

Chapter 1

Introduction

The purpose of this introduction is to describe the organization and scope of this draft environmental impact report (EIR) on the SR 32 widening project between SR 99 to the west and Yosemite Drive to the east in the City of Chico (City), Butte County. This document has been prepared to comply with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, as amended (Public Resources Code, Section 21000, et seq.). With the City of Chico acting as state lead agency under CEQA, this EIR has been prepared based on the State CEQA Guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations, Section 14000 et seq.).

Scope of the Environmental Impact Report

The State CEQA Guidelines encourages lead agencies to prepare EIRs that focus their attention on a project's significant effects and limits the need for extensive discussion of those impacts that are less than significant. Pursuant to State Guidelines Section 15143:

“The EIR shall focus on the significant effects on the environment. The significant effects should be discussed with emphasis in proportion to their severity and probability of occurrence. Effects dismissed in an Initial Study as clearly insignificant and unlikely to occur need not be discussed further in the EIR unless the Lead Agency subsequently receives information inconsistent with the finding in the Initial Study. A copy of the Initial Study may be attached to the EIR to provide the basis for limiting the impacts discussed.”

In February 2007, the City prepared an IS and determined that the project may result in a significant effect on the environment in the areas of aesthetics and noise (see Appendix A for a copy of the IS). Therefore, the City decided to prepare an EIR for the project that focused on those two issues.

The following environmental topics are fully addressed in the project IS (Appendix A). The mitigation measures identified in the IS (with the exception of noise, air quality, biological resources, and visual resources) are included as mitigation measures in this EIR. These environmental impacts and the proposed mitigation measures and levels of significance associated with the following impacts are described in the 2007 IS and summarized in Table S-1:

- cultural resources (including mitigation measures),
- geology and soils (including mitigation measures),
- hazards and hazardous materials (including mitigation measures),
- hydrology and water quality (including mitigation measures),
- land use and planning,
- open space and recreation,
- population and housing,
- public services (including mitigation measures),
- transportation and circulation factors (including mitigation measures), and
- utilities and service systems (including mitigation measures).

A few of the mitigation measures contained in the IS have been clarified in this table. These minor clarifications are noted; omitted text is struck out and added text is underlined.

Because, as noted above, the IS explains why these impacts are less than significant or less than significant with mitigation, the checklist satisfies the requirements of CEQA Guidelines section 15128, which requires that an EIR “shall contain a statement briefly indicating the reasons that various possible significant effects of a project were determined not to be significant and were therefore not discussed in detail in the EIR” and CEQA Guidelines section 15143 that recommends attaching the IS to the EIR.

The 2007 IS recommended the use of OGAC and the construction of sound barriers as *mitigation* for traffic noise impacts. However, based on public input and the noise impact assessment contained in Appendix E, the project has been modified to *include* OGAC and 6-foot-tall sound barriers. A number of design and location options for the proposed sound barrier are also evaluated in this report (see Chapter 2 for a detailed description of the design and location options for the sound barrier.) The noise, biological resources, and visual resources impact evaluations prepared for this EIR take into account these proposed design and location options. No other changes have been made to the proposed project that was evaluated in the 2007 IS.

This EIR also includes a revised evaluation of air quality impacts to address recent concerns over greenhouse gas emissions, as well as a biological resources chapter that summarizes project compliance with Section 404 of the federal CWA) and Section 7 of the federal ESA.

The analyses of noise, air quality, biological resources, and visual resources contained in this EIR expand upon the discussions of these topics in the 2007 IS. In light of the expanded analyses, the mitigation measures described in this EIR for these impact topics take the place of those contained in the initial study.

The mitigation measures included in the IS, with the revisions/replacements from this EIR, will be included in the Mitigation Monitoring Plan to be adopted upon approval of the project (see Appendix D for the draft Mitigation Monitoring Plan).

Organization of the Environmental Impact Report

This EIR is organized as follows:

- Following this chapter, Chapter 2, “Project Description”, presents a description of the project location; project background; project objectives; project features; project alternatives, including those considered but not carried forward in this report; related projects; and required permits and approvals.
- Chapters 3 through 6 present the setting, environmental impacts, and proposed feasible mitigation measures for four environmental issues:
 - Chapter 3, “Noise”
 - Chapter 4, “Air Quality”
 - Chapter 5, “Biological Resources”
 - Chapter 6, “Visual Resources”
 - The two build alternatives and the No-Project Alternative are each evaluated in these chapters.
- Chapter 7, “Cumulative and Growth-Inducing Impacts”, presents cumulative and growth-inducing impacts associated with the proposed project.
- Chapter 8, “References Cited and Agencies Consulted”, lists all sources and personal communications made in preparing this report.
- Chapter 9, “List of Preparers”, lists the technical specialists who prepared this report.

This report also contains the following appendices provided on the compact disc attached to the inside back cover of this report.

- Appendix A, “Notice of Preparation/State Route 32 Widening Project: State Route 99 to Yosemite Drive Initial Study”, February 2007.
- Appendix B, “Public Workshop Comments”.
- Appendix C, “Roundabouts Evaluation”.
- Appendix D, “Mitigation Monitoring Plan”.
- Appendix E, “State Route 32 Widening Project Noise Impact Assessment, Chico, California”, prepared by Illingworth & Rodkin, February 2009.
- Appendix F, “Arborist Report for the State Route 32 Widening Project: State Route 99 to Yosemite Drive”, prepared by ICF Jones & Stokes, June 2009.

- Appendix G, “Delineation of Waters of the United States, State Route 32 Widening Project”, prepared by Gallaway Consulting, December 2005.
- Appendix H, “Natural Environment Study, State Route 32 Road Widening Project”, prepared by Gallaway Consulting, November 2006.
- Appendix I, “Biological Assessment, State Route 32 Road Widening Project”, prepared by Gallaway Consulting, November 2006.
- Appendix J, “U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Opinion”.
- Appendix K, “Traffic Report for the SR-32 Widening Project Report/ Environmental Document”, prepared by Fehr & Peers, February 2006.
- Appendix L, “Historic Property Survey Report, State Route 32 Widening Project”, prepared by Pacific Legacy, December 2006.
- Appendix M, “Preliminary Geotechnical Report, SR 32 Widening – Project Study Report”, prepared by Taber Consultants, November 2005.
- Appendix N, “Initial Site Assessment – Draft, SR 32 Widening”, prepared by Taber Consultants, November 2005.
- Appendix O, “Revised Hazardous Materials Report For Humboldt Road Burn Dump Area, State Route 32 Widening Project”, prepared by EMKO Environmental, June 2006.
- Appendix P, “Draft Bridge Design Hydraulic Study For the State Route 32 Widening Between Fir Street and Yosemite Drive at Dead Horse Slough and South Fork Dead Horse Slough in the City of Chico, California”, prepared by WRECO, August 2006.
- Appendix Q, “Draft Location Hydraulic Study Report For the State Route 32 Widening Between Fir Street and Yosemite Drive at Dead Horse Slough and South Fork Dead Horse Slough in the City of Chico, California”, prepared by WRECO, April 2006.
- Appendix R, “Storm Water Data Report For the State Route 32 Widening Between State Route 99 and Yosemite Drive in the City of Chico, California”, prepared by WRECO, August 2006.