
6. PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

5. ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

Section 15126.6 of the State CEQA Guidelines requires that an “environmentally superior” alternative be selected among the alternatives that are evaluated in the EIR. In general, the environmentally superior alternative is the alternative that would be expected to generate the fewest adverse impacts. The environmentally superior alternative would be the No Project Alternative. The No Project Alternative would eliminate the Project’s significant and unavoidable impacts related to localized construction emissions, and construction noise and vibration impacts. However, the No Project Alternative would not achieve any of the stated Project Objectives, as it would maintain the status quo.

As required by CEQA, when the No Project Alternative is shown to be environmentally superior over the Proposed Project, a separate Environmentally Superior Project Alternative shall be identified among the alternatives analyzed within the EIR. Based on a review of the project alternatives identified in this EIR, neither of the alternatives would be effective in eliminating the Project’s significant and unavoidable impacts. Table 6.5-1, Environmentally Superior Alternative Matrix presents a summary of the impact conclusions for each alternative relative to the impact statements for each impact areas evaluated in the EIR for the Proposed Project.

Of the alternatives evaluated, the Alternative 2 Project would reduce the footprint of the Project Site, as it excludes the Lyons Avenue Extension to Dockweiler Drive, and maintains the at-grade crossing at 13th Street. A comparison of the Alternative 1 Project to the Alternative 2 Project is provided below in Table 6.5-1. As shown in the table below, although both alternatives are very similar with respect to environmental impacts; however, the Alternative 2 Project’s reduced Project Site footprint has the potential to reduce impacts more so than the Alternative 1 Project. For that reason, the Alternative 2 Project is identified as the environmentally superior alternative. A discussion of the changes to impacts between the Alternative 1 Project and the Alternative 2 Project are further discussed below.

Similar to the Proposed Project, the Alternative 1 Project would involve the development of the proposed roadway alignment and associated infrastructure, which would include a new at-grade crossing and a secondary east-west arterial roadway connecting Lyons Avenue to the proposed Dockweiler Drive extension that would connect Dockweiler Drive to a new five-leg intersection at the Arch Street/12th Street/Placerita Canyon intersection. The Alternative 1 Project differs from the Proposed Project by improving the existing at-grade crossing at the intersection of 13th Street and Railroad Avenue instead of removing the crossing, as proposed by the Proposed Project.

**Table 6.5-1
Environmentally Superior Alternative Matrix**

Environmental Impacts	Proposed Project	No Project Alternative	Alternative 1	Alternative 2
Aesthetics	LTS	NI	LTS (same)	LTS (reduced)
Air Quality	SU	NI	SU (same)	SU (same)
Biological Resources	LTS	NI	LTS (same)	LTS (reduced)
Cultural Resources	LTS	NI	LTS (same)	LTS (reduced)
Geology/Soils	LTS	NI	LTS (same)	LTS (reduced)
Hydrology/Water Quality	LTS	NI	LTS (same)	LTS (reduced)
Land Use and Planning	LTS	NI	LTS (same)	LTS (same)
Noise	SU	NI	SU (same)	SU (same)
Traffic	LTS	NI	LTS (same)	LTS (reduced)
<p><i>Notes: LTS = Less Than Significant Impact after mitigation (where mitigation is needed); SU= Significant and Unavoidable Impact; NI = No Impact.</i></p> <p><i>All impact conclusions refer to the level of impact after mitigation. Impact comparisons as to the same, increased or reduced refers to the level of impact as compared to the Proposed Project.</i></p>				

The Alternative 2 Project would involve the development of the proposed roadway alignment and associated infrastructure for Dockweiler Drive, which would extend Dockweiler Drive to Arch Street. The route would continue along Arch Street to 13th Street to link the Railroad Avenue. Unlike the Proposed Project, Alternative 2 does not include the roadway segment between the Dockweiler extension and Lyons Avenue, which spans a portion of the Newhall Creek. Additionally, Alternative 2 proposes to maintain and improve the 13th Street rail crossing. Therefore, as further discussed below, the Alternative 2 Project would result in slightly reduced impacts with respect to aesthetics, biological resources, hydrology and water quality impacts, and traffic and transportation.

Aesthetics

With respect to aesthetics, both project alternatives would result in less than significant impacts with respect to the loss of a significant ridgeline, as both alternatives would extend south to the extension of Dockweiler Drive to the westerly limits of the approved segment of the Master’s University Campus. As noted in Section 4.1, Aesthetics, the eastern segment of the Dockweiler alignment was previously approved under a separate project entitlement for The Master’s University in 2009, which included a

Ridgeline Alteration Permit for the eastern segment of this ridgeline.¹ As part of the approved entitlements for The Master's University Master Plan in 2009, the irreversible grading and re-contouring of the ridgeline was approved to the western limit of the Master's University Campus. However, the Alternative 2 Project would not alter existing views of the Lyons Avenue and Railroad Avenue intersection and would therefore have a slightly reduced impact to existing views as compared to the Proposed Project and Alternative 1. Additionally, while Alternative 2 would still require a Hillside Review Permit and an Oak Tree Permit for the loss of one oak tree that is located within the proposed alignment, this Alternative would require the removal of one less oak tree than the Proposed Project and Alternative 1.

Air Quality

Both the Alternative 1 Project and Alternative 2 Project would result in significant localized air emissions in close proximity to residential land uses within 100 meters of the Project Site on a temporary and intermittent basis during construction. However, notwithstanding implementation of mitigation measures 4.2-1 through 4.2-4, localized air quality impacts resulting from construction activities would be considered significant and unavoidable for all both project alternatives.

With respect to operational Air Quality impacts, although neither project alternatives would directly generate new vehicle trips, both alternatives would result in changes to the traffic circulation in the vicinity and would alter the average daily traffic volumes and peak hour traffic volumes at local intersections. However, as discussed in Section 4.2 Air Quality, under worst-case conditions, future CO concentrations at each intersection of the CO hot spot analysis conducted for the Proposed Project would not exceed the state 1-hour and 8-hour standards with or without the development of the Proposed Project. Therefore, no significant project-related impact would occur relative to future carbon monoxide concentrations. As the both alternative projects are within the envelope of the Proposed Project, the alternative projects would have a less than significant impact with respect to operational air quality impacts.

Biological Resources

As the Alternative 2 Project does not include the extension of Lyons Avenue to Dockweiler Drive, it would not result in either temporary or permanent impacts to the two CDFW jurisdictional features that occur within the Project Site for the Proposed Project and Alternative 1 Project, which includes the Newhall Creek and a small ephemeral drainage that is a tributary to Newhall Creek. As such, the Alternative 2 Project would have no impact with respect to federally protected wetland and implementation of mitigation Measures 4.3-3 would not be applicable to the Alternative 2 Project. Although all three alternatives would result in a less than significant impact with respect to biological resources with implementation of mitigation measures 4.3-1 through 4.3-6, Alternative 2 would result in slightly reduced impacts, as it would not require implementation of mitigation measure 4.3-3.

¹ *Ibid.*

Cultural Resources

No cultural or historic habitable structures are located on-site, and as such, neither Alternative would have the potential to adversely impact any known historic or cultural resources. Additionally, no known archeological or paleontological sites are identified within the Project Site. While, portions of the Project Site are improved with roadways, both alternatives will consist of earthwork activities, such as grading and excavation, in areas that are currently undeveloped. Construction-related earthwork activities may result in the accidental discovery of prehistoric or historic archaeological or paleontological resources or Native American burial sites. Implementation of mitigation measures 4.4-1 and 4.4-2 would reduce impacts to a less than significant level for both alternatives. However, because Alternative 2 would involve less grading, and would avoid grading within the floodplain, it would have a reduced potential for inadvertent finds associated with archaeological, paleontological and tribal cultural resources.

Geology and Soils

The Project Site is underlain by Saugus Formation, Pacoima Formation, Quaternary alluvium and artificial fill and has historic high groundwater elevations greater than 50 feet in depth. The Project Site is located in the State of California Seismic Hazard Zone map for the Newhall Quadrangle. Hazards related to seismic-related ground failures (including ground rupture and liquefaction) are considered low. Therefore, with implementation of mitigation measure 4.5-1, both alternatives would result in a less than significant impact with respect to geology and soils. However, because Alternative 2 would involve less grading, and would avoid grading within the floodplain, it would have a reduced potential for soil erosion, loss of topsoil and potential for altering natural landforms.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Unlike the Proposed Project and Alternative 1 Project, the Alternative 2 Project does not include the roadway extension from Lyons Avenue to Dockweiler Drive, which spans a portion of the Newhall Creek. As such, the Alternative 2 Project would not include the development of a new bridge across Newhall Creek or require embankment protection to the roadway and creek. Although all three project scenarios would result in a less than significant impacts with respect to hydrology and water quality, as all the three projects would be required to comply with the current regulatory and State permitting agencies, under the Alternative 2 Project, impacts related to hydrology and water quality would be reduced as Alternative 2 would avoid grading within the floodplain. As such the potential to alter existing storm flows through Newhall Creek would be avoided.

Land Use and Planning

Implementation of the both alternative projects would not disrupt or physically divide an established community. Monument signage will properly guide traffic and identify the entrance to the Placerita Canyon community as a residential community with no through access. Additionally, similar to the Proposed Project, both alternative projects will provide increased pedestrian and vehicular access in the area. Both alternatives would not conflict with any applicable land use plans, policies, or regulations, including: the Regional Transportation Plan / Sustainable Communities Strategy, City of Santa Clarita

Municipal Code, City of Santa Clarita General Plan (including the Circulation Element), the Placerita Canyon Special Standards District and North Newhall Area, Old Town Newhall Specific Plan, and the Compass Blueprint Concept Plan. As such, implementation of either alternative would create a less than significant impact with regards to land use and planning.

Noise

Construction

Similar to the Proposed Project, construction of both alternatives would require the use of heavy equipment for ground clearing, site grading, and roadway construction. Several pieces of construction equipment operating simultaneously would generate a noise level of approximately 94.6 dBA. The estimated construction noise levels impacting sensitive receptors are expected to exceed the City's daytime noise standards for residential uses (see Table 4.8-8). The construction noise levels would therefore constitute a significant impact with respect to both alternative projects.

Operational

Similar to the Proposed Project, the Alternative 2 Project is anticipated to alter roadway traffic volumes as the Proposed Project would create a new roadway segment connecting Lyons Avenue to Dockweiler Drive. Locations in the vicinity of the Project Site could experience slight changes in noise levels as a result of the change in traffic patterns. The changes in future noise levels along the study-area roadway segments in the project vicinity are for the Proposed Project's near term (Year 2019) impacts would increase local noise levels by a maximum of 2.7 dBA CNEL (at the location of Dockweiler Drive (between Sierra Highway and Valle del Oro). This increase would be below the identified thresholds of significance. At all other roadway segments, the resulting noise levels are anticipated to decrease. As such the Proposed Project's potential to generate a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project would be less than significant.

The Future (2019) With Project noise levels on the new roadway segment from Lyons Avenue to Valle del Oro are expected to be 63.3 dBA (CNEL) within 50 feet of the centerline of the roadway. The resulting noise levels at the three identified sensitive receptors would be below 52.9 dBA. Thus, the anticipated with project noise levels at all off-site receptor locations would be within the "normally acceptable" range of noise for residential areas. Therefore, the Alternative 2 Project's noise impacts would be less than significant.

The Alternative 2 Project would direct more traffic through Arch Street and 13th Street in lieu of the Dockweiler/Lyons Extension, which would not be constructed as part of this alternative. The land uses along Arch Street and 13th Street are commercial properties and are not considered sensitive land uses for purposes of evaluating noise impacts. Thus noise impacts associated with the change of traffic flows under this alternative would be less than significant.

Transportation and Traffic

Opening Year (2019) Conditions

As presented in Table 6.3-1 under Year 2019 with Alternative 1 Condition and Table 6.4-1 under Year 2019 with Alternative 2 Condition, most of the study intersections are anticipated to continue to operate at LOS E or better. Like the Proposed Project, the same four intersections are anticipated to operate at LOS F, they are: Sierra Highway and SR-14 Southbound Ramps, Sierra Highway and Placerita Canyon Road, SR-14 Northbound Ramps and Placerita Canyon Road, SR-14 Southbound Ramps and Newhall Avenue. The same mitigation measures presented for the Proposed Project would generally be necessary to accommodate the anticipated Year 2019 traffic and reduce potential impacts for the Alternative 1 Project and Alternative 2 Project. Alternative 1 Project would not require implementation of mitigation measures 4.9-5 and 4.9-10, as compared to the Proposed Project. Alternative 2 would not require implementation of mitigation measures 4.9-2, 4.9-4 and 4.9-5, as compared to the Proposed Project.

Future (2035) Conditions

As presented in Table 6.3-2 under Future Year 2035 with Alternative 1 Project Condition, several of the study intersections are anticipated to operate at LOS F. There are four intersections that are anticipated to operate at LOS F, they are: Sierra Highway and Placerita Canyon Road, Sierra Highway and Newhall Avenue, Valle Del Oro and Dockweiler Drive, and Main Street and Newhall Avenue. Similar to the Proposed Project, mitigation measures are necessary to accommodate the anticipated Future Year 2035 traffic and reduce potential Alternative 1 Project impacts.

As presented in Table 6.4-2 under Future Year 2035 with Alternative 2 Project Condition, several of the study intersections are anticipated to operate at LOS F. There are five intersections that are anticipated to operate at LOS F, they are: Sierra Highway and Placerita Canyon Road, Sierra Highway and Newhall Avenue, Valle Del Oro and Dockweiler Drive, Railroad Avenue and 13th Street, and Main Street and Newhall Avenue. Mitigation measures are necessary to accommodate the anticipated Future Year 2035 traffic and reduce potential Alternative 2 Project impacts

With the implementation of the mitigation measures identified in Section 6.3 and 6.4, the Alternative 1 Project and Alternative 2 Project's impacts during the 2035 year will be less than significant. Therefore, the Proposed Project and two alternatives would both result in a less than significant impact after mitigation.

Railroad Crossing Analysis

As presented in Table 6.3-3 under Alternative 1 Year 2019, the total average daily traffic is anticipated to be highest for the No Build Condition. Alternative 1 total average daily traffic is lower than the No Build condition but higher than the Proposed Project condition. As presented in Tables 6.3-3 and 6.4-3, the total average daily railroad crossings is anticipated to be lowest for the Alternative 2 Project condition in Year 2019. In 2019, Alternative 2 would result in 820 fewer crossings than the proposed Project and 3,160 fewer crossings than Alternative 1. For the Year 2035 buildout scenario, the total average daily railroad

crossings is also anticipated to be lowest for the Alternative 2 Project condition. In 2035, Alternative 2 would result in 6,230 fewer crossings than the proposed Project and 8,740 fewer crossings as compared to Alternative 1. As such the Alternative 2 alignment would minimize railroad crossing events and would therefore be environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Similar to the Proposed Project, both the Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 would comply with Santa Clarita's circulation goals and enhancing the circulation system by providing bicycle lanes and accessibility to bicycle paths that are fundamental for a comprehensive transportation network.