

Notice of Preparation

To: State Clearinghouse
Responsible Agencies
Trustee Agencies
Other Interested Parties
(refer to Distribution List)

From: Celia McAdam
Executive Director
Placer County Transportation Planning Agency
550 High Street, Suite 107
Auburn, CA 95603

Subject: **Notice of Preparation of a Draft Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Report**

Project Title: **Placer Parkway Corridor Preservation Project**

Background: The South Placer Regional Transportation Authority (SPRTA) is the Lead Agency for this project under CEQA. Sutter County is in the process of formalizing an agreement to associate with SPRTA as a Co-Lead Agency for the project. SPRTA has authorized the Placer County Transportation Planning Agency to prepare the necessary environmental document. Because of potential future federal funding, a joint NEPA/CEQA document is to be prepared. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will be the federal Lead Agency under NEPA, working in conjunction with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). It has been determined that a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) will be prepared for the project described below.

We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the Tier 1 EIS/EIR prepared by our agency when considering the project at this corridor preservation level. There will be additional opportunities for you or your agency to comment on the Placer Parkway at the later, specific-project stage (Tier 2).

The project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are noted below. Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

Please send your response and direct questions to Celia McAdam, Executive Director at the address shown above. We will need the name of a contact person in your agency.

Notice of Agency and Public Scoping Meetings

Scoping meetings to gather comments and information from the public and agencies regarding the proposed project are scheduled in each county. The meetings are:

- Placer County -- Monday, October 6, 2003, 4:00 to 8:00 PM. Maidu Community Center, Meeting Rooms 1 & 2, 1550 Maidu Drive, Roseville, CA 95661
- Sutter County -- Thursday, October 9, 2003, 4:00 to 8:00 PM. Pleasant Grove School, 3075 Howsley Road, Pleasant Grove, CA 95678

All interested parties are invited to attend and provide comments on the scope of the Tier 1 EIS/EIR.

Project Description for the Placer Parkway Corridor Preservation Project

The project is the acquisition or preservation of right of way for a future Parkway connecting State Route 65 in Placer County, California and State Route 70/99 in Sutter County, California. These north-south routes are approximately 15 miles apart in the project area. Three corridor concepts connecting these routes were identified in a Project Study Report prepared in 2001. One concept would consist of a 14.4 mile-long, four-lane expressway/freeway connection from SR 65 at Whitney Boulevard to SR 70/99 at a point about one mile north of Sankey Road. This concept would parallel Sunset Boulevard West and Howsley Road for most of its east-west route. Another concept would consist of a 14.3 mile-long, four-lane freeway connection from SR 65 at Sunset Boulevard to SR 70/99 at a point about one-mile north of Riego Road. West of Fiddymont Road, this concept would travel diagonally through the agricultural area that lies between Sunset Boulevard West and Baseline Road. A third concept would be 15.6 miles-long and connect SR 65 at Whitney Boulevard to SR 70/99 at a point about one-mile south of Riego Road. It would also travel through the agricultural area between Sunset Boulevard West and Baseline Road, but would parallel Baseline Road more closely. These concepts, together with other feasible alignments that may be identified during the scoping process, will be evaluated to determine the alternatives that will be analyzed in the Tier 1 EIS/EIR.

The Placer Parkway Corridor includes some of the fastest growing communities in the Sacramento region. The population in south Placer County will nearly double between 2000 and 2025. Employment in the SR 65 "high-tech" corridor is expected to grow even faster than the population. Sutter County has designated a large area on the western side of the Placer Parkway Corridor for up to 3,500 acres of industrial and commercial development. By 2025, total employment in southwest Placer County is projected to exceed total employment in downtown Sacramento. Anticipated development in the area will dramatically increase travel demand over the next 20 years and beyond. At the same time, daily traffic volumes on I-80 south of the study area are projected to increase nearly 40% in the already congested area south of the project area. Travel speeds will decline as well on local thoroughfares. Congestion on inter-regional roadways will adversely impact access to jobs. Free-flowing access and reliable travel times to both the Sacramento International Airport and the Lincoln Airport are important to this growing regional job center. A new controlled-access highway connection between SR 65 and SR 70/99 would benefit the regional transportation system by providing an alternative to SR 65 and I-80, thereby reducing traffic demand in these existing freeway corridors.

The project study area within which alternative corridors are to be identified and evaluated is approximately 53 square miles. The proposed Parkway project is identified in the Sacramento Council of Government's (SACOG) 2025 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the 2022 Placer County Regional Transportation Plan. A 2001 Project Study Report (PSR) for Placer Parkway identified several concept corridors in the area. However, none of these corridors is fixed and the entire study area will be reviewed for additional potential corridors or variations of those previously identified. The study area is shown on the attached map, Figure 1.

The project was initiated by the Placer County Transportation Planning Agency in response to anticipated growth in residential and commercial/industrial land uses and the need to link rapidly growing areas of western Placer County and planned industrial development in south Sutter County. The Placer Parkway concept was developed by two planning studies adopted by both the PCTPA and SACOG Boards. Copies of these studies are available on PCTPA's web site: www.pctpa.org.

2000 Placer Parkway Conceptual Study. Because of rapid regional urban development and increasing traffic congestion, this study was prepared to outline the Parkway concept. The study was based on an extensive public participation program involving advisory committees, public meetings, press releases, and newsletters. It included local, regional, state staffs; special interest groups; and elected officials from

Placer, Sutter, Sacramento, and Yolo Counties and the cities of Lincoln, Rocklin, and Roseville. The plan provided input on preliminary scope, project goals/policies, concept alignment alternatives, and a funding strategy.

2001 Placer Parkway Project Study Report (PSR). Using a similar public participation program to the 2000 Study, the PSR clarified policy direction, and identified and evaluated several concept corridor alternatives for programming purposes. The PSR's preliminary environmental analysis identified a number of potential impacts. Impacts were considered moderate to high for air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, floodplains, hazardous waste, soils and seismicity, water quality, noise, land use, socio-economics, and public services. The PSR resulted in cost estimates for subsequent environmental and engineering work. The PSR was the basis for securing Tier 1 EIS funding.

The transportation facility is to facilitate the movement of people and goods within the region. Currently, passenger and commercial vehicle drivers desiring to travel between SR 65 north of Roseville and SR 70/99 in the airport vicinity must use local roads or congested Interstate 80, south of the project area. The proposed future Parkway would shorten the travel distance and time for east-west bound passenger and commercial traffic in western Placer County and southern Sutter County.

This project is focused on corridor preservation. No specific transportation facility location or design will be part of the project at this time. In the future, a specific alignment "footprint" will be identified as part of the next level of environmental analysis (Tier 2), when the design of the Parkway is undertaken. Actual construction funding for the transportation facility is not anticipated until after 2015.

The environmental document for the project will be a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (Tier 1 EIS/EIR). Tiering will allow for subsequent environmental documentation to be based on the Tier 1 document, with appropriate additional documentation at such time as detailed alignments and designs are available. The tiering concept incorporates the elements of a staged EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15167) and a Program EIR (Section 15168), which consider projects with multiple stages or that are logical parts in a chain of contemplated actions. As previously noted, this will be a joint federal/state environmental document. The FHWA regulations for implementing NEPA state that tiering may be appropriate for major transportation activities. "The first tier EIS would focus on broad issues such as general location, mode choice, and areawide air quality and land use implications of the major alternatives. The second tier would address site-specific details on project impacts, costs, and mitigation measures." (23 C.F.R. § 771.111(g)).

A Tier 1 document does not have the detail of a project-level (Tier 2) document. The scope and level of analysis of the critical issues in the document will satisfy CEQA, Caltrans, and FHWA requirements necessary to approve a preferred corridor location and to authorize right-of-way corridor protection. Protection may include acquisition of property or rights in property, or other suitable means of preservation. One or more Tier 2 documents, to be prepared at a later date, will address project-specific issues and describe in greater detail the project environmental consequences, design alternatives, and project mitigation.

The scoping process for this proposed action will include coordination and consultation with agencies, groups, and individuals. Public information meetings were conducted in 2000-2001 during development of the PSR and identification of concept corridor alignments. Refinement of the concepts identified, and of any additional viable concept corridors identified, will be based on additional traffic and environmental screening and information derived from this scoping process. This process will establish the set of alternatives to be considered in the Tier 1 EIS/EIR. Meetings are currently scheduled for Placer and Sutter counties as indicated above. Additional public meetings will be held in the future to present

identified alternatives for evaluation in the Tier 1 EIS/EIR. The draft Tier 1 EIS/EIR will be circulated to the public and public hearings conducted in accordance with state and federal law.

Probable Environmental Effects

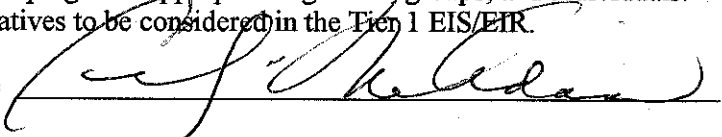
An Initial Study (IS) is not required because it has already been determined that an EIR will be prepared. The probable environmental effects of the project are described below.

The acquisition or preservation of corridor right of way is expected to have minimal environmental effects, on its own. However, a future Parkway located within the selected corridor alternative has the potential to affect a number of resources. The PSR's preliminary environmental analysis identified a number of potential impacts. Impacts were considered potentially moderate to high for air quality, biological resources (e.g., wetlands, special status species, and wildlife impacts), cultural resources, floodplains, hazardous waste, soils and seismicity, water quality, noise, land use, socio-economics (e.g., community, economic, and farmland impacts) and public services. These and other topics identified during the scoping process, including the project's potential for growth inducement, will be considered in the Tier 1 EIS/EIR.

A new transportation model will be developed. Current environmental information will be collected and mapped. Conceptual corridor alternatives identified in the Conceptual Plan and the PSR will be refined. New corridor alternatives will be developed. Corridor alternatives will be screened using transportation, environmental, and engineering criteria and scoping with appropriate agencies, groups, and individuals. This process will establish the corridor alternatives to be considered in the Tier 1 EIS/EIR.

Date: September 18, 2003

Signature



Title: Celia McAdam, Executive Director, PCTPA

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Attachments:
Figure 1 (map)
Distribution List