

Chapter 2 Comments and Responses to Comments

2.1 Introduction

This chapter contains a summary of oral comments received at the January 15, 2004 public hearing together with a copy of all written comments received during the public review period between December 22, 2003 and February 5, 2004. This chapter also presents the lead agencies' responses to all significant environmental issues raised in oral and written comments. Table 2-1 is a list of the capital letter assigned to the hearing comments and each letter, the comments received by date of receipt including the name of the commenter and the agency if he/she represents an agency, and the date of each comment.

Table 2-1. List of Comments Received on the December 2003 Draft Joint Document for the U.S. 50/Missouri Flat Road Interchange Project

Assigned Letter Designation	Comments Received from	Date of Comment
A	Public hearing held on the draft joint document at the Herbert Green Middle School	Summary of oral testimony, January 15, 2004
B	Jason Crow, Sacramento Area Council of Governments	Electronic mail, January 2, 2004
C	Bruce A. Wray	January 15, 2004
D	Eileen Crim	January 16, 2004
E	Melba J. Leal, California Division of the National Pony Express Association	January 19, 2004
F	W. Chris Word, El Dorado Irrigation District	January 26, 2004
G	Elna Norman	January 26, 2004
H	Robert A. Smart	January 27, 2004
I	Karen Aguilar	January 30, 2004
J	Alice Howard, Maidu Group, Mother Lode Chapter, Sierra Club	January 31, 2004
K	Mark A. Perlberger, HalBear Enterprises, Real Estate Consulting	February 2, 2004
L	Ray P. Griffiths	February 3, 2004
M	Marcella McTaggart, El Dorado County Air Quality Management District	February 4, 2004
N	Terry Roberts, State Clearinghouse	February 6, 2004
O	Jerry Ledbetter, El Dorado County Trails Advisory Committee	Undated

2.2 Master Responses

A number of comments were raised that relate to implementing Caltrans Deputy Directive 64, “Accommodating Non-Motorized Travel” (see Appendix B for a copy of this directive) and providing bicycle and pedestrian facilities, as part of the proposed project. Since these issues were raised by a variety of commenters and additional analysis was conducted to respond to these comments, master responses were prepared for these comments. To respond to these comments, El Dorado County Department of Transportation prepared a Missouri Flat Road Bike Path Feasibility Study (Quincy Engineering 2004) which considered both east-west and north-south bicycle and pedestrian travel in the vicinity of the Missouri Flat Road interchange. The conclusions of this study are summarized below in Master Responses B and C.

A number of commenters also expressed concern regarding the project’s air quality impacts. Master Response D addresses these concerns.

Master Response A Related to Implementing Caltrans Deputy Directive 64: Accommodating Nonmotorized Travel

Deputy Directive 64 was issued in 2001 to direct Caltrans staff to consider the needs of non-motorized travelers including pedestrians, bicycles, and persons with disabilities in their activities and products. This includes ensuring the use of best practices for non-motorized travel within transportation improvement projects. The proposed project accommodates pedestrians, bicycles and persons with disabilities by incorporating the following:

- Raised sidewalks have been provided along both sides of Missouri Flat Road throughout the project limits.
- Curb ramps would be constructed as part of the sidewalk at each corner of intersections in order to meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.
- Where raised concrete islands are constructed at ramp intersections or within the median at crosswalk locations, cut-outs or curb ramps would be provided.
- On Missouri Flat Road, north-south crosswalks are provided at Perks Court, Mother Lode Drive, both ramp intersections, and Prospector’s Plaza Drive.
- On Missouri Flat Road, east-west crosswalks are provided at Mother Lode Drive and Prospector’s Plaza Drive. As there are no services between Mother Lode Drive and Prospector’s Plaza Drive, east-west crosswalks are not needed at the ramp intersections.
- Class 2 bike paths are provided along Missouri Flat Road for north-south travel.
- At intersections with a dedicated right-turn lane, a 1.5-meter (5.0-foot) delineated bicycle path has been provided between the outer through lane and the right-turn lane in order to facilitate bicycle movements through the intersections.

It should also be noted that a meeting was held on March 26, 2004 by representatives of Caltrans; El Dorado County Transportation Commission (EDCTC); El Dorado County Department of Transportation; and the environmental consultant for the Western Placerville Interchanges (Forni Road interchange) project, to discuss bicycle and pedestrian movement in the project vicinity. The following issues were discussed at this meeting (Ketchum pers. comm.):

- **bicycle and pedestrian traffic on the existing and proposed Missouri Flat Road interchange configurations:** Since the existing facility does not provide Class 2 bicycle facilities, all proposed Missouri Flat Road interchange configurations would upgrade the interchange to include Class 2 facilities and, therefore, would be in compliance with existing local bicycle plans. Some members of the public have voiced their desire for a separate Class 1 bicycle and pedestrian facility. Therefore, a study has been conducted to assess the feasibility of providing east-west and north-south bicycle/pedestrian access. The findings of this study are discussed below under Master Responses B and C.

Caltrans staff also noted that based on a June 15, 2001 memorandum from Caltrans Headquarters Division of Design entitled “Single Point Interchange Planning, Design, and Operations Guidelines”, a separate bicycle/pedestrian facility is required for non-compact single point diamond interchanges (SPDI). The Phase 2 SPDI design proposed for the Missouri Flat Road interchange is not considered to be compact (A compact SPDI has a maximum distance of 25 meters (82 feet) from the intersection limit line to the farthest conflict point.)

As noted in the Summary chapter and Chapter 1, “Project Objectives/Purpose and Need and Description of the Propose Project/Action” of the draft joint document (see pages S-2, 1-6, 1-13, 1-17, and 1-23), the County Board of Supervisors and FHWA will not act on Phase 2 (SPDI is the preferred configuration for Phase 2) at this time. The Board and FHWA will only act on Phase 1 (4-lane tight diamond interchange) since only this phase is included in the approved 2025 Metropolitan Transportation Plan and 2003/03 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program, as well as the Missouri Flat area Master Circulation and Funding Plan (MC&FP), MC&FP critical mass approval, and Community Facilities District financing plan. If the County adopts a new General Plan that provides for more growth than currently allowed by the Writ of Mandate, the County would then have the option of pursuing Phase 2 (SPDI), as a separate project.

If and when the Phase 2 SPDI is proposed as a separate project, it will be reevaluated during final design to determine whether it can be reconfigured to a compact SPDI. (Tatman pers. comm.) Alternative alignments for such a facility are discussed below under Master Response C. At that time, it would be determined if additional environmental review would be required for Phase 2 pursuant to Sections 15162 and 15163 of the State CEQA Guidelines (requirements related to subsequent and supplemental EIR’s, respectively) and 23 CFR 771.129 (U.S. Department of Transportation NEPA regulations for reevaluations).

- **ability of the Missouri Flat Road interchange project to provide bicycle and pedestrian access between the Missouri Flat Road and Forni Road interchanges:** The meeting attendees agreed that providing access between these two interchanges was beyond the purpose and need for the Missouri Flat Road interchange project, but that the project should not preclude future bicycle and pedestrian improvements. In order to minimize the construction impacts of improving the Weber Creek bridge piers in Weber Creek multiple times, the meeting attendees recommended that a study be conducted to assess the feasibility of providing bicycle/pedestrian access between the Missouri Flat Road and Forni Road interchanges, as well as in a north-south direction across U.S. 50. As noted above, the findings of this study are discussed below under Master Responses B and C; and
- **compliance of the Missouri Flat Road interchange project with the requirements of Caltrans Deputy Directive 64:** Caltrans staff in attendance concurred that the project has followed the requirements of Caltrans Deputy Directive 64. El Dorado County will continue to work with the EDCTC to ensure that the project is consistent with existing bicycle routes in the project area. Also, if a SPDI is proposed as a Phase 2 project, the County will work with the EDCTC to ensure compliance with Caltrans June 15, 2001 memorandum.

Master Response B Related to Providing an East-West Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility on the Weber Creek Bridges

The Missouri Flat Road Bike / Pedestrian Path Feasibility Study (Quincy Engineering 2004) considered eight potential two-way bicycle/pedestrian path alignments that would connect Missouri Flat Road at the west with Placerville Drive / Forni Road at the east.

The possible locations for the westerly terminus of a bicycle/pedestrian path that were considered include:

- Perks Court, or
- at the proposed westbound off-ramp intersection.

The three possible options for crossing over Weber Creek that were considered are:

- the old highway bridge (southernmost crossing);
- the existing eastbound U.S. 50 freeway bridge, which would be widened to the right of traffic (i.e. outside the flow of vehicular traffic) to accommodate the bike path width; or
- the existing westbound US 50 freeway bridge, which would be widened to the right of traffic (i.e. outside the flow of vehicular traffic) to accommodate the bike path width.

The possible locations for the easterly terminus of a bicycle/pedestrian path that were considered are:

- Forni Road at a location west of its intersection with Placerville Drive;

- eastbound Forni Road / Placerville Drive off-ramp intersection; or
- westbound Placerville Drive ramp intersection.

The feasibility study recommends that a Class 1 facility beginning on Perks Court, crossing Weber Creek via the eastbound U.S. 50 bridge, and terminating at the eastbound Forni Road / Placerville Drive off-ramp intersection, as the most feasible alternative (identified as Alternative 2 in the feasibility study). Under this alternative, the grade along the path from Perks Court approaching the U.S. 50 bridge reaches 5%. The grade along the path east of the old bridge approaching Forni Road reaches 6% for a length of 300 meters (984 feet). While the maximum grade recommended for a bicycle path is 5%, a lesser grade cannot reasonably be achieved in this terrain. The other seven alignments were determined to be infeasible due to steep grades (8 to 14%) or potential operational issues associated with introducing bicycle traffic into the five-legged westbound Placerville Drive ramp intersection.

The recommended Class 1 facility would not be constructed as part of the proposed Missouri Flat Road interchange project, but would be proposed as a separate project that would undergo separate environmental review. However, to preserve the option of constructing such a Class 1 facility, as a separate project, and to minimize impacts on Weber Creek by only constructing within the creek once, Phase 1 of the Missouri Flat Road interchange project is proposed to include the following elements:

- slightly increasing the size of the proposed bridge columns on the eastbound Weber Creek bridge from approximately 4.0 meters (13 feet) in diameter to approximately 4.5 meters (15 feet) in diameter to support a possible future Class 1 facility, as well as the proposed auxiliary lanes; and
- increasing the height of a proposed retaining wall along the eastbound U.S. 50 lanes east of Weber Creek.

These supplemental elements would not cause or contribute to any environmental impacts beyond those addressed in the draft joint document and, at the same time, would preserve future options related to the Class 1 facility.

Master Response C Related to Providing a North-South Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility over U.S. 50

The Missouri Flat Road Bike/Pedestrian Path Feasibility Study (Quincy Engineering 2004) considered the following three options for providing a new separate north-south bicycle/pedestrian structure over U.S. 50:

- between the eastbound ramp intersection adjacent to the eastbound on-ramp and the westbound ramp intersection adjacent to the westbound off-ramp, crossing over U.S. 50 east of the interchange (Tatman pers. comm.);

- between Mother Lode Drive, near the existing park-and-ride lot, and Prospector's Plaza shopping center, crossing over U.S. 50 west of the interchange. This alignment would require approval from private property owners, including Prospector's Plaza, to allow touch down of the structure; and
- between Perks Court and the El Dorado Villages shopping center, crossing over U.S. 50 east of the interchange. This alignment would require approval from private property owners, including El Dorado Villages shopping center, to allow touch down of the structure.

A new north-south bicycle/pedestrian Class 1 facility is not being proposed as part of the Missouri Flat Road interchange project, but would be considered separately if the conditions discussed under Master Response A occur in the future. Based upon the costs of other similar facilities in the state, such a Class 1 facility would be expected to cost \$1-1.5 million plus the cost of acquiring the necessary right-of-way.

Master Response D Related to the Project's Compliance with Federal and State Ambient Air Quality Standards

Several commenters are concerned that the project would create additional air quality impacts. Interchange modifications typically generate emissions during both construction and operational phases. This master response addresses the project's operational emissions, specifically whether those emissions comply with federal and state ambient air quality standards. See Impact AQ2 (on pages 3-68, 3-69, 5-44, and 5-45 of the draft joint document) and Impact AQ3 (on pages 3-69, 3-70, and 5-45) for a discussion of construction emissions.

Carbon monoxide (CO) modeling conducted for Phase 1 (4-lane tight diamond interchange), as described under Impact AQ4 on pages 3-70 and 5-45 of the draft joint document, shows that the project's localized CO impacts would be less than both the **state and federal** CO standards. Therefore, since the project would not cause or contribute to exceedances of the state or federal CO standards, the project's CO impacts are less than significant and are not addressed further in this response.

As described under Impact AQ5 (on pages 3-70, 3-71, and 5-46 of the draft joint document), Phase 1 was included in the most recently approved Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) for the Sacramento region, as prepared by the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG). Therefore, Phase 1's ozone precursor emissions constitute a piece of the Sacramento region's total transportation emissions that have been found to be less than the ozone precursor emissions budget for the region. That budget has been developed to prevent violations of the federal ozone standards. Consequently, the project would not cause or contribute to violations of the **federal** ozone standards.

However, the project's inclusion in the most recent MTIP does not specifically address whether the project would cause or contribute to violations of the **state** ozone standard. The federal ozone standard is 0.12 parts per million (ppm) averaged over one hour, whereas the state ozone standard is 0.09 ppm averaged over one hour.

To determine whether Phase 1 would result in violations of the state ozone standard, the Phase 1 improvements were analyzed to determine whether they would increase the ozone precursors, reactive organic gases (ROG) or oxides of nitrogen (NO_x), by more than 82 pounds per day (ppd), which is the El Dorado County Air Pollution Control District's (EDCAPCD) significance threshold. As described in the EDCAPCD's Guide to Air Quality Assessment, these ROG and NO_x thresholds are designed to conform to the California Clean Air Act and the California 1-hour ozone standard of 0.09 ppm.

Emissions for the following scenarios were compared:

1. 2005 No-Project Conditions vs. 2005 4-Lane Tight Diamond Interchange (project specific);
2. 2025 No-Project Conditions vs. 2025 4-Lane Tight Diamond Interchange (project specific);
3. Existing Conditions (2002) vs. 2005 4-Lane Tight Diamond Interchange (cumulative);
4. Existing Conditions (2002) vs. 2015 4-Lane Tight Diamond Interchange (cumulative); and
5. Existing Conditions (2002) vs. 2025 4-Lane Tight Diamond Interchange (cumulative).

The first two scenarios were designed to evaluate the project's incremental impacts, and the last three to evaluate cumulative impacts. Each of the first two scenarios compared the change in emissions with and without the project for years 2005 and 2025. These scenarios examined the emission impacts associated with only the project. The project traffic report did not include an evaluation of 2015 no-project conditions since the 2015 analysis was intended to evaluate the phasing of the project. Therefore, a comparison of 2015 no-project conditions to the 2015 4-Lane Tight Diamond could not be conducted. However, the analyses for 2005 and 2025 (scenarios one and two) are sufficient for determining whether Phase 1 would result in a significant project-specific impact.

The last three scenarios evaluated the change in emissions that would result from vehicle travel caused by cumulative growth in population and employment in the Missouri Flat area. Emissions were estimated using information contained within the "*Final Traffic Report for the U.S. 50/Missouri Flat Road Interchange Project*", prepared by Fehr & Peers (March 2002).

The analysis conducted by Fehr & Peers used a modified version of the SACMET model to generate estimates of a.m. and p.m. peak hour traffic volumes in the project vicinity (see pages 3-43 and 3-44 of the draft joint document for a description of the SACMET model). SACMET is a regional travel demand model that is maintained by SACOG. Fehr & Peers made the following modifications to the SACMET model to evaluate Phase 1 traffic impacts:

- Road networks were modified to improve the level of detail in the study area and to maintain consistency with the existing and planned roadway systems.
- Traffic analysis zones in the project vicinity were split to increase the level of land use detail in the study area, and
- Potential development in the interchange vicinity and in the Missouri Flat area, consistent with planned growth in the area, was added to future-year socioeconomic forecasts of households and employment.

Estimates of road link distances were generated using maps of each alternative. The roads included within the analysis were based on the project area as shown in Figure 2.2-1 in the draft joint document and included:

- U.S. 50 from a point one-third mile west of the U.S. 50/Missouri Flat Road eastbound off-ramps to the Forni Road interchange,
- Missouri Flat Road from just south of Mother Lode Drive to just north of the Prospector's Plaza Drive, and
- A small portion (approximately 152 meters [500 feet]) of Mother Lode Drive.

Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per hour on each road link were estimated by multiplying hourly traffic volumes for each link (as estimated by Fehr & Peers using the modified SACMET model) by road link length. Hourly traffic volumes for each road link were based on information contained in the Fehr & Peers' traffic report. Hourly emissions for each link were estimated. Hourly emissions were based on the California Air Resources Board's EMFAC2002 model and are a function of vehicle speed and ambient temperature. Speeds were based on information provided in the traffic report.

Four runs of the California Air Resources Board's EMFAC2002 model were conducted: existing conditions (2002), 2005, 2015, and 2025. These runs covered El Dorado County, using EMFAC2002's default fleet mix for the County. The purpose of these runs was to generate emission estimates (grams per vehicle mile traveled) as a function of vehicle speed and temperature for each of the four analysis years.

An hourly temperature profile was used for a day when the state ozone standard in the Sacramento area was violated. The hourly temperature profile was based on a year's worth of hourly meteorological data for the Sacramento region. Those temperatures are shown in Table 2-2.

Then, for each hour of the day, emission estimates were generated for each link by multiplying VMT per day by grams per mile, and the result were converted to pounds per day. Total daily emissions were calculated by summing the emission estimates for each alternative. The results are summarized in Table 2-3.

Table 2-2. Hourly Temperature Profile

Hour of Day	Temperature (°F)
Midnight – 1 AM	73
1 AM – 2 AM	71
2 AM – 3 AM	71
3 AM – 4 AM	68
4 AM – 5 AM	68
5 AM – 6 AM	71
6 AM – 7 AM	77
7 AM – 8 AM	83
8 AM – 9 AM	89
9 AM – 10 AM	94
10 AM – 11 AM	98
11 AM – Noon	101
Noon – 1 PM	103
1 PM – 2 PM	105
2 PM – 3 PM	105
3 PM – 4 PM	106
4 PM – 5 PM	106
5 PM – 6 PM	106
6 PM – 7 PM	102
7 PM – 8 PM	92
8 PM – 9 PM	85
9 PM – 10 PM	80
10 PM – 11 PM	78
11 PM – Noon	76

Table 2-3. U.S. 50/Missouri Flat Road Interchange Phase 1 Ozone Precursor Emissions Comparison

	ROG (ppd)	NO _x (ppd)
Scenario		
Existing 2002	71.8	250.2
No Project 2005	71.5	230.2
No Project 2025	15.9	34.6
4-Lane Tight Diamond 2005	56.4	211.2
4-Lane Tight Diamond 2015	24.2	64.3
4-Lane Tight Diamond 2025	9.6	30.3
Comparisons		
1. 2005 4-Lane Tight Diamond versus 2005 No Project	-15.2	-18.9
2. 2025 4-Lane Tight Diamond versus 2025 No Project	-6.3	-4.3
3. 2005 4-Lane Tight Diamond versus Existing Conditions	-15.4	-39.0
4. 2015 4-Lane Tight Diamond versus Existing Conditions	-47.6	-185.9
5. 2025 4-Lane Tight Diamond versus Existing Conditions	-62.2	-220.0

Total emissions for each of the five scenarios are shown in the top half of the table, and the scenarios are compared in the bottom half.

The first two comparisons evaluate the project versus no-project impacts. The first compares ozone precursor emissions associated with the 2005 4-Lane Tight Diamond to the 2005 No-Project condition. The Phase 1 alternative would reduce emissions by 15.2 ppd of ROG and 18.9 ppd of NO_x. These emission reductions are primarily the result of reductions in congestion and associated air emissions that would result from the Phase 1 improvements.

The second comparison evaluates the same two alternatives for 2025 conditions. The 4-Lane Tight Diamond would reduce ROG emissions by 6.3 ppd and NO_x by 4.3 ppd. The emission differential between comparisons one and two drops from 2005 to 2025 because vehicle emission rates drop significantly (for both project and no-project conditions) during this time frame.

Comparisons three, four, and five examine the cumulative impacts of Phase 1. These three comparisons evaluate how Phase 1 compares to existing conditions. As Table 2-3 shows, the cumulative emission reduction benefits of Phase 1 increase over time. These reductions are primarily due to substantial emission reductions in the vehicle fleet. Reduced congestion also plays a role in emission reduction benefits.

The conclusion from these comparisons is that Phase 1 would result in direct and cumulative emission reduction benefits. Phase 1, by reducing congestion in the project area, would reduce emissions and would not cause or contribute to violations of either the federal or state 1-hour ozone standards.

2.3 Individual Responses

This section contains the comments received on the draft joint document (see Table 2-1) and responses to those comments. A summary of each oral comment received at the January 15, 2004 public hearing appears first, followed by the responses to these oral comments. Then each comment letter received is provided, followed by the responses to these letter comments; each comment is numbered in the right margin.

Responses to Oral Comments Received at the January 15, 2004 Draft EA/EIR Public Hearing

Response A-1 (Elna Norman): The commenter's preference for the No-Project Alternative is noted for the record and will be considered by the County Board of Supervisors at the time of project approval consideration.

The draft joint document contains over 30 mitigation measures to reduce significant environmental effects. The riparian restoration program (Mitigation Measure BR3k) is only one of the measures recommended. Table S.4-2 and Appendix G contain a list of the proposed mitigation measures. The commenter is not specific as to which measures are ineffective, if any. Therefore, a more detailed response to this comment cannot be given.

Response A-2 (Bob Smart): See Response E-1.

Response A-3 (Bob Smart): See Master Response C.

Response A-4 (Bob Smart): See Master Responses B and C.

Response A-5 (Bob Smart): See Master Response B.

Response A-6 (Bob Smart): See Master Response C.

Response A-7 (Eileen Crim): See Master Responses B and C.

Response A-8 (Bill Crim): See Master Response B.

Response A-9 (Art Marianaccio): The preferred alternative is a two-phase project. Phase 1, a 4-lane tight diamond interchange, of this 2-phase alternative is expected to provide an adequate level of service until at least 2015, not 2025 as indicated by the commenter. As an alternative, the draft joint document also evaluates the 4-Lane Tight Diamond Alternative (2025), a one-phase project for construction of a 4-lane tight diamond interchange only. This alternative is evaluated in the event that the County adopts a new General Plan that provides for no more growth than allowed by the current Writ of Mandate, in which case the 4-lane tight diamond interchange would provide adequate capacity through at least 2025 based on regional population projections obtained from the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG).

The need for Phase 2 improvements will depend on the outcome of the County's new General Plan. The Missouri Flat interchange joint document evaluates a range of alternatives that covers the full range of land use maps that may be adopted.

Response A-10 (Art Marianaccio): This comment is noted. See Master Response B.

Response A-11 (Art Marianaccio): Pages 3-56 and 3-57 of the draft joint document discusses the level of service (LOS) that could be expected in 2005 and 2015 at Missouri Flat Road/Prospector's Plaza Drive, Missouri Flat Road/U.S. 50 westbound ramps, Missouri Flat

Road/U.S. 50 eastbound ramps, and Missouri Flat Road/Mother Lode Drive without construction of the proposed project. This discussion notes that these intersections currently experience LOS F, and that these conditions will worsen in 2005 and 2015 from planned development in the County and in the vicinity of the interchange.

The draft joint document provides flexibility by evaluating a range of alternatives that supports the range of land use maps evaluated as part of the County's new General Plan process. The County will not commit to a Phase 2 project as part of the proposed project, but would undertake such a project as a separate action, if needed, after the new General Plan is adopted. See also Response A-9.

Response A-12 (Joe Cochran): See Master Response B.

Response A-13 (Bud Veirs): Reintroduction of experimental populations of a federally listed species to an area is accomplished with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service sponsorship via a recovery plan for the species, and is not done as project mitigation. Section 10(j) of the federal Endangered Species Act requires reintroduced populations to be wholly separate from existing, naturally-occurring populations so as not to dilute the gene pool of the natural population. A recovery plan has been adopted for the California red-legged frog and calls for reintroduction in the Sierra Nevada foothill region. Reintroduction of the California red-legged frog as mitigation for the proposed interchange project would not be consistent with the federal Endangered Species Act.

Response A-14 (Bud Veirs): During the floristic field surveys, the Jones & Stokes botanist directly observed blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*) trees within the study area. As described on page 3-106 of the draft joint document, the blue oak trees occur in association with gray pine, interior live oak, and ponderosa pine. This community type could also be referred to as "foothill woodland". Although blue oaks grow on south slopes in shallow soils, they also typically grow in soils derived from a variety of parent materials. The soils are characteristically shallow, infertile, and moderately to excessively well-drained (soil textures can range from gravelly loam to gravelly clay-loam). A good website to view the variety of habitat conditions that typically support blue oaks is http://elib.cs.berkeley.edu/cgi/mg_query?where-genre=Plant&where-taxon=Quercus+douglasii.

**Response to Comment by Jason Crow, Sacramento Area Council of Governments
(January 2, 2004)**

Response B-1: Your suggested revision has been incorporated into the report. See Chapter 3, Errata.

Response to Comment by Bruce A. Wray (January 15, 2004)

Response C-1: The commenter's preference to move forward quickly with the proposed project is noted for the record and will be considered by the County Board of Supervisors. The project must comply with Federal and state environmental regulations before it can be approved; compliance with these regulations dictates, in part, the schedule for beginning final design of the project. This comment does not address the adequacy of the joint document.

Responses to Comments by Eileen Crim (January 16, 2004)

Response D-1: See Master Responses A, B, and C.

Response D-2: See Master Response C.

Response D-3: See Master Response B.

Responses to Comments by Melba J. Leal, California Division of the National Pony Express Association (January 19, 2004)

Response E-1: The referenced statement on page 3-20 of the draft joint document refers to neighborhoods and communities in the “project area”, as shown in Figures 1.6-1, 1.6-2, 2.2-1, 2.2-2, 3.1-4, 3.2-1, 3.5-1, 3.6-1, 3.8-1, and 3.11-1. This project area is the area where ground disturbance could occur with project construction due to the project footprint, construction access, and construction staging areas. The project area was the focus of the environmental analysis of on-the-ground resources, such as biological and cultural resources. The term, project area, does not refer to the communities served by Missouri Flat Road. The communities and land uses identified by the commenter, such as Diamond Springs, El Dorado, Herbert Green Middle School, Wal-Mart are not located within the project area, using this definition.

However, the traffic analysis conducted for this project (and in turn, the noise and air quality analyses since they depended on the traffic analysis results) included all of El Dorado County and recognized the travel corridors identified by the commenter. The traffic model is briefly described on pages 3-43 and 3-45 of the draft joint document. The travel corridors served by the major roads evaluated as part of this project, Missouri Flat Road, Mother Lode Drive, and Prospector’s Plaza Drive, are described on pages 3-35 and 3-36 of the draft joint document. For Missouri Flat Road, this description states that this road “begins at State Route 49 (Pleasant Valley Road) and extends north to Green Valley Road, north of U.S. 50. From the El Dorado and Diamond Springs communities and serves a variety of commercial uses near the U.S. 50 interchange and south of Forni Road....Recently, Missouri Flat Road was improved south of Mother Lode Drive to the Sacramento Placerville Transportation Corridor, just past Wal-Mart...”

Response E-2: See Master Response B.

Response to Comment by W. Chris Word, El Dorado Irrigation District (January 26, 2004)

Response F-1: The discussion under Impact U1 on pages 3-190 and 5-113 has been revised to add that the County will coordinate with EID prior to and during project construction to ensure that utility standards are met. See Chapter 3, Errata.

Responses to Comments by Elna Norman (January 26, 2004)

Response G-1: The commenter's preference for the No-Project Alternative is noted for the record and will be considered by the County Board of Supervisors at the time of project approval consideration. This comment does not address the adequacy of the joint document.

Response G-2: The draft joint document contains over 30 mitigation measures to reduce significant environmental effects. The biological resources education program (Mitigation Measure BR3a) and the riparian restoration program (Mitigation Measure BR3k) are only two of the measures recommended. Table S.4-2 and Appendix G contain a list of the proposed mitigation measures. The commenter is not specific as to which measures are vague, if any. Therefore, a more detailed response to this comment cannot be given.

Response G-3: The commenter's preference for the No-Project Alternative is noted for the record and will be considered by the County Board of Supervisors at the time of project approval consideration. This comment does not address the adequacy of the joint document.

Responses to Comments by Robert A. Smart (January 27, 2004)

Response H-1: See Master Responses B and C.

Response H-2: See Response E-1.

Response H-3: See Master Response B.

Response H-4: See Master Response C.

Response H-5: The proposed improvements to the interchange are designed to Caltrans standards that are intended to provide for safe operating conditions. Drivers who run red stop lights often do so under congested traffic conditions. One of the objectives of the proposed project is to reduce congestion at the ramp intersections by constructing operational improvements.

In areas where a right-turn lane has been provided along Missouri Flat Road for operational reasons, the delineated bicycle lane has been located between the outermost through lane and the dedicated right-turn lane. These delineated bicycle lanes have been located directly across from the delineated bicycle lanes on the other side of the intersection in order to provide direct movement through the intersection. Where right-turn lanes have been provided at the off-ramps, those right-turning vehicles are controlled and must turn through the intersection rather than having “free” right- turn lanes.

Response H-6: See Master Responses A and D.

Responses to Comments by Karen Aguilar (January 30, 2004)

Response I-1: See Master Responses B and C.

Response I-2: See Master Response C.

Response I-3: See Master Responses A, C, and D.

Response I-4: This comment is unrelated to the proposed Missouri Flat Road interchange project and does not address the adequacy of the draft joint document. Caltrans and the City of Placerville have considered the option of relocating Highway 49; however, this project is on hold due to budgetary constraints and because there are other higher priority projects for the limited, available funding (Postelwaite pers. comm.).

Responses to Comments by Alice Q. Howard, Maidu Group, Mother Lode Chapter, Sierra Club (January 31, 2004)

Response J-1: Under the preferred alternative, Phase 1, the 4-lane tight diamond interchange configuration, is the first phase of the proposed two-phase interchange improvement project. As described on page 1-12 of the draft joint document, Phase 1 would provide an adequate level of service for approximately 10 years and adequate capacity for the development allowed by the court-issued Writ of Mandate. The draft joint document analyzes a second phase in order to be consistent with Caltrans' policy that State facilities be designed for a minimum 20-year design life. If the County adopts a new General Plan that provides for more growth than currently allowed by the Writ of Mandate, the County would have the option of pursuing a Phase 2 interchange as a separate project at the time it is needed.

Response J-2: The Phase 1, 4-lane tight diamond interchange configuration is the minimum acceptable design that is needed to solve existing operational deficiencies and provide adequate capacity for planned growth allowed by the court-issued Writ of Mandate. Therefore, if the County adopts a lower growth plan, then a Phase 2 project would not need to be built. This scenario is assumed under the 4-Lane Tight Diamond Alternative that is evaluated in the draft joint document. As described on page 1-6 of the document, the County Board of Supervisors will only be acting upon Phase 1 of the project at this time. As noted under Response J-1, if the County adopts a new General Plan that provides for more growth than currently allowed by the Writ of Mandate, the County would have the option of pursuing a Phase 2 interchange as a separate project. See also Response L-1 for an explanation of how SACOG projected 2025 population levels for El Dorado County.

Response J-3: The fake pine communication tower will not be affected under any of the alternatives evaluated in the draft joint document.

Response J-4: The referenced text has been modified to reflect the General Plan alternatives evaluated in the May 2003 County General Plan EIR. See the errata to text on pages 3-4 through 3-9 in Chapter 3 of this report.

Response J-5: Until a new General Plan is adopted by the County, the 1996 General Plan policies are in effect for the purpose of evaluating projects allowed to move forward under the Writ of Mandate. (For a detailed discussion of this issue, see pages 1-3 through 1-5 of the draft joint document.)

Regarding the level of service criteria, page 3-38 of the draft joint document states the following:

“Under Policy 3.5.1.1 of the 1996 El Dorado County General Plan, the County is required to maintain LOS E on all roadways. In addition, the County shall not allow the LOS to drop below the projected LOS under 2015 conditions with the roadway plan (i.e., *El Dorado County 20-Year Capital Improvement Program [CIP]*, El Dorado County Department of Transportation, July 25, 1996) assumed in place...(Note that Policy 3.5.1.1, addressing roadways, is applied to intersections since intersections are the nodes that connect roadway segments and

are the critical elements that control traffic operations through the roadway system...Therefore, intersection operations govern LOS for the roadway system.):...

The MC&FP EIR (EDAW 1998) identifies the LOS threshold for the Missouri Flat Road/U.S. 50 eastbound ramps as D rather than E. This difference is due to a refined interpretation of the limits of the CIP roadway segments. LOS D was identified in the MC&FP EIR since LOS D is Caltrans' threshold. However, further discussions with Caltrans and the County have indicated that the County's threshold of E should be used consistent with the 1996 General Plan."

Based on Policy 3.5.1.1, the 1996 General Plan and the 1996 General Plan Alternative (analyzed as part of the proposed draft County General Plan process) uses a threshold of level of service (LOS) F for Missouri Flat Road between U.S. 50 and Mother Lode Drive. Based on draft Policy TC-1c, the Environmentally Constrained and Roadway Constrained 6-Lane Plus Alternatives analyzed as part of the County's draft General Plan also use a threshold of LOS F for this segment. Therefore, although LOS F could have been used for the threshold for the Missouri Flat Road/U.S. 50 eastbound ramps, LOS E was selected since it provides for a more meaningful threshold.

Response J-6: Exhibit 3-2 from the Missouri Flat Area MC&FP Draft EIR (April 1998), entitled "MC&FP Project Area by Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ)", presents the entire MC&FP area. This area includes all properties designated as "commercial" in the Missouri Flat area per the 1996 General Plan. The MC&FP EIR was intended to be a program-level EIR from which project EIRs on proposed roadway improvements and retail developments would tier. This approach is not piecemealing under CEQA, as the "whole of the project" was considered programmatically in the MC&FP EIR. The very concept of tiering assumes that once a program EIR or first tier EIR is in place, individual projects consistent with the program will proceed on an individual basis. Page 1-2 of the MC&FP Draft EIR states:

"This MC&FP is evaluated at a "program EIR" level, pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines §15168...A program EIR can either serve as "first-tier" EIR upon which later project-specific documents can rely or as a comprehensive and detailed document that would allow an agency to carry out an entire "program" without having to prepare additional site-specific EIRs or negative declarations. The Missouri Flat Area MC&FP environmental analysis is intended to serve, a minimum, as a first-tier to evaluate "big picture" physical changes resulting from implementation of the plan...the EIR will provide a broad spectrum ('umbrella') analysis for roadway improvements..."

The MC&FP Draft EIR acknowledges that project EIRs would be prepared for individual roadway improvements, including the U.S. 50/Missouri Flat Road interchange improvement project. Page 3-25 of the MC&FP Draft EIR states:

"Each roadway project either has or will have completed in its own project-level CEQA review before implementation to address site-specific details not known at this time."

The draft joint document for the Missouri Flat Road interchange project identifies the project area as the area that would undergo ground disturbance with project implementation. For other environmental topics, such as traffic, air quality, and noise, models were run that included planned land uses and roadway improvements within the entire County. See also Response E-1 regarding the definition of the project area. See also Responses L-4 and L-6 regarding the Missouri Flat Road/Pleasant Valley Road connector.

Response J-7: The “No Impact” answer to item XVI(f) of the project initial study checklist, contained in Appendix D of the draft joint document, was intended to indicate that adequate landfill capacity is available for waste materials generated by project construction. In response to the Notice of Preparation comments, pages 3-191 and 5-114 of the draft joint document state the following:

“Construction of the Missouri Flat Road overcrossing would generate 720 cubic meters of concrete to be removed from the existing overcrossing. Approximately 120 cubic meters of concrete would be removed during construction of the Weber Creek bridge improvements. This concrete would become the property of the construction contractor who would be responsible for disposing of the construction waste at the appropriate landfill or at a facility that recycles concrete into aggregate base or other products.”

According to the County’s project manager for this project, a concrete recycling facility is not located in the County. Also, the County does not currently utilize a concrete recycling program. (Payne pers. comm.)

See also Response J-32.

Response J-8: The Sacramento Placerville Transportation Corridor (SPTC) and the Missouri Flat Road/Pleasant Valley Road connector are mentioned on page 1-3 and on pages 3-9 and 3-10 of the draft joint document as part of the description of the MC&FP and associated Community Facilities District. See also Responses L-4 and L-6 regarding the Pleasant Valley Road connector project.

Response J-9: Actions related to the crossing of the former Southern Pacific Railroad (now known as the SPTC) of Missouri Flat Road do not relate to the Missouri Flat Road interchange project or the adequacy of the draft joint document since this corridor is outside of the interchange project area. However, background regarding this corridor and County actions within this corridor are provided below to address the commenter’s questions.

In August 1993, sensing rail system inactivity and disrepair at the railroad crossing, the County Department of Transportation (DOT) asked the Southern Pacific Transportation Company (Company) for permission to repair the Missouri Flat Road crossing over the railroad, using DOT road maintenance personnel, due to the poor surface conditions of the crossing. In 1994, DOT received permission from the Company to make repairs, and the tracks were removed and roadway repaired.

At about the same time the repairs were being made, the County formed the SPTC-Joint Powers Authority (JPA) with Sacramento Regional Transit, City of Folsom, and Sacramento County. The SPTC-JPA subsequently purchased the rail corridor from the Company. The "Sale Agreement, Placerville Branch", dated September 6, 1996, between the Company and the SPTC-JPA stipulated that the purchase and sale of the rail corridor was pursuant to the Department of Transportation, Surface Transportation Board's effective orders under Sections 1248(b and c) of the National Trails System Act. This Act includes the provision informally called "Rails to Trails" permitting rail banking and interim trail use by issuance of a "Notice of Interim Trail Use" (NITU). This NITU allows for protection of the railroad corridor for future rail use and for interim trail use until a rail need occurs. As a SPTC-JPA member agency, El Dorado County signed, with the other member agencies, a "Reciprocal Use and Funding Agreement (RUFA)" on August 31, 1996, identifying the rights and responsibilities with respect to the SPTC and further signed an "Easement Agreement" on September 6, 1996 that defines specific rights and restrictions for the general use of the SPTC within each member agency's jurisdiction. These agreements also protect the corridor from any degradation of non-rail or non-trail uses.

Additionally in January 1997, the County Board of Supervisors approved a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Missouri Flat Road widening project. Later in 1997, the SPTC-JPA Board signed a Grant of Easement, as required by the RUFA, for the reconstruction of the crossing and the widening of Missouri Flat Road as part of this widening project.

Neither the DOT's maintenance activities in 1994 nor construction of the Missouri Flat Road widening improvements preclude the provision of future rail service within the SPTC corridor.

The Pleasant Valley Road connector is actively being pursued by the County as a separate project since it is included in the MC&FP and associated Community Facilities District and will undergo separate environmental review. The connector proposal does not yet have a specific schedule. Once the route adoption is completed, necessary rights-of-way will be purchased to ensure that the SPTC is preserved for future rail use, consistent with the Rails to Trails Act. See also Responses L-4 and L-6 regarding the Pleasant Valley Road connector project.

Response J-10: The Pleasant Valley Road connector was assumed as a planned improvement in both the 2015 and 2025 traffic forecasts since this project is included in the MC&FP and the associated Community Facilities District.

Response J-11: See Master Responses A and C.

Response J-12: See Master Response A.

Response J-13: The text on page 1-7 is correct, and the text on page 3-43 is incorrect and has been corrected in the errata in Chapter 3. A sidewalk exists on the east side of the bridge.

Response J-14: Phase 1 will include construction of 2.4-meter (8-foot) wide bike lanes in both directions and 1.5-meter (5-foot) wide sidewalks in both directions under all of the alternatives. See also Response H-5 and Master Responses A and B.

Response J-15: See Master Response A.

Response J-16: As noted on page 3-54 of the draft joint document, establishment of a park-and-ride lot is proposed to mitigate impacts related to the displacement of up to 20 of the 73 automobile spaces (or less than one-third of the spaces) located in the existing lot in the southwest quadrant of the interchange. DOT has had preliminary discussions with the El Dorado County Transit Authority regarding possible locations for the siting of a future park-and-ride lot. The northwest quadrant of the Missouri Flat Road interchange is just one possible location that may be considered by transit authority in siting a new park-and-ride lot. Issues raised by the commenter, such as alternative sites, ingress/egress, internal circulation, the number of needed bus and automobile spaces, and topographical site constraints would be evaluated by the transit authority when a specific project is proposed. The County will make the land in the northwest quadrant available for a future park and ride lot if the transit authority decides to consider this site. However, the location of the new lot will ultimately be up to the transit authority.

If the transit authority decides to consider the northwest quadrant site, access to a new lot would likely be from Prospector's Plaza Drive. This location could likely accommodate more than the 70 spaces that occur at the existing lot in the southwest quadrant.

Response J-17: The reference to "LOSC Method" on page 3-36 should be "LOS C Method". This text is corrected in Chapter 3.

Response J-18: CORSIM stands for Corridor Simulation. CORSIM is the proprietary name for a comprehensive computer-simulated traffic model applicable to surface streets, freeways, and integrated networks with a complete selection of control devices (i.e., stop/yield sign, traffic signals, and ramp metering). CORSIM simulates traffic and traffic control systems using commonly accepted vehicle and driver behavior models.

See also Master Response D.

Response J-19: The project specific carbon monoxide analysis and modeling used the current emissions factors and vehicle mix specified in the latest approved version of the California Air Resources Board's (CARB) EMFAC emission rate program.

The transportation conformity conclusions made in the joint draft document under Impact AQ5 apply to Phase 1 of the project. As noted under Impact AQ5, Phase 1 is included in the currently approved regional transportation plan (2025 Metropolitan Transportation Plan [MTP]) and transportation improvement program (TIP) (2003/05 Metropolitan TIP amendment #1) that were previously demonstrated to meet the transportation conformity requirements. SACOG must update these plans and prepare conformity analyses every three years. New projects, not currently in the approved plans must go through this new conformity determination. The new analysis must use an updated fleet mix. SACOG and the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (AQMD) are currently working on updating the Clean Air Plan to account for the new vehicle mix and demonstrate conformity for the new plan. However, Phase 1 of the proposed project will not be a part of the conformity determination for the new plan as it was included in the previously approved plan. As noted under Impact AQ5, a project in the approved MTP and MTIP is presumed to conform provided the project description for that project has not changed since the plan was adopted. Phase 1 of the proposed project is consistent with the

project description included in the approved plan. Therefore, it meets the transportation conformity requirements.

If the County decides to go forward with Phase 2 of the project, Phase 2 would be included in a future MTP and MTIP and modeled for transportation conformity. As noted on page 1-6 of the draft joint document, additional environmental review would likely be required for the Phase 2 project pursuant to Sections 15162 and 15163 of the State CEQA Guidelines and the U.S. Department of Transportation NEPA regulations before it could be constructed.

The adoption of a general plan will not have direct implications regarding conformity, except to the extent that population growth permitted by a new general plan might create the demand for Phase 2, which as noted, will be subject to a conformity determination as part of a future MTP.

Response J-20: The CARB and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency enacted regulations designed to reduce emissions of reactive organic gases (ROG), nitric oxides (NO_x), carbon monoxide (CO), and particulate matter less than or equal to 10 microns in diameter (PM10) (soot) from off-road diesel-powered construction equipment. These new regulations are to be phased in over time so that in succeeding years, the emission limits on construction equipment become more stringent. As the construction vehicle fleet turns over each year and is replaced by newer vehicles, the average fleet emission rates decrease, similar to the on-road vehicle fleet. The construction fleet regulations make the emissions analysis in the draft joint document conservative because any delays in project construction cause actual construction emissions to be lower than those estimated.

Only ROG and NO_x are included in Table 3.5-3 because the El Dorado County Air Pollution Control District's (EDCAPCD) Guide to Air Quality Assessment (El Dorado County Air Pollution Control District 2002) states that mass emissions of PM10 need not be quantified. For construction-related fugitive dust, the EDCAPCD assumes that mitigation measures designed to prevent visible dust beyond the project's property line are sufficient to reduce impacts to less than significant levels. The draft joint document contains Mitigation Measures AQ2a and AQ3a consistent with this requirement (see pages 3-68, 3-69, and 3-70 of the draft joint document).

The EDCAPCD does not require that construction-related PM10 exhaust emissions be quantified. However, the EDCAPCD has adopted construction diesel fuel use limits designed to minimize generation of PM10 exhaust (soot). The draft joint document requires that if the project would exceed the fuel use limits established by the EDCAPCD (337 gallons per day for 1995 or earlier vehicles, 402 gallons per day for 1996 or later vehicles), then additional mitigation measures would be required, such as the use of aqueous diesel fuel (see Mitigation Measure AQ2a).

Response J-21: The CEQA analysis for both the County's draft General Plan (as contained in the May 2003 draft EIR on the El Dorado County General Plan) and the Missouri Flat Road interchange project use a greater than 5 dB increase over existing noise levels as a significance threshold. The interchange project analysis also uses a greater than 3 dB increase over future-year no-project noise levels as a threshold (see pages 5-49 and 5-50 of the draft joint document). The NEPA analysis for the interchange project uses a 12 dB or greater increase over existing

noise levels as the trigger for analyzing noise abatement, consistent with 23 CFR 772 (page 3-74 of the draft joint document).

Noise levels specified by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are guidelines only. The County's noise standards are based on those recommended by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) which were derived from the EPA guidelines. The noise levels for outdoor living areas recommended by WHO are in the range of 50 to 55 dBA (not 50 dBA as stated in the comment). A constant sound level of 55 dBA over a 24-hour day corresponds to 61 Ldn. Accordingly, the County threshold of 60 Ldn for residential uses, transient lodging, places of worship, and other sensitive uses (adopted in the 1996 General Plan and proposed under the No-Project Alternative, the 1996 General Plan Alternative, and the Environmentally Constrained Alternative in the County draft General Plan), is not inconsistent with the WHO noise level. The County's threshold of 60 Ldn is also consistent with the OPR guidelines. The County allows noise of up to 65 Ldn if available noise mitigation measures have been implemented (per the 1996 General Plan and proposed under each of the four General Plan alternatives in the County's draft General Plan).

The proposed noise compatibility standards being considered by the County as part of the draft General Plan are the same as or less stringent than those in the 1996 General Plan. As noted above, three of the General Plan alternatives propose the same criteria as the 1996 General Plan, and the Roadway Constrained 6-Lane Plus Alternative proposes 65 Ldn as the threshold for residential, transient lodging, places of worship, and other sensitive uses. Accordingly, the County does not expect to adopt noise standards that are more stringent than the current standards.

Response J-22: As noted under Response J-21, the noise compatibility standards proposed under each of the four alternatives considered as part of the County's draft General Plan are the same as or less stringent than those adopted in the 1996 General Plan and used as a significance criterion for the interchange project. As described under Impacts N3 and N4 on pages 5-54 and 5-55 of the draft joint document, traffic noise impacts are expected to be less than significant without mitigation. Therefore, consideration of additional noise mitigation measures is not required.

Response J-23: As noted on page 3-90 of the draft joint document, a design hydraulic study was prepared for the portion Weber Creek within the project area that estimated peak 50- and 100-year flows in Weber Creek and existing and projected channel scour conditions. Therefore, baseline hydraulic information was developed for this project. A drainage study was also completed for this project that indicated that the area does not have a history of flooding or other drainage-related problems. Page 3-96 of the draft joint document indicates that only minor modifications to existing drainage facilities would be required to accommodate project-related runoff consisting of new culverts and site grading to direct drainage to appropriate culvert locations.

Regarding baseline water quality data, it is not uncommon to have limited water quality data on small watersheds. For a project of this type and scale, water sampling is not typically conducted. As noted on page 3-94 of the draft joint document, Caltrans has a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System stormwater permit issued by the State Water Resources Control Board and

administered by the Regional Water Quality Control Board for projects within Caltrans' right-of-way. Under this statewide general permit, a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will be developed and implemented for this project. The SWPPP will include Best Management Practices that will be implemented to reduce construction-related and post-construction effects on receiving waters.

Response J-24: As suggested by the commenter, the referenced text has been revised. See Chapter 3, Errata.

Response J-25: A detention basin will not be constructed on the H&S Gas Mart property (parcel 327-130-20) as part of the interchange project. As noted under Impact WQ1 on page 5-58 of the draft joint document, the rate of runoff from all proposed facilities would be approximately 0.34 cubic meters per second (12.3 cubic feet per second) during a 25-year storm event with construction of the preferred alternative. Some of the drainage would flow to Weber Creek, and the remainder would flow to either Mound Springs Creek or Indian Creek. Minor modifications to existing drainage facilities would be made to accommodate the runoff including new culverts and site grading to direct drainage to the appropriate culvert locations. The change in surface water elevation under post-project conditions would be negligible, and the project would not result in any additional flood risk to life or property. Therefore, a detention basin is not needed for the interchange project.

As noted on pages 1-11 and 1-12 of the draft joint document, because a detention basin is not needed for the proposed project, the County has proposed to modify one small part of adopted mitigation measure 4.8-1 of the MC&FP program EIR, as follows (modified language is shown as underlined text):

Prior to the approval of a tentative map, or, for projects without maps, issuance of a building permit, a project applicant for retail development or roadway improvements in the MC&FP Area, including the project applicants for Sundance Plaza and El Dorado Villages Shopping Center projects, shall submit and obtain approval of the project drainage report by the El Dorado County Department of Transportation. This report shall demonstrate that, for all such projects other than the Missouri Flat interchange itself, post-development stormwater peak discharge levels from the project will remain at existing peak levels through the use of one or all of the following alternative mitigation measures...

Response J-26: Intensive floristic surveys were conducted for special-status plant species. Special-status species are those legally protected under state and federal endangered species acts and other regulations, and species that are considered sufficiently rare by the scientific community to qualify for such listing (see page 3-108 and 3-109 of the draft joint document for a more detailed definition of special-status species). In conducting these surveys, the California Native Plant Society Botanical Survey Guidelines were followed. These surveys were conducted during the time(s) of year when special-status plants would be identifiable in order to determine the presence of special-status species.

Intensive surveys were also conducted for special-status wildlife species, including breeding bird surveys conducted in April and May 2002, focused surveys for elderberry bushes, and protocol-

level surveys for herpetological species (reptiles and amphibians). The protocol-level surveys for listed species were performed according to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service guidelines and accepted scientific methods for nesting birds.

Response J-27: The commenter is correct in that Policy 7.3.3.2 appears twice. This duplicative text has been omitted in Chapter 3, Errata.

Response J-28: Until a new General Plan is adopted by the County, the 1996 General Plan policies are in effect for the purpose of evaluating projects allowed to move forward under the Writ of Mandate. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see pages 1-3 through 1-5 of the draft joint document. See also Response J-29.

Response J-29: The mitigation ratio and monitoring period identified in Mitigation Measure BR5a (see page 3-136 of the draft joint document) were identified by the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) botanist for Region 2 as an adequate ratio for compensating the potential impacts to woodland habitat; this determination was made during a field visit to the project site in 2002. As identified in this mitigation measure, the 5-year monitoring period is based on meeting a minimum of 80% survival by the end of the fifth year and a stable viable population for the duration of the monitoring period. If these performance standards are not met, remedial measures such as replanting will be implemented. These monitoring efforts will include an adaptive management approach whereby if at 5 years, the success criteria have not been met and additional plantings or other remedial measures (such as weed or herbivore control measures) are required, then monitoring may extend beyond 5 years.

Most city and county native tree ordinances protect trees that are 6 inches in diameter at breast height (dbh) or greater. For this reason and because DFG has concurred with this determination, the mitigation measure applies to the replacement of native trees that are 6 inches dbh or greater.

Response J-30: Mitigation Measure BR7a has been modified to specify “steam cleaning” rather than “washing”. See the errata to pages 3-138 and 5-84 in Chapter 3.

Response J-31: The County has considered stockpiling topsoil removed from upland areas and reapplying it to those areas of the right-of-way to be replanted. The County, in consultation with Jones & Stokes’ botanists, has determined that this approach would not guarantee that a seed source for displaced native plants would be introduced to the project area. The nonnative annual grassland in the project area is dominated by non-native species including wild oat, dogtail, soft chess, barley, Italian ryegrass, ripgut brome, smallpod mustard, and strawberry clover. The grassland also supports several plants that are considered invasive species including yellow-star thistle, field bindweed, Scotch broom, and medusahead. Replacing the topsoil from upland areas in the project right-of-way could increase the distribution of these invasive species. For this reason, the County has chosen not to stockpile topsoil removed during grading.

Response J-32: The County will consider chipping native material and applying it to the construction right-of-way for use as a mulch, together with other traditional disposal methods.

Response J-33: The reference on page 3-145 should be to Farmer’s Free Ditch. This text is corrected in Chapter 3, Errata.

Response J-34: As noted on page ix (Roman numeral) of the draft joint document, the Historic Properties Survey Report (HPSR) is available for review at the County offices at 2850 Fairlane Court, Placerville by contacting Kris Payne at 530-621-5926. As the HPSR is one of 21 technical reports prepared for this project, all of these reports cannot be appended to the draft document. Instead, a comprehensive listing of the available technical reports is included.

The draft joint document contains a summary of the HPSR. As noted on page 3-159 of the draft joint document, an architectural historian and an archeologist, who meet the Secretary of Interior's professional qualifications, conducted intensive surveys. Twelve properties that were constructed in or before 1956 were evaluated. Also, four engineering structures (Old Weber Creek bridge, Old Highway 50 segment, Missouri Flat Ditch, and Farmer's Free Ditch), that were constructed in or before 1956 and had previously been evaluated, were visited, photographed, and their previous recordations updated.

The State Historic Preservation Officer's (SHPO) letter in Appendix C is not intended to be one-sided, but an objective evaluation of the conclusions of the HPSR. Under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, the SHPO is responsible for making decisions about the preservation of historic properties in their states in accordance with appropriate regulations. Among those responsibilities is to provide guidance, review, and concurrence on National Register of Historic Places evaluations completed for federally funded projects. While the SHPO is an appointed office, the SHPO's staff is comprised of historians, architectural historians, and archaeologists who meet the Secretary of Interior Standards for historic preservation and archaeology.

The Crawford Ditch is located more than 5 kilometers (3 miles) beyond the architectural Area of Potential Effect (APE). The architectural APE includes those parcels containing structures, in their entirety, where a partial or full acquisition would be needed for roadway right-of-way. The architectural APE encompasses the archeological APE that includes the project footprint and total existing and proposed right-of-way width. These definitions of the APE meet the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regulations (36 CFR 800.2[c]). Figure 3 presents both APEs.

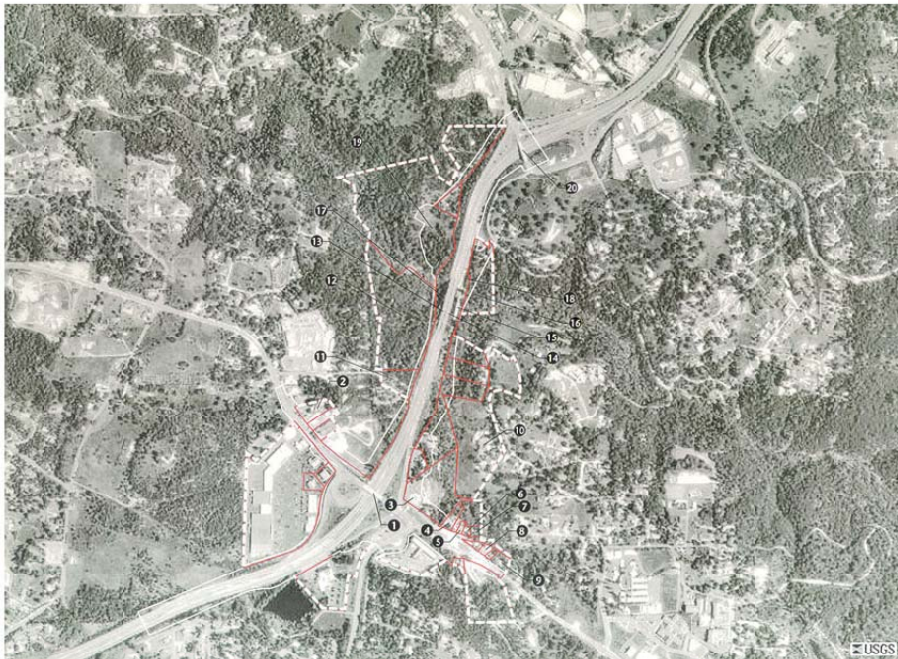
Response J-35: No ordering criterion was used in the referenced list of economic activities.

Response J-36: The old Southern Pacific Railroad corridor (Sacramento Placerville Transportation Corridor) is located approximately 0.8 kilometers (0.5 mile) beyond the architectural APE, and it would not be affected by the project. Therefore, this corridor was not evaluated for historical significance. See Responses J-8 and J-34.

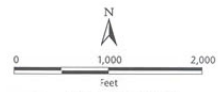
Response J-37: The County will consider using decorative lighting on Missouri Flat Road. In evaluating lighting options, the County will consider a number of factors, including the effectiveness of the lighting pattern and capital and maintenance costs. The selected lighting must adequately illuminate the sidewalk for pedestrian safety. At the ramp intersections, it is more typical to have standard lights on the signal poles. At the ramp locations, the entire intersection must be lit for safety purposes.

Response J-38: Overhead sign illumination would be used on this project since reflectorization does not provide adequate visibility of the signs at night. Illumination would be provided by an

Figure 3
APE Map



- Legend**
- Archaeological APE and Survey Area
 - Architectural APE
 - Parcels
 - Parcels Numbers



Source: USGS Aerial, 05/09/1993.

Area of Potential Effects	
Submitted By:	<i>Carly Hope</i> SI District Dept. of Transportation
Approved By:	<i>[Signature]</i> Field Area Manager
Approved By:	<i>[Signature]</i> DEE Dept.

85-watt induction lamp lighting system that allows a direct uniform illumination over the entire face of the sign. The lighting fixture is mounted at the base of the sign panel and is directed upward to evenly illuminate the sign face. It is not intended to create light pollution. This is the standard illumination method used on overhead signs on the state highway system. This lower wattage lamp system recently replaced the 175-watt mercury vapor illumination system.

Response J-39: Page 3-164 of the draft joint document notes that based on the project's geotechnical report, tremolite and actinolite, forms of naturally occurring asbestos, are known to be present in the County, but do not occur within the limits of the project area. Mitigation Measure ER6a (If Unknown Deposits of Asbestos are Found during Construction, Comply with El Dorado County's Asbestos Ordinance) applies to all forms of naturally occurring asbestos, including tremolite. This measure requires that the County's contractors comply with the County's asbestos and dust protection ordinance if unknown deposits of asbestos are found during construction. Therefore, no additional mitigation measures are needed.

Response J-40: The Chevron station is located at 3943 Missouri Flat Road and is the second property listed on page 3-165 of the draft joint document. The text on this page and Mitigation Measure ER7a (Implement Recommendations Related to Hazardous Materials Contained in the Project Initial Site Assessment) require that additional investigation of this site be conducted related to the potential for soil or groundwater contamination from a leaking underground storage tank. This investigation would entail exploratory borings, soils and/or groundwater sampling, and analytical testing of samples to assess if contamination is present. As noted under Mitigation Measure ER7a, if the sampling investigation identifies this property as containing contaminated materials, the County, in coordination with Caltrans and FHWA, will follow local, state, and federal regulations in establishing the appropriate clean-up measures. These measures may include, but are not limited to, identifying the parties responsible for cleanup and identifying the type of clean-up activity (such as movement of materials off-site, in-place remediation, or project redesign to avoid hazardous materials).

Response J-41: The growth projections in the 1996 General Plan are not addressed in the growth inducement analysis on page 3-16 of the draft joint document. This growth inducement analysis only addresses planned growth to 2015 under the Writ of Mandate since this analysis is intended to address the question: Does Phase 1 of the proposed project have the potential to induce growth? As noted in this analysis, Phase 1 is needed today to accommodate growth that has already occurred and to solve existing traffic problems. The analysis concludes that Phase 1 could hasten planned growth under the Writ of Mandate in the vicinity of the interchange, but it is unlikely to induce unplanned growth since it does not provide capacity beyond what is needed as allowed under the Writ of Mandate.

Responses to Comments by Mark A. Pellberger, HalBear Enterprises, Real Estate Consulting (February 2, 2004)

Response K-1: The 3.51 acres set aside for acquisition by the County will be adequate for construction of the 4-lane tight diamond interchange. The impact areas for the parcels in question have been revised in Table 3.1-1 of the draft joint document. See Chapter 3, Errata.

Response K-2: This comment is not related to the adequacy of the draft joint document. The County notes this comment for future reference in developing estimates for the cost of acquisition of the remnant parcel.

Responses to Comments by Ray Griffiths (February 3, 2004)

Response L-1: As described on pages 3-43, 3-44, 4-1, and 4-2 of the draft joint document (an EA/EIR, not an EIS, as noted by the commenter), the traffic volume forecasts for the Missouri Flat Road interchange traffic analysis were generated using a modified version of the regional SACMET travel demand model maintained by the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG). This model used 2025 market-based levels of land use development projected by SACOG and assumes a County population of approximately 213,000 in 2025.

As noted on pages 1-6 and 1-7 of the draft joint document, the County and FHWA will only act on Phase 1 of the interchange project at this time. If the County decides to pursue Phase 2 as a separate project, it would not act upon a Phase 2 design until after the General Plan is adopted. At that time, the County would evaluate the need to conduct additional environmental analysis pursuant to Sections 15162 and 15163 of the State CEQA Guidelines and 23 CFR 771.129 (U.S. Department of Transportation NEPA regulations) before Phase 2 could be constructed. Sections 15162 and 16163, respectively, describe the conditions under which a subsequent or supplemental EIR need to be prepared. 23 CFR 771.129 describe the requirements for reevaluations.

See also Responses J-1 and J-2.

Response L-2: As described on pages 1-1 and 1-7 of the draft joint document, in December 1996, the County Board of Supervisors chose the single point diamond interchange (SPDI) as the preferred alternative over a modified L-9 interchange configuration because it would result in reduced impacts on existing and proposed development in the vicinity of the interchange, requires less right-of-way acquisitions, and has better traffic operational characteristics than the modified L-9 interchange. The County eventually dropped the modified L-9 interchange from consideration since it had more extensive right-of-way impacts than the 4-lane tight diamond interchange and would require redesign of the El Dorado Villages shopping center development. The SPDI also provides the best and most efficient enhancement of the 4-lane tight diamond configuration since it eliminates significant future modifications to the 4-lane tight diamond design and does not incur significant throw-away costs.

As noted on page S-10 of the draft joint document, the County considers the 4-lane tight diamond interchange configuration to be the environmentally preferred alternative if the County adopts a new General Plan that allows for a level of growth consistent with the Writ of Mandate. If the County adopts a new General Plan that provides for more growth than the Writ of Mandate, the County considers the SPDI and the 6-lane tight diamond interchange to be comparable in terms of environmental impacts since their differences are minor.

Response L-3: See Response L-1.

Response L-4: The SPDI does not include the Pleasant Valley Road connector since this connector is unrelated to the purpose and need for improving the Missouri Flat Road interchange. The Pleasant Valley Road connector is a separate project that is currently being pursued by the County, and it will undergo separate environmental review.

Response L-5: As noted under Response L-4, the Pleasant Valley Road connector is a separate project that would undergo its own environmental review.

Response L-6: The Pleasant Valley Road connector is not mentioned in Chapter 1 since it is unrelated to the purpose and need for the Missouri Flat Road interchange project. The connector is mentioned in the discussion of the Missouri Flat Area MC&FP on page 3-10 of the draft joint document since it is one of the roadway improvements planned for in the Missouri Flat area and would be funded by the MC&FP and associated Community Facilities District. A number of roadway improvements are included in the MC&FP including Phase 1 of the Missouri Flat Road interchange project, the Pleasant Valley Road connector, and various other improvements. Each of these improvements is a separate project for which project- and site-specific environmental analysis will be conducted as they are proposed. See also Response J-6.

Response L-7: See Response J-36.

Response L-8: The referenced phrase on page 3-147 of the draft joint document is contained in a section describing the historical context of the project with regard to Placerville. The railroad trestle is not included within the project archeological or architectural APEs that were surveyed for historical resources since it would not be affected by the project. Therefore, the trestle was not evaluated for its historical significance. For the definitions of the project APEs, see Response J-34.

Response L-9: These features are not included within the project APEs. See also Response L-8.

Response L-10: Policies 3.7.2.1, 3.7.2.2, and 6.7.2.4 were not evaluated in the draft joint document since they don't relate to the proposed interchange project. The purposes of the proposed project include increasing the capacity and improving the safety of the Missouri Flat Road interchange capacity and do not relate to providing areawide and regional rail service. The analysis of relevant transportation policies is contained under Impact LU4 on pages 3-12 through 3-14 of the draft joint document.

Response L-11: The purpose of the discussion on page 3-54 is to describe the bicycle and pedestrian facilities proposed for the interchange project. The El Dorado portion of the SPTC was addressed in the recently adopted SPTC Master Plan and associated EIR (February 2003).

Responses to Comments by Marcella McTaggart, El Dorado County Air Quality Management District (February 4, 2004)

Response M-1: This comment expresses concurrence with the proposed mitigation measures for air quality. Comment noted.

Response M-2: See Master Response B.

Response M-3: This letter contains the same comments as H-1 through H-6. See Responses H-1 through H-6.

Response to Comment by Terry Roberts, State Clearinghouse (February 6, 2004)

Response N-1: This letter acknowledges that the County complied with State Clearinghouse review comments. Comment noted.

Responses to Comments by Jerry Ledbetter, El Dorado County Trails Advisory Committee (no date)

Response O-1: See Master Responses A, B, and C.

Response O-2: As noted under Response E-1, the traffic analysis conducted for this project (and in turn, the noise and air quality analyses since they depended on the traffic analysis results) included all of El Dorado County and the Placerville-Diamond Springs-El Dorado travel corridor identified by the commenter.

Response O-3: See Response E-1.

Response O-4: See Master Response A.

Response O-5: See Master Response B.

Response O-6: See Response H-5 and Master Response C.

Response O-7: Additional analysis has been conducted regarding providing a bicycle/pedestrian facility as part of the proposed project. See Master Responses A, B, and C.