

**NEPA/SECTION 404 INTEGRATION PROCESS
ALTERNATIVES RECOMMENDED TO BE CARRIED FORWARD INTO THE
CEQA/NEPA PROCESS FOR THE CETAP HEMET TO CORONA/LAKE ELSINORE
CORRIDOR
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 Hemet to Corona/Lake Elsinore Corridor. 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 7b, previously provided to the agencies at our meeting of October 12, 2000 at the Corps of Engineers offices in Los Angeles and also included in the NEPA/404 package submitted to the agencies. Working Paper 7b 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 are provided of comments received at these three public meetings.
- 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 Hemet to Corona/Lake Elsinore Corridor, 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 in the NEPA/404 submittal to facilitate review of the recommended alternatives:

- Working Paper 7b

- 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
HEMET TO CORONA/LAKE ELSINORE CORRIDOR, AS APPROVED BY RCTC**

Alternative Number and Name	Description	RCTC Recommendation	Rationale
1. Ramona/ Cajalco (a, b, and c)	Build Ramona Expressway as a freeway from SR-79 to I-215 and build Cajalco Road as a freeway from I-215 to El Sobrante Road. Continue along El Sobrante Road north of Lake Mathews and back to Cajalco Road continuing to an interchange at I-15. There are three variations in alignments to be considered linking the intersection of La Sierra Ave./El Sobrante Road with the Cajalco Road/I-15 interchange, as shown in on the map. These will be termed the north, central, and south segments of the Cajalco alignment, or alternatives 1a, 1b, and 1c	a. Eliminate b. Carry forward c. Eliminate	More circuitous and difficult from an engineering perspective. Alternative 1 provides an important improved connection between I-15, I-215, and Hemet/San Jacinto. Also consider adding a connection from this alignment north to the 91 between La Sierra and I-15. Not realistic to add lanes across the dam at Lake Mathews.
2. Ramona/ Cajalco/ Mockingbird Cyn.	Build Ramona Expressway as a freeway from SR-79 to I-215 and build Cajalco Road as a freeway from I-215 to El Sobrante Road. Continue along Mockingbird Canyon Road to Van Buren Boulevard connecting to SR-91.	Eliminate	Too much of an impact along Mockingbird Canyon Rd. and Van Buren Blvd., and too difficult to convert into limited access facility in those areas.
3. Van Buren	Upgrade Van Buren Blvd. to a limited access facility from I-215 to SR-91.	Eliminate	Difficult to convert into limited access facility. Still important as an arterial and as a critical link for March Air Reserve Base.
4a. SR-74/ Ethanac, following SR-74 to I-15	Realign SR-74 on the west side of I-215 to connect directly with SR-74 on the east side of I-215 using the Ethanac Road connection. Continue as a freeway on existing SR-74 to new SR-79 alignment (the SR-79 alignment is being determined as part of a separate study by RCTC and Caltrans). For connection to I-15, upgrade SR-74 between Ethanac Road and I-15 along the existing SR-74 alignment.	Eliminate	Alternative 5, connecting to Domenigoni Parkway, is preferred to Alternative 4, along existing SR-74. Alt. 4 has too much of an impact along SR-74 east of I-215, and will be too difficult to convert into limited access facility in those areas. See comments on Alternatives 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d, and 5e regarding options to carry forward for Alternative 5.
4b. SR-74/ Ethanac, following northern route to Lake Street at I-15	Same as 4a but for the connection to I-15 build a new alignment from the Ethanac Road/SR-74 junction to the north of existing SR-74, joining Lake Street at I-15. Continue westward across I-15 to the Cleveland National Forest, where the alignment would potentially link up with a future Riverside County to Orange County alignment.	Eliminate	See discussion under 4a

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<p>4c. SR-74/ Ethanac, following Nichols Rd. to I-15</p>	<p>Same as 4a but for the connection to I-15, from the Ethanac Road/SR-74 junction, follow SR-74 to the El Toro Cut Off Road and then follow the Nichols Road alignment due west to the Nichols Road/I-15 interchange. Continue westward across I-15 to the Cleveland National Forest, where the alignment would potentially link up with a future Riverside County to Orange County alignment.</p>	<p>Eliminate</p>	<p>See discussion under 4a</p>
<p>4d. SR-74/ Ethanac, following new alignment south of SR-74 to I-15</p>	<p>Same as 4a but for the connection to I-15 build a new alignment to the south of existing SR-74. The southerly alternative would extend from I-15 south of North Main Street to the Ethanac Road extension near the San Jacinto River crossing.</p>	<p>Eliminate</p>	<p>See discussion under 4a</p>
<p>4e. SR-74/ Ethanac, following new alignment to south of SR-74 to Nichols Rd. to I-15</p>	<p>Same as 4a but for the connection to I-15, from Ethanac Road extension near San Jacinto River Crossing, build new alignment south to Riverside Street, continue west on Riverside Street to El Toro Cut Off Road / Nichols Road. Follow Nichols Road alignment west to I-15 interchange. Continue westward across I-15 to the Cleveland National Forest, where the alignment would potentially link up with a future Riverside County to Orange County alignment.</p>	<p>Eliminate</p>	<p>See discussion under 4a</p>
<p>5. Domenigoni/ Ethanac/ SR-74 (a, b, c, d, and e)</p> <p>5e</p>	<p>Extend Domenigoni Parkway as a freeway to the northwest, along the San Jacinto Branch Line, to Ethanac Road. Extend Ethanac Road westward and connect to I-15 using one of the alignments (a, b, c, d, or e) identified in alternative 4 above.</p> <p>a. Connects from Ethanac Road to I-15 along existing SR-74.</p> <p>b. Connects from Ethanac Road to a northerly alignment, connecting to Lake Street at I-15.</p> <p>c. Connects from Ethanac Rd. to SR-74 to Nichols Rd.</p> <p>d. Connects from Ethanac Rd. to I-15 via southern alignment</p> <p>e. Connects from Ethanac Rd. to I-15 via partial southern alignment, crossing SR-74, connecting to Nichols Rd. and an interchange at I-15.</p>	<p>a. Carry forward</p> <p>b. Carry forward</p> <p>c. Carry forward</p> <p>d. Eliminate</p> <p>e. Carry forward</p>	<p>Need to carry forward as an option that minimizes environmental impacts, even though it does not serve as a good linkage across I-15 to any possible future alignment to Orange County.</p> <p>Still has environmental impacts, but may be less objectionable than options along existing SR-74.</p> <p>Aligns well with possible future connection to Orange County.</p> <p>Has some of the greater environmental impacts of the five options, and does not connect well with possible future alignment to Orange County.</p> <p>Avoids most of impacts to existing development along SR-74 and aligns well with possible future connection to Orange County. Still has environmental impacts.</p>
<p>6. Domenigoni/N ewport/ RR</p>	<p>Extend Domenigoni Parkway as a freeway from SR-79 to I-15. From Domenigoni Parkway proceed west connecting to Newport Road continuing to Railroad</p>	<p>a. Eliminate</p>	<p>Would have significant impact to communities along Newport Road and Railroad Canyon Road. Does not</p>

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Canyon Rd. (a and b)	Canyon Road/Goetz Road. For connection to I-15 two variations exist: a) Follow Railroad Canyon connecting to I-15 or b) New alignment to the south of Railroad Canyon Road bypassing Canyon Lake area connecting to I-15.	b. Eliminate	connect well with possible future alignment to Orange County. Would have significant impact to communities along Newport Road. Does not connect well with possible future alignment to Orange County.
Rail or bus service along one of above alignments	Provide rail or bus service within one of the defined highway alignments listed above, connecting to north-south transit routes at I-15, I-215, and SR-79. Major transit stops would be located at those junctions, plus the cities of Hemet, San Jacinto, and Perris, as appropriate for the alignment.	Carry forward	Assumed to be on all alignments recommended for carrying forward.
Transit service along San Jacinto Branch Line	Implement commuter rail service on the existing San Jacinto Branch Line to downtown Riverside and provide stations at San Jacinto, Hemet, Winchester, a location east of Perris, Perris, and March ARB.	Carry forward	Should include evaluation of transit options other than commuter rail as well.

EXHIBIT 2. ADDITIONAL RATIONALE FOR ALTERNATIVES RECOMMENDED FOR ELIMINATION FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION IN THE CETAP HEMET TO CORONA/LAKE ELSINORE CORRIDOR

Alternative Number and Name	Description	Rationale
1. Ramona/Cajalco (a, b, and c)	Build Ramona Expressway as a freeway from SR-79 to I-215 and build Cajalco Road as a freeway from I-215 to El Sobrante Road. Continue along El Sobrante Road north of Lake Mathews and back to Cajalco Road continuing to an interchange at I-15. There are three variations in alignments to be considered linking the intersection of La Sierra Ave./El Sobrante Road with the Cajalco Road/I-15 interchange, as shown in on the map. These will be termed the north, central, and south segments of the Cajalco alignment, or alternatives 1a, 1b, and 1c	1a - More circuitous and difficult from an engineering perspective. The most expensive of the three options for connection from La Sierra Ave. to I-15. Very high visual impacts. 1c - Not realistic to add lanes across the dam at Lake Mathews. If not connected across the dam, major structure required over outflow. Affects the greatest number of species of the three options for connection from LaSierra Ave. to I-15.
2. Ramona/Cajalco/Mockingbird Cyn.	Build Ramona Expressway as a freeway from SR-79 to I-215 and build Cajalco Road as a freeway from I-215 to El Sobrante Road. Continue along Mockingbird Canyon Road to Van Buren Boulevard connecting to SR-91.	Significant impact to residences along Mockingbird Canyon Rd. and Van Buren Blvd. Would substantially change the character of the community along Mockingbird Canyon Rd., and would be very difficult to convert into limited access facility in those areas. Would have substantial impacts on or require acquisition of existing businesses along Van Buren Boulevard from Mockingbird Canyon Rd. to SR-91. Substantial opposition from the public and from the City of Riverside.
3. Van Buren	Upgrade Van Buren Blvd. to a limited access facility from I-215 to SR-91.	Significant impact to residences and businesses along Van Buren Blvd. Would substantially change the character of the community along Van Buren Blvd. and would be very difficult to convert into limited access facility. Van Buren Blvd. is still important as an arterial and as a critical link for March Air Reserve Base. Substantial opposition from the public and from the City of Riverside.
4a. SR-74/Ethanac, following SR-74 to I-15	Realign SR-74 on the west side of I-215 to connect directly with SR-74 on the east side of I-215 using the Ethanac Road connection. Continue as a freeway on existing SR-74 to new SR-79 alignment (the SR-79 alignment is being determined as part of a separate study by RCTC and Caltrans). For connection to I-15, upgrade SR-74 between Ethanac Road and I-15 along the existing SR-74 alignment.	Alternative 4 has too much of an impact on existing businesses and residences along SR-74 east of I-215, and will be too difficult to convert into limited access facility in that area. It would not be able to provide the type of higher-speed service needed to support job growth and industry in the area. The Alternative 5 options are identical to the 4 options on the west side of I-215.
4b. SR-74/Ethanac, following northern route to Lake Street at I-15	Same as 4a but for the connection to I-15 build a new alignment from the Ethanac Road/SR-74 junction to the north of existing SR-74, joining Lake Street at I-15. Continue westward across I-15 to the Cleveland National Forest, where the alignment would potentially link up with a future Riverside County to Orange County alignment.	See discussion under 4a. Same rationale.

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<p>4c. SR-74/ Ethanac, following Nichols Rd. to I-15</p>	<p>Same as 4a but for the connection to I-15, from the Ethanac Road/SR-74 junction, follow SR-74 to the El Toro Cut Off Road and then follow the Nichols Road alignment due west to the Nichols Road/I-15 interchange. Continue westward across I-15 to the Cleveland National Forest, where the alignment would potentially link up with a future Riverside County to Orange County alignment.</p>	<p>See discussion under 4a. Same rationale.</p>
<p>4d. SR-74/ Ethanac, following new alignment south of SR-74 to I-15</p>	<p>Same as 4a but for the connection to I-15 build a new alignment to the south of existing SR-74. The southerly alternative would extend from I-15 south of North Main Street to the Ethanac Road extension near the San Jacinto River crossing.</p>	<p>See discussion under 4a. Same rationale.</p>
<p>4e. SR-74/ Ethanac, following new alignment to south of SR-74 to Nichols Rd. to I-15</p>	<p>Same as 4a but for the connection to I-15, from Ethanac Road extension near San Jacinto River Crossing, build new alignment south to Riverside Street, continue west on Riverside Street to El Toro Cut Off Road / Nichols Road. Follow Nichols Road alignment west to I-15 interchange. Continue westward across I-15 to the Cleveland National Forest, where the alignment would potentially link up with a future Riverside County to Orange County alignment.</p>	<p>See discussion under 4a. Same rationale.</p>
<p>5. Domenigoni/ Ethanac/ SR- 74 (a, b, c, d, and e)</p>	<p>Extend Domenigoni Parkway as a freeway to the northwest, along the San Jacinto Branch Line, to Ethanac Road. Extend Ethanac Road westward and connect to I-15 using one of the alignments (a, b, c, d, or e) identified in alternative 4 above.</p> <p>d. Connects from Ethanac Rd. to I-15 via southern alignment</p>	<p>5d. Has some of the greater environmental impacts of the five options, and essentially dead-ends into I-15. Alternatives 5a, b, c, and e also have environmental impacts, and further discussions need to be held with Federal agencies in the NEPA/404 process on which option(s) provide a viable connecting point to I-15 while limiting impact on the environment and surrounding communities.</p>
<p>6. Domenigoni/ Newport/ RR Canyon Rd. (a and b)</p>	<p>Extend Domenigoni Parkway as a freeway from SR-79 to I-15. From Domenigoni Parkway proceed west connecting to Newport Road continuing to Railroad Canyon Road/Goetz Road. For connection to I-15 two variations exist:</p> <p>a) Follow Railroad Canyon connecting to I-15 or b) New alignment to the south of Railroad Canyon Road bypassing Canyon Lake area connecting to I-15.</p>	<p>6a. Would have significant impact to communities along Newport Road and Railroad Canyon Road and would be very difficult to convert into a major multi-modal facility. Would require take of a major portion of the Canyon Lake Golf Course to satisfy engineering criteria.</p> <p>6b. Would have significant impact to communities along Newport Road and would be very difficult to convert into a major multi-modal facility.</p>