

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND REGULATORY GUIDANCE

The City of Rancho Cordova (City), in cooperation with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the federal Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), proposes to extend International Drive between its existing terminus at Kilgore Road to Sunrise Boulevard.

The proposed project is a joint project by the City of Rancho Cordova, BOR, and Caltrans as delegated by FHWA, and is subject to state and federal environmental review requirements. Project documentation, therefore, has been prepared in compliance with both the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The City of Rancho Cordova is the lead agency under CEQA. Caltrans, as delegated by FHWA, is the federal lead agency under NEPA, and BOR is a NEPA cooperating agency.

This document is a Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration/Environmental Assessment (IS/MND/EA) for the International Drive Extension Kilgore to Sunrise Project, which incorporates the Draft IS/MND/EA by reference. The Final IS/MND/EA includes comments and responses on the Draft IS/MND/EA circulated on February 1, 2008 through March 3, 2008. The document provides justification for a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Public Resources Code Section 21000 *et seq.*, and the State CEQA Guidelines 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15000 *et seq.* Supplemental information has also been provided in the Minimal Environmental Assessment (Minimal EA) to support a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) by the BOR pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

An initial study is conducted by a CEQA lead agency to determine if a project may have a significant effect on the environment. In accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines Section 15063, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must be prepared if an initial study indicates that the proposed project under review may have a potentially significant impact on the environment. A Negative Declaration may be prepared instead if the lead agency prepares a written statement describing the reasons why a proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment and therefore, why it does not require the preparation of an EIR (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15371). According to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15070, a Negative Declaration shall be prepared for a project subject to CEQA when either:

- a) *The initial study shows there is no substantial evidence, in light of the whole record before the agency, that the proposed project may have a significant effect on the environment, or*
- b) *The initial study identifies potentially significant effects, but:*
 - (1) *Revisions in the project plans or proposals made by or agreed to by the City before the proposed negative declaration is released for public review would avoid the effects or mitigate the effects to a point where clearly no significant effects would occur, and*
 - (2) *There is no substantial evidence, in light of the whole record before the agency, that the proposed project as revised may have a significant effect on the environment.*

If revisions are adopted into the proposed project in accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines Section 15070(b), a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) is prepared.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the primary differences between NEPA and CEQA is the way significance is determined. Under NEPA, significance is used to determine whether and EIS, or some lower level of documentation, will be required. NEPA requires that an EIS is prepared when the proposed federal action (project) as a whole has the potential to "significantly affect the quality of the human environment." The determination of significance is based on context and intensity. The context, referred to as the "affected environment" in this document, is the the geographic, social, and environmental contexts within which the project may have effects. Intensity is the severity of the potential impact, considered in context.

Some impacts determined to be significant under CEQA may not be of sufficient magnitude to be determined significant under NEPA. Under NEPA, once a decision is made regarding the need for an EIS, it is the magnitude of the impact that is evaluated and no judgment of its individual significance is deemed important for the text. NEPA does not require that a determination of significant impacts be stated in the environmental documents. Another difference between NEPA and CEQA is that CEQA can utilize thresholds of significance to determine the level of impact to a given resource while NEPA determines level of significance based on context and intensity. Under NEPA, all impacts are discussed regardless of any thresholds amount and include mitigation measures where reasonable.

1.2 LEAD AGENCY

The lead agency is the public agency with primary responsibility over a proposed project. Where two or more public agencies will be involved with a project, CEQA Guidelines Section 15051 provides criteria for identifying the lead agency. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15051(b)(1), "the lead agency will normally be the agency with general governmental powers." The City of Rancho Cordova Public Works Department has initiated preliminary design of the roadway improvements. The project lies within the city limits of the City of Rancho Cordova and requires approvals from the Rancho Cordova City Council. Therefore, based on the criteria described above, the lead agency for the proposed project is the City of Rancho Cordova.

According to Council for Environmental Quality (CEQ) Guidelines 1501.5(c), the following factors (which are listed in order of descending importance) shall determine lead agency designation when more than one federal agency is involved in the same action:

1. Magnitude of agency's involvement.
2. Project approval/disapproval authority.
3. Expertise concerning the action's environmental effects.
4. Duration of agency's involvement.
5. Sequence of agency's involvement

FHWA is anticipated to provide funding for construction of the proposed project. Effective July 1, 2007, Caltrans assumed all of FHWA's responsibilities under NEPA for projects on California's State Highway System and for federal-aid local streets and roads projects under FHWA's Surface Transportation Project Delivery Pilot Program, pursuant to 23 CFR 773. Caltrans also assumed all of FHWA's responsibilities for environmental coordination and consultation under other federal environmental laws pertaining to the review or approval of projects under the Pilot Program. Caltrans, by virtue of it being a transportation agency, has expertise concerning the

environmental effects of the proposed roadway widening action. Caltrans will act on behalf of FHWA as the NEPA Lead Agency.

The Bureau of Reclamation will need to issue an encroachment permit. Because Caltrans has a comparatively larger magnitude of involvement and also has expertise concerning the action's environmental effects, Caltrans, on behalf of FHWA, will be the NEPA lead agency. Bureau of Reclamation will be a cooperating agency for NEPA.

1.3 PURPOSE AND DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

The purpose of this Final IS/MND/EA is to respond to comments raised by the agencies and the public. The Final IS/MND/EA includes an introduction, response to comments, and a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP), which has been identified to reduce or eliminate any identified significant and/or potentially significant impacts.

This document is divided into the following sections:

1.0 Introduction - Provides an introduction and describes the purpose and organization of this document;

2.0 Response to Comments - Written comments on the IS/MND/EA are reproduced in this section (except as noted), as well as responses to those comments;

3.0 Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program - The MMRP will provide for monitoring of project activities as necessary, in-the-field identification and resolution of environmental concerns, and reporting to City staff; and

4.0 Report Preparation - Identifies staff and consultants responsible for the preparation of this document.