Hot Springs Road with I-15 at a new interchange north of Winchester Rd.
5a. Eastern bypass/ Pourroy/79	Build SR-79 as a freeway from Domenigoni Parkway to I-15, bypassing Temecula to the east via Pourroy Road/Butterfield Stage Road. The transit alignment would continue along current SR-79 into Temecula. For connection to I-15, follow the existing SR-79 alignment (south segment) from Butterfield Stage Road west to I-15	Carry forward as a limited access expressway, not a freeway	Provides moderate traffic relief to I-15 and SR-79. The south segment of SR-79 would be difficult to convert to freeway status.
5b. Eastern bypass/ Pourroy/ Rainbow	Same as 5a but for connection to I-15, a new alignment would proceed south of existing SR-79 along the County proposed extension of Butterfield Stage Road to Anza Road, continuing west on Anza Road to Pala Road (County Route S-16). The alignment then would follow the base of the mountains on the southwest side of the Pechanga Indian Reservation Entertainment Center. It would proceed around the north end of the mountain to Rainbow Canyon Road and continue to the Rainbow Valley Boulevard interchange.	Carry forward	Would allow San Diego-bound traffic to avoid I-15 in Murrieta and Temecula. Provides moderate amount of traffic relief to I-15 and SR-79.
6a. Eastern bypass/ Washington/ 79	Build SR-79 as a freeway from Domenigoni Parkway to I-15, bypassing Temecula to the east via Washington Street to Auld Road to Butterfield Stage Road. For connection to I-15, follow the existing SR-79 alignment (south segment) from Butterfield Stage Road west to I-15. The transit alignment would continue along current SR-79 into Temecula.	Eliminate	Alternative 5a is a more preferable alignment at the north end.

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CETAP – Recommended Alternatives to Carry Forward for Banning/Beaumont to Temecula Corridor

6b. Eastern bypass/Washington/Rainbow	Build SR-79 as a freeway from Domenigoni Parkway to I-15, bypassing Temecula to the east via Washington Street to Auld Road to Butterfield Stage Road. For connection to I-15, see description under 5b. The transit alignment would continue along current SR-79 into Temecula.	Eliminate	Alternative 5b is a more preferable alignment at the north end.
7a. Domenigoni/Leon	Extend Domenigoni Parkway west as a freeway from SR-79 to I-215. The alignment would proceed west from SR-79 / Domenigoni Parkway to Leon Road, continuing south along Leon Road, turning west near Holland Road and connecting to Garboni Road on the south side of Rose Mountain. The transit alignment would continue along current SR-79 into Temecula.	Eliminate	Alternative 7b, providing a connection to Scott Road, is more direct and can tie into I-215 at the existing interchange location.
7b. Domenigoni/Scott	Follow same alignment as in 7a, but continue south, connecting to Scott Road and then to I-15. The transit alignment would continue along current SR-79 into Temecula.	Carry forward	Provides moderate amount of traffic relief to SR-79, and is north of most of the environmentally sensitive areas.
Transit from Hemet to Temecula	1. Provide rail service or busway within one of the defined highway alignments listed above along the SR-79 right-of-way, connecting to the San Jacinto Branch line, which would provide transit service between Hemet and Riverside. Provide transit stations at least in Temecula/Murrieta, French Valley, Diamond Valley Lake area, and Winchester.	Carry forward	Assume that transit alignment will continue along SR-79 into Temecula.
Transit from Hemet to Temecula	2. Provide express bus service between Banning/Beaumont, Hemet/San Jacinto and Temecula/Murrieta	Carry forward	Assumes express service would run on SR-79, no exclusive transit facility, but would include preferential treatment at intersections.

**EXHIBIT 2. FURTHER RATIONALE FOR ALTERNATIVES RECOMMENDED FOR
ELIMINATION FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION IN THE CETAP
BANNING/BEAUMONT TO TEMECULA CORRIDOR**

Alternative Number and Name	Description	Rationale
3. SR-79/ Keller	Build SR-79 as a freeway from Domenigoni Parkway south to Keller Road with connection to I-215 via Keller Road. The transit alignment would continue from Keller Road along current SR-79 into Temecula.	Crosses a possible core reserve area for MSHCP. Interchange at I-215 would provide less effective traffic service than interchanges at I-215 for Alternatives 1 or 3. Alignment is not as direct as alignment along Clinton Keith Road. Keller Road may still be considered as part of General Plan circulation network, depending on traffic analysis.
4. SR-79/ Date	Build SR-79 as a freeway from Domenigoni Parkway south to Date Street with connection to I-15 via Date Street. The transit alignment could be included along Date Street or could continue along current SR-79 into Temecula.	Alignment along Date Street will have significant community impacts. It follows Date Street in the County of Riverside, which is new four-lane roadway with an 88-foot right-of-way. A major multimodal facility would require a minimum of 250 feet of right-of-way, and would required the acquisition of at least two rows of newly constructed homes along Date Street. The alternative is not compatible with the land use plan for the City of Temecula, which calls for residential and commercial facilities in the area along the alignment, with at-grade intersections.
6a. Eastern bypass/ Washington/ 79	Build SR-79 as a freeway from Domenigoni Parkway to I-15, bypassing Temecula to the east via Washington Street to Auld Road to Butterfield Stage Road. For connection to I-15, follow the existing SR-79 alignment (south segment) from Butterfield Stage Road west to I-15. The transit alignment would continue along current SR-79 into Temecula.	Alignment 5a is preferable to alignment 6a at the north end. It is more direct, slightly lower in cost, and is more feasible to implement in terms of access to properties. It cuts off fewer existing driveways. .
6b. Eastern bypass/ Washington/ Rainbow	Build SR-79 as a freeway from Domenigoni Parkway to I-15, bypassing Temecula to the east via Washington Street to Auld Road to Butterfield Stage Road. For connection to I-15, see description under 5b. The transit alignment would continue along current SR-79 into Temecula.	Alternative 5b is preferable to alternative 6b at the north end. It is more direct, slightly lower in cost, and is more feasible to implement in terms of access to properties. It cuts off fewer existing driveways.
7a. Domenigoni/ Leon	Extend Domenigoni Parkway west as a freeway from SR-79 to I-215. The alignment would proceed west from SR-79 / Domenigoni Parkway to Leon Road, continuing south along Leon Road, turning west near Holland Road and connecting to Garboni Road on the south side of Rose Mountain. The transit alignment would continue along current SR-79 into Temecula.	Alternative 7b, providing a connection to Scott Road, is more direct than alternative 7a, and can tie into I-215 at the existing interchange location.