

CHAPTER 8.0

SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES WHICH CANNOT BE AVOIDED IF THE PROPOSED PROJECT IS IMPLEMENTED

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Pursuant to Section 15126(f) of the CEQA Guidelines, the following discussion summarizes the potentially significant irreversible environmental impacts and irretrievable commitments of non-renewable resources associated with Project implementation. The following assessment of significant irreversible environmental changes is generally applicable to all three of the alternative alignments (A, B and C), due to the similar location and nature of the three alternatives. That is, the nature and level of most impacts for the three alignments are generally similar, and are therefore not differentiated in the following evaluation except where specifically noted. Additional discussion of individual impact differences for the three alternative alignments is provided in Chapter 4.0, Environmental Analysis.

8.1 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The Project would result in significant impacts related to land use, traffic and circulation, biological resources, noise, air quality, hazards and hazardous materials, visual quality and aesthetics, agricultural resources, paleontological resources, and recreation. Significant impacts related to land use, visual quality and aesthetics, and agricultural resources would remain unmitigated.

8.2 IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCES

According to CEQA, an EIR must also analyze the extent to which a project would commit non-renewable resources to uses that future generations will likely be unable to reverse. Irretrievable commitments of natural resources and energy supplies must be evaluated to assure that present consumption is justified. With respect to the proposed Project, open space parkland would irreversibly be converted to proposed roadway uses. This impact would be greatest under Alternative C (8.35 acres), followed by Alternative B (3.62 acres), and Alternative A (3.55 acres). It should be noted that Project impacts related to parkland conversion would be mitigated for all three alternatives through the dedication of appropriate areas of additional parkland (i.e., such that no net loss of parkland area would result, refer to Section 4.14, Recreation).

Implementation of any of the alternatives would result in an irretrievable loss of biological resources. Based on the analysis in Section 4.4, Biological Resources, all of the alternatives would impact the following sensitive vegetation communities: southern riparian forest, southern willow scrub, freshwater marsh, cismontane alkali marsh, mule fat scrub, saltgrass grassland and Diegan coastal sage scrub. Although acquisition and/or creation of these vegetation communities would occur as mitigation, these resources would be permanently eliminated within the selected alignment.

In addition, the Project would result in long-term irretrievable commitments of non-renewable resources connected with grading and construction operations. Natural resource utilization would include sand and gravel, asphalt and other construction materials for Project

implementation and long-term maintenance. Construction would also incrementally reduce existing supplies of fuel oil, natural gas and/or gasoline.

These irretrievable commitments of natural resources are neither unusual nor unexpected, and must therefore be weighed against the benefit of the proposed action. The primary benefits of the Project would be to: (1) provide a regional transportation link connecting North Santa Fe Avenue to SR-76; (2) provide improved access to the cities of Carlsbad and Vista; and (3) improve the level of service on Melrose Drive and connecting roadways and intersections. These public benefits would offset the incremental loss of non-renewable resources associated with Project implementation and maintenance.