

CHAPTER 1 PROPOSED PROJECT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) has prepared this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in its role as the Lead Agency under CEQA. The VTA, in cooperation with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), proposes to widen and upgrade a 7.6-mile project segment of U.S. 101 in southern Santa Clara County/northern San Benito County to a 6-lane freeway. The northerly project limit is Monterey Street¹ in the City of Gilroy and the southerly project limit is State Route (SR) 129. The project location is shown on Figures 1 and 2.

Other improvements will include the reconstruction of the existing U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange, construction of a grade separation on SR 25 at the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) crossing, construction of frontage roads, addition of auxiliary lanes, extension of Santa Teresa Boulevard to the U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange, and construction of bicycle facilities. For project details, see Section 1.3.

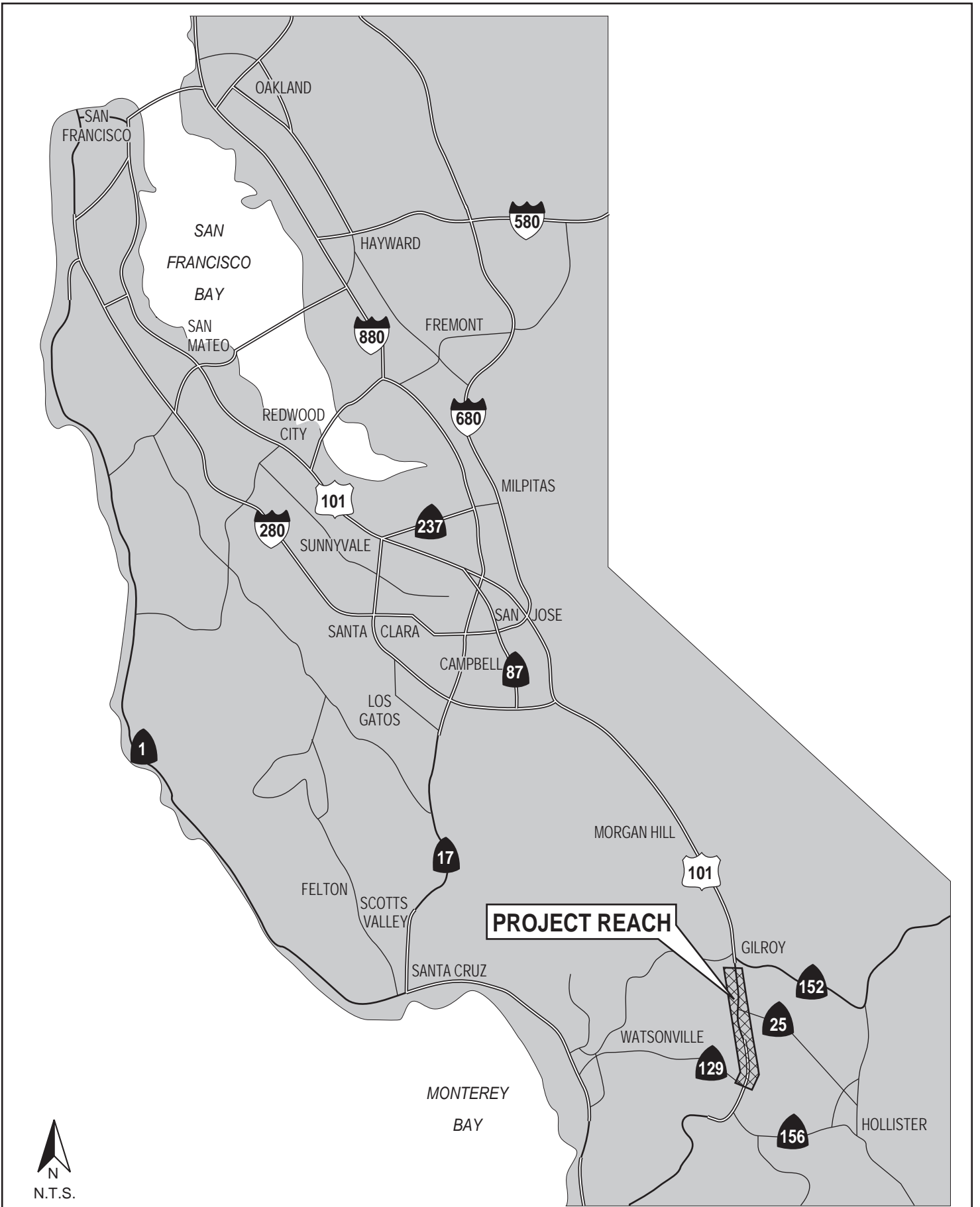
Within the project limits, U.S. 101 is currently a 4-lane expressway in Santa Clara County and a 4-lane freeway in San Benito County. Existing interchanges on U.S. 101 are located at Monterey Street, SR 25, Betabel Road/Y Road, and SR 129. Within Santa Clara County, there is also access between U.S. 101 and a number of local roadways and driveways.

The proposed project will 1) complete the upgrade of U.S. 101 to freeway standard in Santa Clara County, 2) accommodate projected traffic demand along U.S. 101, 3) improve safety along the project segment of U.S. 101, 4) improve traffic operations on the project segment of U.S. 101, 5) enhance the movement of goods along the U.S. 101 transportation corridor, and 6) maintain and enhance bicycle access in the U.S. 101 corridor.

The northerly portion of the project, including the reconstruction of the 101/25 interchange, is included in the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC) Regional Transportation Plan 2035. The segment of the project between SR 25 and the Santa Clara /San Benito County line is not currently included in MTC's RTP, but will be added prior to project approval. The portion of the project in San Benito County is included in the Council of San Benito County Government's 2010 Regional Transportation Plan.

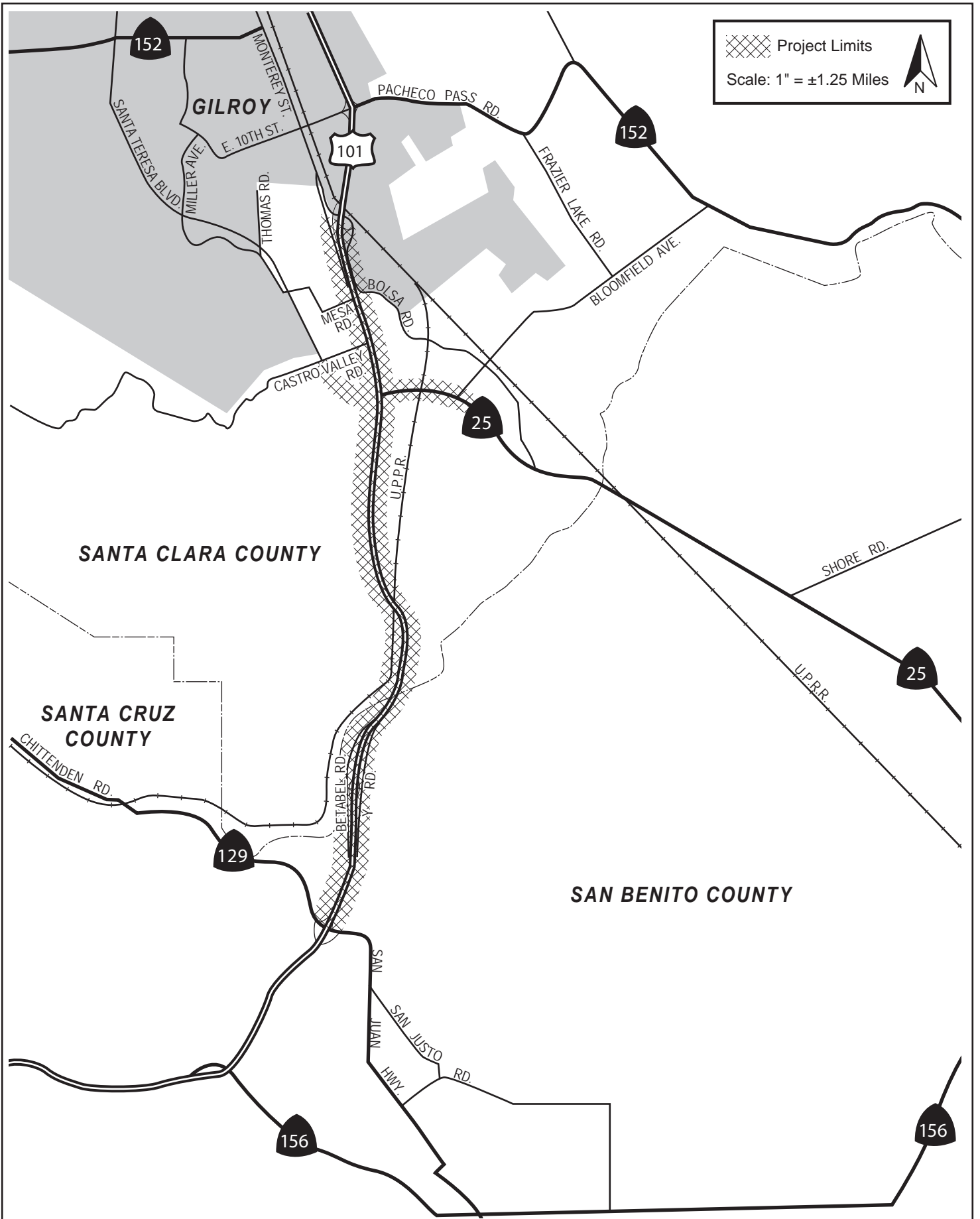
The project has independent utility, meaning that the proposed improvements can be implemented within the project limits and completion of other projects would not be required in order to realize the

¹In the project area, various publications and governmental databases refer to Monterey Street as Monterey Road or Monterey Highway. The names are used interchangeably, but all refer to the same facility.



REGIONAL MAP

FIGURE 1



VICINITY MAP

FIGURE 2

operational benefits of the proposed improvements. Establishing independent utility is important to avoid “project segmentation”.²

The project has logical starting and ending points or termini. The end points were selected to allow for construction of the proposed improvements and the integration of such improvements with the existing freeways and local street system.

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

1.2.1 Purpose of the Proposed Project

The purpose of the proposed project is to accomplish the following objectives:

- Complete the upgrade of U.S. 101 to freeway standard in Santa Clara County, and improve system connectivity to SR 25 and SR 129.
- Accommodate projected traffic demand along U.S. 101, including growth anticipated under adopted land use plans, thereby reducing future congestion and delay, especially during peak travel periods.
- Improve safety along the project segment of U.S. 101, including the reduction of conflicts with agricultural traffic.
- Improve traffic operations on the project segment of U.S. 101, including those associated with connections between U.S. 101 and SR 25, SR 129, local roads, and adjacent land uses.
- Enhance the movement of goods along the U.S. 101 transportation corridor.
- Maintain and enhance bicycle access in the U.S. 101 corridor.

²**Project Segmentation** would occur if a project were defined such that the proposed improvements (and/or benefits resulting from the proposed improvements) would be contingent upon the completion of additional projects. NEPA and CEQA require agencies to analyze “the whole of the action” and do not allow a project to be broken into smaller segments unless it can be demonstrated that each of the segments has independent utility.

1.2.2 Need for the Proposed Project

1.2.2.1 *Capacity, Transportation Demand and Safety*

- The project segment of U.S. 101, which is currently a 4-lane expressway in Santa Clara County and a 4-lane freeway in San Benito County, has insufficient capacity to accommodate future demand during peak travel periods. As a result, delays and congestion are projected to occur during the AM and PM peak weekday commutes, as well as on weekends. Since U.S. 101 is the primary north-south highway between the San Francisco Bay Area and the Monterey Bay Area, this congestion will result in substantial social, economic, and environmental impacts associated with delays in the movement of people and goods.³
- The design of the existing U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange is inadequate to accommodate demand, the result of which is the backup of traffic onto the mainlines of U.S. 101 and SR 25.

Accident Data

Table 1 presents a summary of accidents that occurred on the project segment of U.S. 101 during the 3-year period of October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2010. Summaries of these data are as follows:

- For the segment of U.S. 101 between Monterey Street and the Santa Clara/San Benito County line, 307 collisions were reported. The accident rates along this segment of U.S. 101 represent conditions better than the statewide average for similar facilities.
- For SR 25, 38 collisions were reported for the portion of the roadway between U.S. 101 and a short distance beyond Bloomfield Road, with no fatal accidents. The accident rates along this segment of SR 25 represent conditions better than the statewide average for similar facilities.
- For the segment of U.S. 101 between the Santa Clara/San Benito County line and SR 129, 104 collisions were reported, with no fatal accidents. The accident rates along this segment of U.S. 101 represent conditions better than the statewide average for similar facilities.
- For the on-ramp to southbound U.S. 101 from SR 25, both the total and fatal accident rates are higher than the statewide average for similar facilities.

³U.S. 101 is part of the Freeway and Expressway System, National Truck Network, and Interregional Road System (IRRS). U.S. 101 is a focus route identified by Caltrans in the 1998 Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan and is on the Freeway and Expressway System (F&E) "...whose completion has been declared essential to the future development of the State, with provision for control of access to the extent necessary to preserve the value and utility of the facilities."

TABLE 1							
SUMMARY OF FREEWAY ACCIDENT DATA IN THE PROJECT AREA							
[October 2007 - September 2010]							
Location	Total Number	Accident Rates (accidents per million vehicle miles)					
		Actual			Statewide Average		
		Fatal + Injury	Fatal	Total	Fatal + Injury	Fatal	Total
U.S. 101: Monterey St. to Co. Line	307	0.15	0.007	0.55	0.32	0.016	0.88
U.S. 101: County Line to SR 129	104	0.12	0	0.36	0.19	0.01	0.52
SR 25: U.S. 101 to just East of Bloomfield Road	38	0.12	0	0.63	0.33	0.025	0.77
Southbound U.S. 101 On-Ramp from SR 25	2	0	0.52	1.04	0.1	0.003	0.4
Northbound U.S. 101 On-Ramp from SR 25	1	0	0	0.9	0.11	0.003	0.35
Southbound U.S. 101 Off-Ramp to SR 25	3	0	0	0.25	0.19	0.006	0.75
Northbound U.S. 101 Off-Ramp to SR 25	3	0.61	0	1.83	0.1	0.003	0.3
Northbound U.S. 101 Off-Ramp to Monterey St.	3	0.17	0	0.34	0.18	0.002	0.6
Southbound U.S. 101 Off-Ramp to Monterey St.	2	0/42	0	0.85	0.42	0.004	1.20
Northbound U.S. 101 On-Ramp from Monterey St.	3	0.23	0	0.68	0.26	0.002	0.8
Southbound U.S. 101 On-Ramp from Monterey St.	0	0	0	0	0.26	0.002	0.75
Southbound U.S. 101 Off-Ramp to SR 129	2	0	0	0.45	0.19	0.006	0.75
Southbound U.S. 101 On-Ramp from Betabel Rd.	0	0	0	0	0.18	0.004	0.6
Northbound U.S. 101 Off-Ramp to Betabel Rd.	0	0	0	0	0.37	0.007	1.2
Southbound U.S. 101 Off-Ramp to Betabel Rd.	0	0	0	0	0.37	0.007	1.2
Northbound U.S. 101 On-Ramp from Betabel Rd.	0	0	0	0	0.18	0.004	0.6
Source: Caltrans' Traffic Accident Surveillance and Analysis Systems							

- For the on-ramp to northbound U.S. 101 from SR 25, the total accident rate is higher than the statewide average for similar facilities.
- For the off-ramp from northbound U.S. 101 to SR 25, the injury and total accident rates are higher than the statewide average for similar facilities.
- For the off-ramp from southbound U.S. 101 to SR 25, all of the accident rates are lower than the statewide average for similar facilities.
- All of the on- and off-ramps at the U.S. 101/Monterey Street interchange have accident rates lower than the statewide average for similar facilities.
- No accidents of any type occurred during the 3-year period on any of the on- or off-ramps at the U.S. 101/Betabel Road/Y Road interchange.

1.2.2.2 *Roadway Deficiencies*

- Existing conditions within the project segment of U.S. 101 that do not meet current standards include inadequate shoulder widths, uncontrolled local and private access, reduced sight distance, insufficient merge/weave sections, and insufficient street lighting. These conditions, coupled with relatively high traffic volumes and relatively high travel speeds, have resulted in accident rates that are higher than those on the adjacent freeway segment of U.S. 101 to the north.
- The lack of controlled access to U.S. 101 and the absence of frontage roads along the highway requires local traffic associated with the adjacent land uses to utilize U.S. 101. This results in conflicts between fast-moving highway traffic and slower-moving vehicles that are entering/exiting along the existing highway.
- The existing at-grade crossing of the UPRR tracks on SR 25 just west of Bloomfield Avenue causes traffic backups during train operations.
- The lack of a signalized intersection at the U.S. 101 ramp termini on SR 129 is projected to result in delay as demand increases.

1.2.2.3 *Bicycle Access Deficiencies*

- Existing access for bicycles in the project area is limited. Since there is no existing alternative bike route between SR 25 and SR 129, the north-south bicycle traffic must ride on the outside

shoulders of U.S. 101 between Monterey Street and SR 129. The west-to-east bicycle traffic uses Mesa Road, the southbound U.S. 101 shoulder, the U.S. 101 to SR 25 off-ramp and then along the shoulder of SR 25. East-to-west bicycle traffic travels along the SR 25 shoulder, the SR 25 to U.S. 101 on-ramp, the northbound U.S. 101 shoulder, and exits at the Monterey Street interchange.

- Future access for bicycles in the project area will be eliminated when U.S. 101 (and the west end of SR 25) is upgraded to a freeway.

1.3 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This section describes the proposed action and the design alternatives that were developed to meet the identified need through accomplishing the defined purpose(s), while avoiding or minimizing environmental impacts. The alternatives are the "Build Alternative" and the "No Build Alternative." Within the Build Alternative, there are two design options evaluated for the proposed reconstruction of the U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange.

In addition to the Build and No Build Alternatives, this section summarizes six design and location alternatives that were evaluated for their potential to meet the project's purpose and need, but which have been eliminated from further evaluation in this EIR due to one or more of the following reasons: 1) failure to adequately meet the purpose and need, 2) failure to meet minimum roadway design criteria, 3) substantial right-of-way needs that would require significant residential and/or business acquisitions and relocations, 4) substantial environmental impacts, and 5) substantial cost.

The proposed project is located along a 7.6-mile segment of U.S. 101 in southern Santa Clara County/northern San Benito County. Within the project limits, U.S. 101 is currently a 4-lane expressway in Santa Clara County and a 4-lane freeway in San Benito County.⁴ Existing interchanges on U.S. 101 are located at Monterey Street, SR 25, Betabel Road/Y Road, and SR 129. Within Santa Clara County, there is also access between U.S. 101 and a number of local roadways and driveways.

As described in Section 1.2, the purposes of the project are to 1) complete the upgrade of U.S. 101 to freeway standard in Santa Clara County, 2) accommodate projected traffic demand along U.S. 101, 3) improve safety and operations along the project segment of U.S. 101, 4) enhance the movement of goods along the U.S. 101 transportation corridor, and 5) maintain and enhance bicycle access in the U.S. 101 corridor.

⁴A **freeway** is a divided highway with full access control, meaning the owners of abutting lands have no right or easement of access to or from their abutting lands. An **expressway** is a divided highway with partial access control, meaning there may be limited driveways and/or at-grade intersections.

ALTERNATIVES

1.3.1 Build Alternative

Under the build alternative, improvements would be constructed on U.S. 101 between Monterey Street in Gilroy and SR 129 in San Benito County.

1.3.1.1 *Widen U.S. 101 to a 6-lane Freeway*

The project proposes to construct an additional lane in each direction of U.S. 101 between the Monterey Street interchange in Gilroy and the SR 129 interchange in San Benito County, a distance of 7.6 miles. The improvements will involve a combination of widening in the median and to the outside of the existing lanes. Within the Santa Clara County segment of the project, U.S. 101 will be upgraded to freeway standards, which means that all private and local access with U.S. 101 will be closed and relocated to controlled interchanges. The elimination of this direct access will require the construction of new frontage roads, as described below. In addition, all private utilities that longitudinally encroach into State right-of-way will be relocated outside of proposed State right-of-way limits.⁵

The proposed widening of U.S. 101 will require the widening or replacement of various bridges and culverts within the project limits. Table 2 lists the existing structures on U.S. 101 and provides a summary of the proposed modifications. [Note: Table 2 refers to “Design Option A” and “Design Option B”, both of which are described in Section 1.3.1.2.]

The existing median of U.S. 101 varies in width from approximately four feet at the Pajaro River bridge to as much as approximately 150 feet and, depending upon the location, contains either a concrete barrier or a thrie-beam barrier.⁶ Under the proposed project, the median width of the freeway will be 70 feet north of the SR 25 interchange, and 46 feet south of the SR 25 interchange. North of Tar Creek, thrie-beam median barriers will be used as safety barriers and will continue to facilitate wildlife movement. South of Tar Creek, concrete barriers will be used as safety barriers, with wildlife passageways (“Type S, M, and L”) to facilitate wildlife crossings.

Fencing will be erected at the edges of the freeway right-of-way within the project limits. Caltrans standard wire mesh or barbed wire fencing will be utilized north of Tar Creek. In the section south of Tar Creek, which is considered the most ecologically significant area for wildlife movement, various

⁵A **longitudinal encroachment** means the utilities are located within Caltrans’ right-of-way and such utilities generally parallel the highway. In contrast, a **transverse encroachment** is one where the utilities cross the highway at, or close to, right angles.

⁶A **Thrie beam barrier** is a common type of metal beam barrier found along many highways. The metal beam barrier is mounted on wood or metal posts.

TABLE 2			
EXISTING AND PROPOSED STRUCTURES WITHIN PROJECT LIMITS			
[Listed North to South]			
Location	Existing	Modifications Proposed by Project	
		Design Option A	Design Option B
U.S. 101 at Carnadero Creek	Two bridges: 4-span NB bridge, 37' in width and 140 feet in length; 4-span SB bridge, 34' in width and 141' in length	Existing NB bridge to be used by new frontage road; existing SB bridge to be widened by 37' and used for NB traffic; new 4-span bridge (71' x 122') to be constructed for SB traffic.	
U.S. 101 at SR 25 (proposed)	n/a	New bridge to be constructed to convey SR 25 over U.S. 101.	
Flood Passage Culverts on U.S. 101 north of proposed 101/25 interchange	None. U.S. 101 currently floods.	Three double 14' x 8' x 689' RCB culverts are proposed under U.S. 101 to channel floodplain flow from west to east of the freeway.	Nine 12' x 6' x 600' RCB culverts are proposed under U.S. 101 to channel floodplain flow from west to east of the freeway.
Flood Passage Culvert/Bridge on Off-Ramp from SB U.S. 101 to EB SR 25	None.	Three double 14' x 8' x 316' RCB culverts are proposed under the SB U.S. 101 off-ramp to SR 25.	New bridge (39' x 176') to be built to convey flood flow under ramp.
Flood Passage Bridge on On-Ramp from WB SR 25 to NB U.S. 101	None.	No bridge needed.	New bridge (39' x 400') to be built to convey flood flow under ramp.
Flood Passage Bridge on SR 25, just east of U.S. 101	None. SR 25 currently floods.	New bridge (56' to 63' x 450') to be built to convey flood flow under SR 25.	New bridge (73' to 86' x 400') to be built to convey flood flow under SR 25.
SR 25 at UPRR	None; at-grade crossing	New bridge (51' x 295') to be constructed to convey SR 25 over the UPRR.	New bridge (58' to 66' x 310') to be constructed to convey SR 25 over the UPRR.
SR 25 at Carnadero Creek	Existing bridge 40' x 444'.	No changes proposed.	

TABLE 2
EXISTING AND PROPOSED STRUCTURES WITHIN PROJECT LIMITS
[Listed North to South]

Location	Existing	Modifications Proposed by Project	
		Design Option A	Design Option B
Santa Teresa Blvd. at Gavilan Creek	None	New 6' x 4' x 45' RCB culvert.	None needed.
Frontage Road (Option A) or Santa Teresa Blvd. (Option B) near Pond	n/a	Bridge (approximately 100 feet in length) will be constructed near stock pond to facilitate dispersal by threatened species; see Section 2.21.	
Monterey Road at Gavilan Creek	None	New 6' x 4' x 50' RCB culvert.	None needed.
101/25 off-ramp at Gavilan Creek	14-span bridge (27' x 545')	Existing bridge to be removed.	
U.S. 101 at Gavilan Creek	8' x 6' x 185' RCB culvert	Existing culvert to be extended to a length of 425'.	Existing culvert to be extended to a length of 650'.
U.S. 101 at SR 25 (existing)	Existing bridge (44' x 212') over U.S. 101	Existing bridge to be removed.	
Monterey Rd at Tick Creek (location #1)	Double 5' x 3' x 31' RCB culvert	Existing culvert to be replaced with double 5' x 3' x 56' RCB culvert.	
Monterey Rd at Tick Creek (location #2)	Single 7' x 6' x 32' RCB culvert	Existing culvert to be replaced with single 7' x 6' x 59' RCB culvert.	
Access Driveway at Tick Creek (eastside of U.S. 101)	None.	New double 8' x 4' x 110' RCB culvert.	
U.S. 101 at Tick Creek	Double 8' x 4' x 163' RCB culvert	Existing culvert to be extended to a length of 220'.	
U.S. 101 at Sargent/UPRR/Tar Creek	Two bridges: 11-span NB bridge (34' x 607'); 7-span SB bridge (41' x 672')	Remove NB bridge; widen SB bridge by 113' to accommodate both NB and SB traffic; build new single-span (20' x 40') bridge over Tar Creek (under the widened SB bridge) for bike access road.	
Tar Creek Access Road	None.	New bridge (19' x 40') to be constructed for access road.	

TABLE 2			
EXISTING AND PROPOSED STRUCTURES WITHIN PROJECT LIMITS			
[Listed North to South]			
Location	Existing	Modifications Proposed by Project	
		Design Option A	Design Option B
Betabel Road at Pajaro River	No existing crossing; former bridge removed in 1940 when current U.S. 101 bridge was built.	New 3-span bridge (43' x 360') to be constructed for access road/bike path.	
U.S. 101 at Pajaro River	4-span bridge (60' x 340')	Existing bridge to be replaced with 3-span bridge (141' x 381').	
U.S. 101 at Betabel Road/Y Road	Existing bridge over U.S. 101 (37' x 215')	Existing bridge will be widened by approximately 12'.	
U.S. 101 at San Benito River	Two bridges: 13-span NB bridge (34' x 722'); 13-span SB bridge (38' x 710')	Existing NB bridge to be widened by 25'; existing SB bridge to be widened by 33'.	
Y Road at San Benito River	No existing crossing; former low-flow crossing washed away during storm in 1990s.	New 3-span bridge (13' x 300') to be constructed for bicyclists.	
101/129 off-ramp at San Juan Creek	Triple 8' x 8' x 174' RCB culvert	No changes proposed.	
U.S. 101 at San Juan Creek	3-span bridge (82' x 142')	Existing bridge will be widened to the west by approximately 17'.	
U.S. 101 at SR 129	Existing bridge over U.S. 101 (59' x 210')	No changes proposed.	
<p>Note: All proposed dimensions are approximations based on preliminary engineering and are subject to refinement during final design.</p> <p>RCB = reinforced concrete box</p> <p>NB = northbound SB = southbound EB = eastbound WB = westbound</p>			

undercrossing additions, enlargements, and/or enhancements will be combined with wildlife fencing to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions while simultaneously increasing the permeability of the highway.

1.3.1.2 *Reconstruct U.S. 101/SR 25 Interchange*

The proposed project includes the reconstruction of the existing U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange. There are two design options under consideration for this component of the project:

- ▣ *Design Option A - Reconstruct Interchange North of Existing Location:* Design Option A will reconstruct the U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange at a location approximately 0.2 miles north of the existing interchange. The interchange will include a new bridge to convey SR 25 over U.S. 101. It will also include ramps to allow all traffic movements between U.S. 101 and SR 25, as shown on Figure 3. The proposed work at the reconstructed U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange will include the realignment of SR 25 to a location just east of the UPRR crossing, at which point it will either transition to existing SR 25 or will tie into an upgraded 4-lane SR 25.⁷

- ▣ *Design Option B - Reconstruct Interchange at Existing Location:* Design Option B will reconstruct the U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange at essentially the same location as the existing interchange. The interchange will include a new bridge to convey SR 25 over U.S. 101. It will also include ramps to allow all traffic movements between U.S. 101 and SR 25, as shown on Figure 4. The proposed work at the reconstructed U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange will include a minor realignment of SR 25 to a location just east of the UPRR crossing, at which point it will either transition to existing SR 25 or will tie into an upgraded 4-lane SR 25.

As a separate project, Caltrans is evaluating the upgrade of SR 25 to a 4-lane expressway between the UPRR crossing (just west of Bloomfield Avenue) and San Felipe Road in Hollister.

1.3.1.3 *Construct Auxiliary Lanes*⁸

The project proposes to construct an auxiliary lane in each direction on U.S. 101 between the Monterey Street interchange in Gilroy and the SR 25 interchange. The auxiliary lane will be constructed adjacent to the outside lane in each direction.

1.3.1.4 *Extend Santa Teresa Boulevard*

The existing southerly terminus of Santa Teresa Boulevard is at Castro Valley Road in Gilroy. The project proposes to extend Santa Teresa Boulevard from Castro Valley Road to the reconstructed U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange, a distance of approximately 0.5 miles. The extended roadway will include one traffic lane in each direction, two 8-foot wide shoulders, and a 4-foot wide median. The extension will

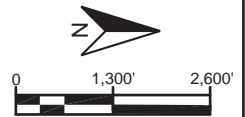
⁷As a separate project, Caltrans is evaluating the upgrade of SR 25 to a four-lane expressway between the UPRR crossing (just west of Bloomfield Avenue) and San Felipe Road in Hollister.

⁸An auxiliary lane typically extends between two adjacent interchanges. It improves weaving and overall freeway operations. It is not a "thru" lane; traffic in an auxiliary lane must either merge into the adjacent thru lane or exit the freeway at the next off-ramp.



LEGEND:

- BUILD ALTERNATIVE NEW FRONTAGE ROAD
- IMPROVE EXISTING FRONTAGE ROAD
- CLASS 1 BIKEPATH
- JOINT ACCESS DRIVEWAY
- BRIDGE STRUCTURE
- CULVERT
- PROPOSED DETENTION BASIN



PROPOSED PROJECT PLANS (DESIGN OPTION A)

FIGURE 3



PROPOSED PROJECT PLANS (DESIGN OPTION B)

FIGURE 4

meet minimum design standards for an expressway (i.e., 50 miles-per-hour [mph] design speed). It also includes a new traffic signal on Santa Teresa Boulevard at the driveway entrance to Gavilan College.

Under Design Option A, proposed work will include constructing Santa Teresa Boulevard on an embankment that will connect the new U.S. 101/SR 25 overcrossing to a slightly realigned Santa Teresa Boulevard north of Castro Valley Road. As shown on Figure 3, the new alignment of Santa Teresa Boulevard will be to the east of the existing alignment, which will improve traffic operations by providing for a straighter roadway.

Under Design Option B, the alignment for the Santa Teresa Boulevard extension will be along a hillside that is located on the south side of Gavilan Creek. The extension will connect to the new U.S. 101/SR 25 overcrossing, as shown on Figure 4.

Under both design options, this connection between U.S. 101 and Santa Teresa Boulevard will provide improved access to nearby Gavilan College and areas of southern Gilroy, as identified in the *City of Gilroy General Plan*, the *Southern Gateway Transportation and Land Use Study* (VTA, 2006), and the *Valley Transportation Plan 2035* (VTA, 2009).

1.3.1.5 Construct Improvements at the U.S. 101/SR 129 Southbound Off-Ramp

A traffic signal will be installed at the intersection of the U.S. 101 southbound off-ramp and SR 129. The off-ramp will be widened to provide for a second right-turn lane, which will include minor improvements on SR 129 to receive this lane. In addition, an auxiliary lane of approximately 1,300 feet in length will be constructed in the southbound direction of U.S. 101, creating a 2-lane exit to SR 129.

1.3.1.6 Construct Frontage Roads

The proposed upgrade of U.S. 101 to freeway standards, which is described in Section 1.3.1.1, will require that all private and local access with U.S. 101 be closed and relocated to controlled interchanges. The loss of this access, which in most cases is the only access to/from adjacent properties, will be mitigated by the project's construction/realignment of the following frontage roads:

- Monterey Road will be extended to the south along the east side of U.S. 101. This roadway extension will run through the northeast quadrant of the U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange, then parallel to the UPRR tracks, then east across the UPRR tracks utilizing the existing SR 25 at-grade crossing, and terminate at the SR 25/Bloomfield Avenue intersection. The extension will include a crossing of Carnadero Creek on the bridge that is now used for northbound U.S. 101 traffic.
- The existing Monterey Frontage Road (also known as the Farman Frontage Road) that runs along the west side of U.S. 101 between Carnadero Creek on the south and Monterey Road on the north will be realigned to the west.

- Under Design Option A, a new frontage road will be constructed on the west side of U.S. 101, extending from Castro Valley Road on the north and connecting to the Old Monterey Road that provides access to the existing Granite Construction/Freeman Quarry. The new frontage road will include an intersection with the extended Santa Teresa Boulevard. Under Design Option B, this frontage road will not extend north of Santa Teresa Boulevard; instead, a joint use driveway will be constructed south of Castro Valley Road to provide replacement access to a number of properties.
- Betabel Road will be extended northerly from its current terminus on the south side of the Pajaro River. The extension will cross the Pajaro River on a new bridge and connect to an existing frontage road that parallels the west side of U.S. 101 north to Tar Creek. At this point, the frontage road will extend under the 101/Sargent bridges overcrossings and across Tar Creek on a new bridge to provide access to the property and utilities located on the east side of U.S. 101.⁹ A joint access driveway will extend north of this frontage road, terminating on the north side of Tick Creek.

1.3.1.7 *Grade-Separate the SR 25/UPRR Crossing*

SR 25 currently crosses the UPRR tracks “at-grade” just west of Bloomfield Avenue, meaning that traffic is halted when trains are passing. The project will construct a bridge to convey the realigned SR 25 over the UPRR tracks.

1.3.1.8 *Construct Bicycle Facilities*

Within the project limits, bicycle travel occurs in both the north-south and east-west directions. Because U.S. 101 is designated as an expressway between Monterey Street and the southern limits of Santa Clara County, and since there is no existing alternative bike route between SR 25 and SR 129, the north-south bicycle traffic is allowed to ride on the outside shoulders of U.S. 101 between Monterey Street and SR 129. The west-to-east bicycle traffic uses Mesa Road, the southbound U.S. 101 shoulder, the U.S. 101 to SR 25 off-ramp and then along the shoulder of SR 25. East-to-west bicycle traffic travels along the SR 25 shoulder, the SR 25 to U.S. 101 on-ramp, the northbound U.S. 101 shoulder, and exits at the Monterey Street interchange.

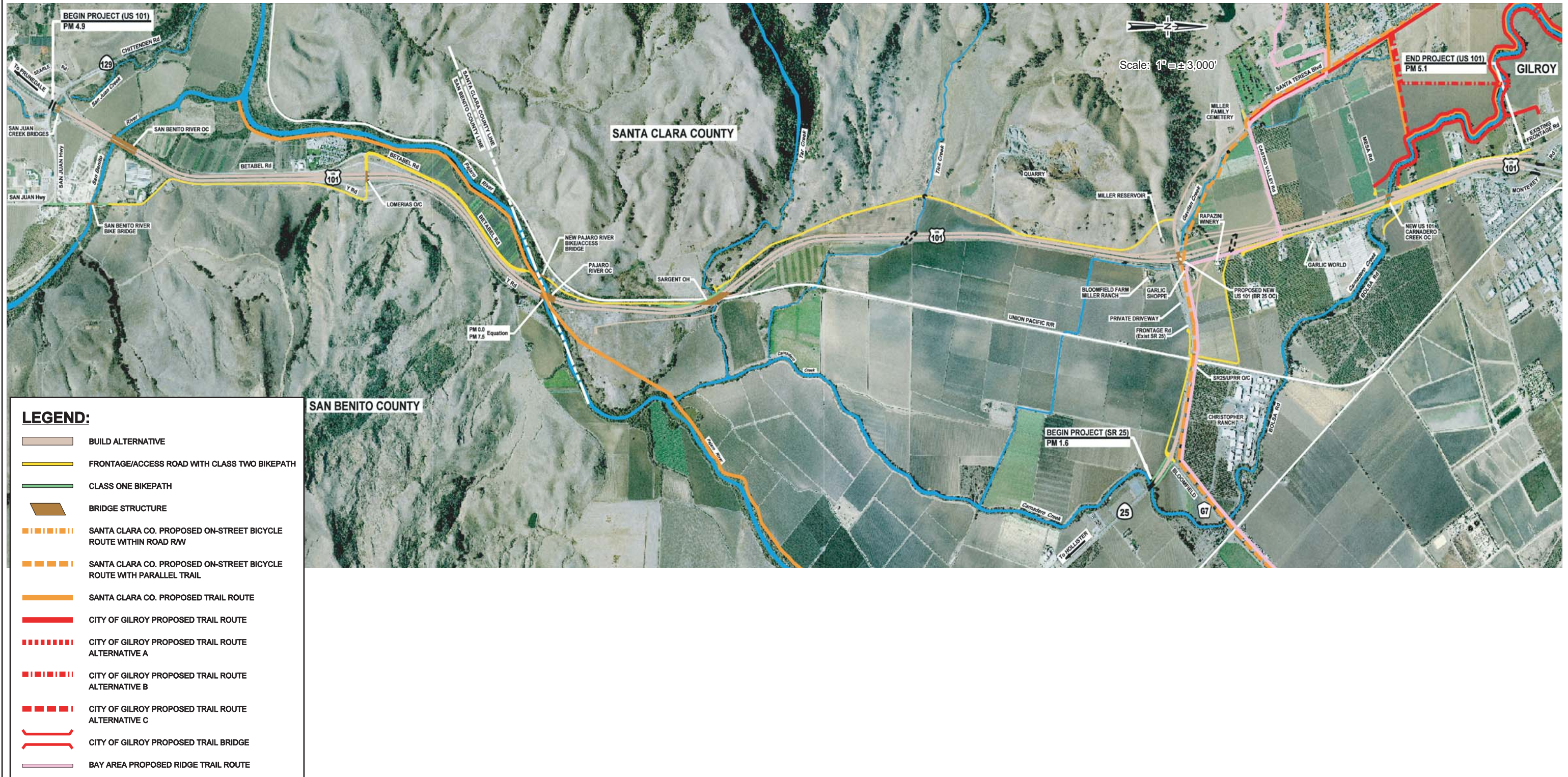
The project will eliminate bicycle access on U.S. 101 within the project limits, as well as access on SR 25 within the project limits. The project, therefore, includes replacement of north-south and east-west bicycle access, which is described below and illustrated on Figures 5 and 6.

⁹The existing U.S. 101 Sargent bridges include two U.S. 101 bridges (northbound and southbound) over the UPRR railroad and Tar Creek near Sargent Ranch. Under the proposed project, the northbound bridge will be removed and the southbound bridge will be widened to accommodate both northbound and southbound traffic. Therefore, the proposed project will include a single bridge at this location, known as the U.S. 101/Sargent bridge overcrossing.



PROPOSED BIKE AND TRAIL FACILITIES (ALTERNATIVE 1)

FIGURE 5



PROPOSED BIKE AND TRAIL FACILITIES (ALTERNATIVE 2)

FIGURE 6

North-South Bicycle Facilities

The north-south route will connect to Santa Teresa Boulevard on the north, which is a north-south roadway with Class 2 bike lanes.¹⁰ Between Santa Teresa Boulevard and Tar Creek, it will consist of Class 2 bike lanes on the existing and proposed frontage roads along the west side of U.S. 101. Bicyclists will cross Tar Creek and the UPRR on the U.S. 101/Sargent bridge overcrossing, separated from traffic by a barrier (i.e., a Class 1 bike path). Between Tar Creek and the U.S. 101/Betabel Road/Y Road interchange, there will be Class 2 bike lanes along Betabel Road, which as described above, will be extended over the Pajaro River. Beginning at the U.S. 101/Betabel Road/Y Road interchange, the bike route will transition to the east side of U.S. 101 via the overcrossing at the U.S. 101/Betabel Road/Y Road interchange, which will require the widening of the overcrossing by approximately 10 feet. Class 2 bike lanes will be constructed on Y road. South of the terminus of Y road, a Class 1 bike path will be constructed to the San Juan Highway, including a new bicycle bridge over the San Benito River.

East-West Bicycle Facilities

The east-west bicycle route will connect to Santa Teresa Boulevard on the west and SR 25 at Bloomfield Avenue on the east. Starting at a point east of the SR 25/Bloomfield Avenue intersection, there will be Class 1 bike lanes that run along both sides of SR 25 and under the Carnadero Creek bridge, which will allow non-motorized users to travel from one side of SR 25 to the other side without having to cross SR 25 traffic. These Class 1 bike lanes will connect to the extended Monterey Road (as described above) where they will become Class 2 bike lanes. West of the UPRR crossing, Monterey Road will be constructed around the perimeter of a proposed detention basin and will extend to the new U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange. At this point, two alternatives are being considered for connecting bike lanes to Santa Teresa Boulevard:

Under Design Option A, Alternative 1 will route bicyclists under U.S. 101 and the U.S. 101/SR 25 ramps via large box culverts that will be installed as part of the project for flood passage purposes (Figure 5). Alternative 2 will continue on Monterey Road along the east side of U.S. 101 between the new interchange and Carnadero Creek (Figure 6). The route will then cross under U.S. 101 along the south bank of Carnadero Creek, where it will connect to Mesa Road on the west side of U.S. 101. Alternative 2 avoids routing cyclists through long culverts under the freeway. However, the Alternative 2 alignment is approximately 1.2 miles longer than the Alternative 1 alignment.

Under Design Option B, the lack of vertical clearance in the culverts does not accommodate Alternative 1, and therefore only Alternative 2 is proposed.

¹⁰Bicycle facilities generally are categorized as follows: *Class 1* refers to a bike lane or path that is physically separated from vehicular traffic by open space or a barrier. *Class 2* is a lane on a roadway that is designated by striping, signing and pavement markings for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists. *Class 3* is commonly referred to as a bike route on an existing roadway wherein there are no markings or striping that delineate an area for the preferential or exclusive bicycle use.

1.3.1.9 *Other Project Features*

The project will include utility relocations, as necessary, to construct the above-described improvements. Where necessary to avoid or minimize impacts on adjacent properties and/or sensitive environmental resources, retaining walls will be utilized to reduce the amount of fill slopes, thereby reducing the footprint of the project. Lighting will be provided at interchange ramps in accordance with Caltrans' design standards. The project will also include the installation of landscaping in accordance with the policies of Caltrans. Metal beam guardrails or similar barriers will be installed, as needed, to preserve trees and vegetation located within 30 feet of the edge of the outside traffic lanes of the freeway, such vegetation that would otherwise need to be removed to comply with requirements for an object free safety/recovery zone.

1.3.1.10 *Right-of-Way Requirements*

Construction of the above-described improvements will necessitate the acquisition of a substantial amount of right-of-way. Most of the additional right-of-way required will be from properties located north of Tar Creek. South of Tar Creek, only minor right-of-way is needed (i.e., less than one acre total) from two parcels.

Based on preliminary designs, Table 3 provides data regarding the properties from which right-of-way will be needed for the project. The table includes information on the current use(s) of each property, the amount of right-of-way required, and the effects of the acquisition. In some cases, the required right-of-way will result in the demolition of residences or businesses; such information is also contained in Table 3. Please note that the data in Table 3 are preliminary and are subject to revision during the final design of the project.

1.3.1.11 *Construction Schedule*

The schedule for construction of the proposed project has not been determined because funding has not been secured. Further, recognizing the uncertainties associated with highway funding from various federal, state, and local programs, it is probable that the project will be constructed in phases as funding permits. Phasing is common on large capital improvement projects such as the proposed project.

If funding for the project or an initial phase of the project is secured in the near future, the soonest construction would commence would be in year ~~2013~~ 2015.

1.3.1.12 *Compatibility with Other Future Projects*

All of the above-described improvements will be designed so as to not preclude other planned and potential future regional and local highway projects, as well as potential future bicycle/pedestrian trail projects, in the vicinity. Such projects include the following:

TABLE 3						
PRELIMINARY RIGHT-OF-WAY REQUIREMENTS						
Assessor's Parcel Number	Property Address & Owner	Existing Land Use	Parcel Size (acres)	Right-of-Way Required (acres)		Notes
				Design Option A	Design Option B	
West Side of U.S. 101, listed north to south						
808-21-013	5885 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Vatuone)	residential	4.7	0.1	0.1	Strip of right-of-way needed along the east edge of these parcels; no structures to be impacted.
808-21-014	Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Dean)	residential	1.4	0.1	0.1	
808-21-015	5825 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Casino)	residential	3.2	0.1	0.1	
808-22-001	5815 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Fonseca)	agricultural w/ residence	8.5	0.1	0.1	
808-22-002	5725 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Galtman)	agricultural w/ residence	3.6	0.1	0.1	
808-22-003	5655 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Rizutto)	residential	1.4	0.1	0.1	
808-22-012	5625 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Rizutto)	commercial	2.1	0.1	0.1	
808-22-013	5355 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Novartis Seeds)	commercial	12.3	0.2	0.2	
808-22-007	5365 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Filice)	agricultural w/residence	23.8	1.8	1.8	
808-22-008	n/a (SCVWD)	open space next to Carnadero Creek	1.0	0.3	0.3	
808-22-009	n/a (Ljepava)	agricultural	41.6	0.8	0.8	
808-23-001	360 Mesa Road, Gilroy	agricultural	9.7	0.4	0.4	
808-23-002	5015 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Miliias)	agricultural	17.2	2.2	2.2	
808-23-003	4965 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Borello)	agricultural w/ residence**	24.8	2.6	2.4	Residence & associated structures to be impacted

TABLE 3 [continued]

Assessor's Parcel Number	Property Address & Owner	Existing Land Use	Parcel Size (acres)	Right-of-Way Required (acres)		Notes
				Design Option A	Design Option B	
808-23-004	4395 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Pelliccione)	agricultural w/ residence**	46.1	4.1	2.8	Residence & associated structures to be impacted.
808-23-005	55 Castro Valley Rd., Gilroy (Borello)	agricultural w/ residence & farm-worker cottages**	49.2	7.9	3.4	Residence & associated structures & farmworker cottages to be impacted.
808-24-001	410 Mesa Rd., Gilroy (Chang)	agricultural**	17.9	0.4	0.4	
808-23-006	Santa Teresa Blvd., Gilroy (Gavilan College)	agricultural	0.5	0.4	0.1	
810-34-005	n/a (Castro Valley Properties)	agricultural**	60.7	40.2	9.9	
810-34-007	Santa Teresa Blvd. (Castro Valley Properties)	agricultural**	77.9	1.3	4.1	
810-35-008	4355 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Wingens)	agricultural w/residence**	41.3	7.9	16.4	Residence/event center will not be impacted.
810-35-007	3201 Monterey Rd. (Castro Valley Properties)	agricultural w/residence & barn**	1,186.6	13.1	14.2	Barn will be impacted; residence will not be impacted.
810-35-004	3405-A Monterey Rd. Gilroy	agricultural	29.5	8.1	8.1	
810-38-002	Monterey Rd., Gilroy	agricultural**	17.3	10.0	10.0	
810-38-017	2775 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Sargent Ranch)	agricultural**	325.1	1.1	1.1	
13-110-009	n/a (Rancho Gavilan)	open space	2.4	2.4	2.4	
n/a	strip of land owned by San Benito County between Betabel Road and U.S. 101			0.2	0.2	
12-010-024	Chittenden Rd. (Lavagnino)	agricultural	74.9	0.5	0.5	

TABLE 3 [continued]

Assessor's Parcel Number	Property Address & Owner	Existing Land Use	Parcel Size (acres)	Right-of-Way Required (acres)		Notes
				Design Option A	Design Option B	
East Side of U.S. 101, listed north to south						
841-14-029	5530 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Panchal)	commercial	3.2	0.1	0.1	Existing buildings on these parcels will not be impacted.
841-14-027	n/a (Filice)	agricultural	28.2	0.2	0.2	
841-14-026	5480 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Filice)	residential	1.0	0.1	0.1	
841-31-014	5400 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Fortino)	residential	2.5	0.1	0.1	
841-31-021	5350 Monterey Rd. (Uchida Greenhouses)	commercial	20.0	0.1	0.1	
841-31-019	n/a (Barberi)	agricultural w/ residence	20.9	1.1	1.1	
841-31-002	Bolsa Road (Powell)	open space	4.4	0.1	0.1	
841-32-001	5020 Monterey Rd. (Headstart Nursery)	agricultural	37.0	0.1	0.1	
841-32-004	4680 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Borello)	agricultural**	19.5	0.1	0.0	
841-32-005	4590 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Borello)	agricultural**	19.1	0.3	0.0	
841-32-015	4420 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Santos)	agricultural w/ residence	46.1	2.8	1.8	Residence & cherry stand to be impacted.
841-32-016	4450 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Santos)	residential	5.0	0.8	0.0	Residence will not be impacted.
841-32-008	Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Santos)	agricultural	9.8	2.0	0.5	
841-32-009	4360 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Santos)	agricultural & commercial	11.8	4.6	1.0	Buildings (Rapazzini Winery) to be impacted.
841-32-010	4350 Monterey Rd., Gilroy (Two Youths)	commercial	0.5	0.5	0.2	

TABLE 3 [continued]

Assessor's Parcel Number	Property Address & Owner	Existing Land Use	Parcel Size (acres)	Right-of-Way Required (acres)		Notes
				Design Option A	Design Option B	
841-32-011	4340 Monterey Hwy., Gilroy (Torres)	agricultural	28.9	28.9	28.9	
841-32-013	n/a (Filice Estate Vineyards)	agricultural & commercial	19.0	19.0	19.0	Buildings (Garlic Shoppe) to be impacted.
841-32-014	4310 Monterey Hwy. (Filice Estate Vineyards)	commercial	1.2	0.3	1.2	
841-33-008	415 Bloomfield Ave. (Christopher Ranch)	agricultural**	59.8	3.5	3.2	
841-35-002	200 Bloomfield Ave., Gilroy (Pura)	agricultural**	25.8	0.3	0.3	
841-35-003	Bloomfield Ave., Gilroy (Pura)	agricultural**	175.4	2.4	2.3	
841-35-004	n/a (Young)	agricultural**	123.9	3.5	3.5	
841-34-002	n/a (Bloomfield Ranch)	agricultural	264.7	5.5	5.5	
841-36-016	n/a (JB Ltd Partnership)	agricultural**	231.5	0.1	0.1	
841-36-019	n/a (JB Ltd Partnership)	agricultural**	32.6	5.4	5.4	
n/a	n/a (SCVWD)	Carnadero Creek		0.4	0.4	
841-36-013	n/a (Sargent Ranch)	agricultural**	120.0	1.7	1.7	
n/a	strip of land owned by San Benito County between Y Road and U.S. 101			0.2	0.2	
Totals:				190.8	159.5	
Notes:						
1. Information in this table is preliminary and is subject to minor revision during final design.						
2. SCVWD = Santa Clara Valley Water District						
3. ** = parcel is under California Land Conservation (Williamson) Act contract.						

- Upgrade/widening of SR 25 to a 4-lane expressway between the UPRR crossing (just west of Bloomfield Avenue) and San Felipe Road in Hollister
- Widening of U.S. 101 to eight lanes, to extend high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes from Cochrane Road to SR 25
- Possible realignment of SR 152 (East) to provide a more direct connection between the SR 152/SR 156 and U.S. 101/SR 25 interchanges
- Extension of Mesa Road over U.S. 101, to connect to Bolsa Road
- Future trails identified in the *Santa Clara County Countywide Trails Master Plan* (see Section 2.1.2.2 for a discussion of this topic)

1.3.2 Transportation System Management (TSM) and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Alternatives

Transportation systems management (TSM) strategies increase the efficiency of existing facilities by accommodating a greater number of vehicle trips on a facility without increasing the number of through lanes. Transportation demand management (TDM) focuses on regional means of reducing the number of vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled (VMT), as well as increasing vehicle occupancy.

The project need could not be adequately satisfied by reasonable TSM and TDM strategies. The project is located in a rural area that is not served by existing or future high capacity transit systems that would have the capacity to lure motorists out of their vehicles in sufficient numbers so as to eliminate the need for the project. Likewise, neither ramp metering nor the provision of auxiliary or HOV lanes would provide sufficient benefit and none of these improvements would address the deficiencies of the existing U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange.

Although TSM and TDM measures alone could not satisfy the purpose and need for the project, the following TSM and TDM measures have been incorporated into the Build Alternative for this project:

- To increase the efficiency of the freeway system during peak travel periods, ramp metering equipment will be installed on the on-ramps at the reconstructed U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange.
- The 70-foot median width for U.S. 101 north of SR 25 will accommodate HOV lanes that are planned for U.S. 101 between Cochrane Road and SR 25 in the future.
- The new bicycle facilities that will be constructed as part of the project (see Section 1.3.1.8) will facilitate bicycle travel.

1.3.3 No Build Alternative

The No Build Alternative would consist of not constructing the project, which would avoid the environmental impacts of the project, as described in this document. However, the No Build Alternative would not meet any of the purposes of the project, which are listed in Section 1.2.1. Under the No Build Alternative, projected increases in traffic would cause congestion to worsen and the existing problems that are described in Section 1.2.2 would be exacerbated. For additional information on future traffic conditions in the project area under the No Build Alternative, please see Section 2.6.2.5.

1.3.4 Comparison of Alternatives

This section highlights the differences between the Build Alternative, including the two design options, and the No Build Alternative. Key similarities and differences are also highlighted in Table 4.

Under the Build Alternative, the primary difference between Design Option A and Design Option B is the location of the reconstructed U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange. Under Design Option A, the interchange would be reconstructed approximately 0.2 miles north of its existing location, while under Design Option B, the interchange would be reconstructed at essentially the same location as the existing facility. Both interchange design options would continue to allow all traffic movements between U.S. 101 and SR 25, and both options would include the connection to Santa Teresa Boulevard.

Under the No Build Alternative, none of the purposes and needs would be met. Under the Build Alternative, both design options would meet the purposes and needs equally.

As shown in Table 4, for many of the project design features and the majority of the environmental impacts, the differences between Design Options A and B are not substantial. There are several categories, however, where the differences between the two design options are more substantial, and these are summarized as follows:

- ▶ **Amount of Right-of-Way Needed for Project:** The amount of additional right-of-way needed to construct the project under Design Option A is approximately 191 acres, as compared to approximately 160 acres under Design Option B.
- ▶ **Impacts to Prime and Unique Farmlands:** Direct impacts to lands designated as Prime Farmland or Unique Farmland will total approximately 157 acres under Design Option A, as compared to approximately 122 acres under Design Option B.
- ▶ **Construction Phasing:** Design Option A cannot be phased into smaller construction packages and, therefore, requires a large initial phase investment to reconstruct the U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange. In contrast, Design Option B can be phased into smaller construction packages and, therefore, requires a smaller initial investment.

TABLE 4

COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES

	Build Alternative with Design Option A for U.S. 101/SR 25 Interchange	Build Alternative with Design Option B for U.S. 101/SR 25 Interchange	No Build Alternative
Summary of Highway Improvements	Widen 101 to 6 lanes between Monterey St. & SR 129; upgrade 101 to freeway including frontage roads; construct grade-separation on SR 25 at UPRR; extend Santa Teresa Blvd. to 101/25 interchange; construct improvements at 101/129 SB off-ramp; reconstruct 101/25 interchange 0.2 miles north of existing interchange.	Widen 101 to 6 lanes between Monterey St. & SR 129; upgrade 101 to freeway including frontage roads; construct grade-separation on SR 25 at UPRR; extend Santa Teresa Blvd. to 101/25 interchange; construct improvements at 101/129 SB off-ramp; reconstruct 101/25 interchange at same location as existing interchange.	No improvements
Summary of North-South Bicycle Improvements	From Santa Teresa Blvd. to San Juan Hwy, construct a combination of new Class 1 bike paths and Class 2 bike lanes along frontage roads, Betabel Rd., and Y Rd. Same improvements under both design options.		No improvements.
Summary of East-West Bicycle Improvements	From Santa Teresa Blvd. to SR 25 at Bloomfield Ave., construct a combination of new Class 1 bike paths and Class 2 bike lanes; there are two alternatives being considered for segment between 101/25 & Santa Teresa Blvd.	From Santa Teresa Blvd. to SR 25 at Bloomfield Ave., construct a combination of new Class 1 bike paths and Class 2 bike lanes.	No improvements.
Cost	\$ 482 million	\$ 487 million	\$ 0
Ability to Meet Purpose & Need	Both design options meet the purpose and need equally.		Does not meet the purpose & need
Overall changes in traffic patterns	Connecting Santa Teresa Blvd. to 101/25 interchange will shift some traffic from Monterey St. in Gilroy to Santa Teresa Blvd. Same effect under both design options.		No change

TABLE 4 [continued]

	Build Alternative with Design Option A for U.S. 101/SR 25 Interchange	Build Alternative with Design Option B for U.S. 101/SR 25 Interchange	No Build Alternative
Effect on existing congestion & delay	Reduction in congestion, delay and peak-period travel times. Similar benefit under both design options.		Congestion will worsen over time as planned growth continues.
Relocations	4 residences and 2 businesses. Same impact under both design options.		None
Right-of-Way Needed for Project	Total of approximately 191 acres from 56 properties.	Total of approximately 160 acres from 53 properties	None
Growth-inducing Impacts	Significant impact if and when the application for the El Rancho San Benito (ERSB) project is resubmitted and the approval of ERSB is conditioned upon the widening of U.S. 101. Same impact under both design options.		None
Prime & Unique Farmland Impacts	156.8 acres	121.8 acres	None
Williamson Act Lands to be Impacted	105.1 acres	77.6 acres	None
Floodplain Impacts	Project lies within multiple floodplains. Design includes a combination of pipes, culverts, channels, and detention basins to avoid adverse flooding impacts. Similar effect under both design options.		Historical flooding of 101 will continue; no change from existing.
View of Diablo Range from Vicinity of Residence & Business	Significant <u>and Unavoidable</u> Impact	Less-than-Significant Impact	No impact
Visual Impact near Event Center in Vicinity of 101/25	Less-than-Significant Impact	Significant Impact	No impact

TABLE 4 [continued]

	Build Alternative with Design Option A for U.S. 101/SR 25 Interchange	Build Alternative with Design Option B for U.S. 101/SR 25 Interchange	No Build Alternative
Impacts to Archaeological Resources	There are 13 known archaeological sites within the project's footprint. Depending on final design, many of these sites will likely be impacted. Same impact under both design options.		No impact
Impacts to Paleontological Resources	There are locations within the project limits that are likely to contain significant paleontological resources. If present, the project could impact these resources and could destroy fossils. Same impact under both design options.		No impact
Changes in Noise Levels Compared to Existing Conditions	+1 dBA to +9 dBA	-1 dBA to +9 dBA	No Change
Increase in Impervious Surfaces	75.5 acres	73.6 acres	None
Noise Abatement Soundwalls Proposed?	No	No	No
Permanent Impacts to Riparian Habitat	8.0 acres	8.0 acres	None
Permanent Impacts to Wetlands and Aquatic Habitat	2.98 acres	3.22 acres	None
Permanent Impacts to Oak Woodland Habitat	2.0 acres	1.5 acres	None
Construction Impacts	Noise and dust may be substantial but will be avoided/minimized. Same impact under both design options.		None
r/w = right-of-way SB = southbound			

- ▶ **Construction Staging:** Design Option A will have less construction staging issues than Design Option B because it is located farther from the existing interchange.

- ▶ **U.S. 101/SR 25 Interchange Traffic Operations:** Under Design Option A, northbound SR 25 to southbound U.S. 101 traffic is put through a loop on-ramp instead of having to make a left turn. Under Design Option B, left-turn pockets are needed at both ends of the bridge to accommodate the left-turning traffic onto southbound and northbound U.S. 101.

~~After the public circulation period, all comments will be considered, and VTA, in cooperation with Caltrans, will select a preferred design option and make the final determination of the project's effect on the environment. In accordance with CEQA, VTA will certify that the project complies with CEQA, prepare findings for all significant impacts identified, prepare a Statement of Overriding Considerations for impacts that will not be mitigated below a level of significance, and certify that the findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations have been considered prior to project approval. VTA will then file a Notice of Determination with the State Clearinghouse and the Santa Clara County Clerk-Recorder that will identify whether the project will have significant impacts, if mitigation measures were included as conditions of project approval, that findings were made, and that a Statement of Overriding Considerations was adopted.~~

Identification of a Preferred Alternative

On May 7, 2013, the U.S. 101 Improvement Project Development Team (PDT), consisting of VTA and Caltrans design, environmental, and management staff and consultants, met to identify a preferred alternative. The PDT identified the Build Alternative Design Option B as the preferred alternative, with a recommendation to the VTA Board of Directors (i.e., the decision-making body of the Lead Agency) that Build Alternative Design Option B be approved. The PDT also recommended the approval of Bike Alternative 2. This recommendation was made after considering comments from outside agencies and the public, as well as input from the PDT itself. Relevant factors that led to this recommendation include the following:

- ❑ The Build Alternative Design Option B meets the purpose and need for the project, whereas the No Build Alternative does not meet the purpose and need.

- ❑ The amount of right-of-way needed to construct the project under Design Option B is approximately 160 acres, as compared to approximately 191 acres under Design Option A.

- ❑ Direct impacts to lands designated as Prime Farmland or Unique Farmland is approximately 122 acres under Design Option B, as compared to approximately 157 acres under Design Option A.

- ❑ Design Option A cannot be phased into individual construction packages and, therefore, requires a large initial investment to reconstruct the U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange. In contrast, Design

Option B can be phased into individual construction packages and, therefore, requires a smaller initial investment.

- ❑ The Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, Central Coast Regional Water Quality Board, Council of San Benito County Governments, and members of the public have stated preference for Design Option B due to less environmental impacts overall. No commentor on the Draft EIR indicated preference for Design Option A.
- ❑ The National Park Service, Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, Santa Clara County Open Space Authority, and Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation have stated preference for Bike Alternative 2. No commentor on the Draft EIR indicated preference for Bike Alternative 1.

If the VTA Board of Directors approves the project, it will include the adoption of a Mitigation Monitoring Plan, Findings, and a Statement of Overriding Considerations, as required under CEQA. A CEQA Notice of Determination will be filed with the State Clearinghouse and the Santa Clara County Clerk-Recorder.

1.3.5 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Further Discussion

The purposes of the project, as described in Section 1.2.1, consist of safety and operational improvements to the U.S. 101 highway facility, which is an existing major north-south transportation route in California. As such, the various alternatives that were evaluated focused on design options for achieving these purposes through various improvements to U.S. 101 itself. Alternatives such as constructing a new highway in a different corridor were not evaluated since they would not meet the basic project objectives and purposes.

1.3.5.1 *Outside Widening of U.S. 101 between SR 25 and Monterey Street*

When compared to the proposed project, this design option would involve outside widening on both sides of existing U.S. 101, in lieu of the westerly shift of U.S. 101 between the U.S. 101/SR 25 and U.S. 101/Monterey Street interchanges to add one more through lane and one auxiliary lane in each direction. This alternative was studied as a way to minimize the construction footprint of the proposed project. Although this design option would achieve the same objectives as the proposed project in enhancing traffic operations, reducing congestion, and improving safety, it impacts a large number of businesses and requires the relocation of major utilities located east of U.S. 101, thus increasing the project costs significantly. It also precludes future plans to build carpool or HOT lanes in the existing median of U.S. 101 due to width limitations.

1.3.5.2 *Easterly Widening of U.S. 101, South of SR 25*

This design option would involve outside widening on both sides of existing U.S. 101 between SR 25 and the Tar Creek crossing (U.S. 101/Sargent bridges) to add one more through lane in each direction.

Similar to the option discussed above, this design option was studied as a way to minimize the construction footprint of the proposed project. Although this design option would achieve the same objectives as the build alternative in enhancing traffic operations, reducing congestion, and improving safety, it was determined that it is not feasible because it would directly impact the Bloomfield Ranch, which is a significant historic resource that is eligible for the *National Register of Historic Places*. Further, this option would impact an archaeological site that was identified during the cultural resources investigation phase, thus increasing the project environmental impacts significantly. Unless significant design exceptions can be approved, this option will also preclude future plans to widen U.S. 101 in the median due to the lack of sufficient width.

1.3.5.3 *Widen Northbound U.S. 101 into the Existing Median between SR 25 and Tar Creek*

This design option would widen existing U.S. 101 northbound into the median between Tar Creek (U.S. 101/Sargent bridges) and the reconstructed U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange, which would leave an existing median width of approximately 31 feet. This design option has a smaller overall footprint, and therefore a lesser environmental impact, than the proposed project. However, it was rejected since a 31-foot median width would be unacceptable because 1) it would require design exceptions to median shoulder widths standards when/if the freeway is widened to 8 lanes south of SR 25, and 2) it would not be consistent with the 46-foot median width south of Tar Creek. The standard width for freeway medians in rural areas is 62 feet and discussions with Caltrans' engineers resulted in a determination that the minimum acceptable median width is 46 feet at this location.

1.3.5.4 *Alternative Median Widths on U.S. 101 between Tar Creek and SR 129*

Under the proposed project, the median width on U.S. 101 between Tar Creek (Sargent Overhead) and SR 129 will be 46 feet. This design option explored alternative median widths of 22 feet, 36 feet, and 62 feet.

The 22-foot wide median has the advantage of having a smaller footprint than the proposed project, which in turn reduces environmental impacts. However, this design was rejected because the width is substantially below the 62-foot design standard for rural freeways and because it would preclude the construction of future lanes in the median.

The 62-foot wide median has the advantage of meeting the Caltrans Highway Design Manual standards for freeway median width in rural areas. However, it would have a larger footprint than the proposed project and would require extensive right-of-way acquisition. The larger footprint would also result in significantly greater archaeological, biological, floodplain, and visual impacts. Finally, this design would significantly increase the project's capital construction cost.

A 36-foot wide median was also considered. That option was rejected because it would require a mandatory design exception for non-standard shoulder widths when future median widening (i.e., adding one more lane in each direction) is needed. In other words, the ability to undertake the future median

widening would be questionable because the width of the shoulders would be only five feet instead of the ten foot width that is the design standard.

1.3.5.5 *Construct a Separate U.S. 101/Santa Teresa Boulevard Interchange*

This design option would extend Santa Teresa Boulevard south from its current terminus at Castro Valley Road through a new frontage road that runs behind Miller Reservoir and ties into Old Monterey Road, where a proposed second interchange would be built approximately 1.3 miles south of the reconstructed U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange. This design option was considered because it has the advantage of separating local (i.e., Santa Teresa Boulevard) traffic from freeway-to-freeway traffic. This design option was rejected because 1) it requires significant right-of-way acquisition; 2) it has a large environmental footprint that would require a significant amount of mitigation; 3) it does not meet the minimum interchange spacing requirement¹¹, which would potentially impact traffic operations; and 4) it would be less desirable by the local communities due to the extended length of travel distance needed to get from Santa Teresa Boulevard to SR 25.

1.3.5.6 *Reconstruct U.S. 101/SR 25 Interchange without Santa Teresa Boulevard Connection*

The project initially considered a design for the reconstruction of the U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange that did not include the Santa Teresa Boulevard connection. This proposal generated significant opposition from local residents and businesses, the City of Gilroy, and Santa Clara County. This design option was rejected in response to the comments received during the public scoping meeting that was held in November 2007. In addition, the Santa Teresa Boulevard connection to the U.S. 101/SR 25 interchange was included in the project as it is identified in the *City of Gilroy General Plan*, the *Southern Gateway Transportation and Land Use Study* (VTA, 2006), and the *Valley Transportation Plan 2035* (VTA, 2009).

1.4 PERMITS AND APPROVALS NEEDED

Construction of the proposed project will require permits/approvals from the governmental agencies listed in Table 5.

¹¹FHWA and Caltrans have criteria that establish minimum distances between adjacent interchanges on a freeway. These minimums are designed to avoid the operational problems that occur as vehicles are merging on and off a freeway within relatively short distances.

TABLE 5
PERMITS AND APPROVALS NEEDED

Agency	Permit/Approval	Status
City of Gilroy	Encroachment permit for work extending onto local streets within Gilroy.	Application to be submitted during final design.
Santa Clara County	Encroachment permit for work extending onto local streets in unincorporated areas of Santa Clara Co.	Application to be submitted during final design.
San Benito County	Encroachment permit for work extending onto local streets in unincorporated areas of San Benito Co.	Application to be submitted during final design.
Santa Clara Valley Water District	Permit for work in Carnadero Creek, Gavilan Creek, Tick Creek, Tar Creek, and Pajaro River.	Application to be submitted during final design.
San Benito County Water District	Permit for work in Pajaro River, Murphy Creek, San Benito River, and San Juan Creek.	Application to be submitted during final design.
California Public Utilities Commission	Permit for any work affecting the UPRR crossings at Tar Creek/U.S. 101 & SR 25.	Application to be submitted during final design.
National Marine Fisheries Service	Section 7 Consultation for Threatened and Endangered Species; Review and Comment on 404 Permit.	Consultation to be undertaken by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers during processing of Section 404 permit.
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	Section 7 Consultation for Threatened and Endangered Species; Review and Comment on 404 Permit.	
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Section 404 permit for temporary and/or permanent work in low-flow channels of Carnadero Creek, Gavilan Creek, Tick Creek, Tar Creek, Pajaro River, Murphy Creek, San Benito River, and San Juan Creek.	Application to be submitted during final design.
Regional Water Quality Control Board	Section 401 Water Quality Certification for temporary and/or permanent work in low-flow channels of Carnadero Creek, Gavilan Creek, Tick Creek, Tar Creek, Pajaro River, Murphy Creek, San Benito River, and San Juan Creek.	Application to be submitted during final design.
California Department of Fish & Wildlife	Streambed Alteration Agreement for work in Carnadero Creek, Gavilan Creek, Tick Creek, Tar Creek, Pajaro River, Murphy Creek, San Benito River, and San Juan Creek; Incidental Take Permit for impacts to endangered/threatened species	Application to be submitted during final design.